

Obituaries

Mrs Eve Baker

Few persons can have revealed so much unsuspected beauty as Eve Baker, who died on 18 August 1990 at the age of eighty-four. She was not only a leading conservator of mural paintings, responsible for restoring hundreds of such works of art to their original state, but she revolutionized the technique of looking after them.

Eve Ulyott was born on 29 July 1906. She went to the Royal College of Art, and it was there that she met her future husband, Robert Baker, whose technical knowledge and practical help were to be of great assistance in her subsequent career. They were married in 1931 at Hale Church in Wiltshire, one of Thomas Archer's creations, and it was there that her body was laid to rest on 24 August 1990 in the presence of many admirers of her work.

At the Royal College of Art she studied painting and she never gave up her love for the brush. When she became attracted to mural paintings she went to Denmark to study under Egmont Lind, and this is what set her on her life's work. Up to that time wall paintings had been given coatings of wax and similar substances in the belief that this would preserve them. Conservator Lind showed that, in fact, such coatings were doing great harm. Attracted by the difference in temperature between the outside and the inside of a building, rainwater would enter the walls but the moisture was trapped by the presence of the wax coating. This not only caused blackening of the paintings but weakened their adherence to the walls. Conservator Lind taught that it was essential to allow wall paintings to breathe, and it was this message that Eve Baker brought back to England and propagated with evangelical enthusiasm. She first persuaded the Council for the Care of Churches and with its help soon converted all practitioners in this field.

She and her husband, by now Professor Baker, together developed new techniques in the conservation of wall paintings. One was a method of applying a 'poultice' to a painting and after a while removing it so as to bring away the grime without damaging the painting. By such methods it was possible to recover the original colours without repainting, about which she was most conservative. Even more revolutionary was the method they devised for actually removing paintings from the wall and putting them back on sound plaster.

This was first done to the thirteenth-century paintings in the vault of the Guardian Angels Chapel in Winchester Cathedral. Later they detached a thirteenth-century palimpsest in the Holy Sepulchre chapel in the same cathedral, re-locating it elsewhere and revealing underneath what is considered the finest of all late Romanesque wall paintings in England.

Eve Baker worked at other cathedrals—Canterbury, Durham and St Albans among them—and in St Faith's Chapel at Westminster Abbey, but the work by which she would most like to be remembered is in the parish churches, and among these she would probably choose Kempsey in Gloucestershire as her memorial. She described

herself as 'drunk with excitement' as the paintings began to emerge. Nearly all the great medieval paintings known to exist in parish churches felt the touch of her hand—Trotton, Hardham, Chalgrove, Clayton, Ickleton among them—but still more important are the paintings she revealed that were not previously known to exist. At Little Witchingham in Norfolk, which had been condemned to demolition, she had to climb through a broken window to investigate and subsequently revealed one of the finest fourteenth-century schemes in the country.

The list could be extended almost indefinitely, but I may be forgiven for concluding with two which I had the privilege of commissioning myself. One is at East Shefford in Berkshire, where she revealed, underneath the later plaster, an early fresco over the chancel arch and extending over the side walls which made necessary a reconstruction of the church's architectural history and pushed back its date into Saxon times. The other is at Llanellieu near Talgarth in Powys, where she proved that the whole of the north, west and south walls at the nave were decorated. My recollection is that, although she saw that her assistants were properly remunerated, she took no payment herself.

She could not alas! complete the uncovering of the Llanellieu paintings. A fall from a scaffold while working on one of her murals led in due course to an operation for hernia, which left her physically disabled and mentally confused. With indomitable courage she struggled on as long as she could, but at the age of eighty or thereabouts she had to admit defeat. She and Bobbie had made their home at South Newington, near Banbury, where he had a kiln which made tiles as good as ever came out of the Middle Ages, and there they had brought up a son and a daughter. But they decided to move to a bungalow at Wood Green in the New Forest, where there would be no steps to climb. It was near where they had first met, and where on his wedding day Bobbie had added as his present to Eve a basket of fruit to a mural he had painted in the village hall to local worthies. It looked out on Breamore with its famous Saxon rood and was the next village to Hale, where they had begun nearly sixty years of supremely happy married life.

IVOR BULMER-THOMAS

The Hon. Mrs Victor Bruce

The achievements of Mrs Victor Bruce on land, on sea and in the air are well known, but what deserves also to be recorded is that when she retired to Bradford-on-Avon she showed the same restless energy in defending the amenities of that lovely town. She died on 21 May 1990 at the age of ninety-four.

Mildred Mary Petre was the daughter of an English country gentleman, Lawrence Joseph Petre, and an American Shakespearian actress, and was born on 10 November

1895 and brought up at Coptford Hall in Essex. She was the great grand-daughter of the 11th Baron Petre, of Brentwood. With five brothers she had an adventurous childhood, despite being educated at the Convent of Sion, which prepared her for her marriage in 1926 to the Hon. Victor Bruce, youngest son of the 2nd Baron Aberdare. He was a racing driver and with him she drove in 1927 farther north into Lapland than anyone else had been by car. On her own she achieved a record for the Channel Crossing, Dover to Calais, by motor-boat: she covered the longest distance for a man or woman in single-handed drive, 2,164 miles in twenty-four hours; she made the first solo flight from England to Japan and the first solo flight around the world, and established a record for the longest solo flight. For a solo flight from India to French Indo-China she was given the Order of the Million Elephants and White Umbrella by the latter country.

From flying aircraft she took to owning them. In 1937 she founded Air Dispatch Limited to fly London newspapers from Croydon to Le Bourget in time for the Paris breakfast table. It was the first airline on which air hostesses were employed. When war came the company moved to Cardiff and concentrated on repair work. With the end of hostilities she took up airline work again and my earliest acquaintance with her, when I was Parliamentary Secretary for Civil Aviation, was to negotiate the purchase of Cambrian Airways for the nation.

She came into my life again when I had become Secretary of the Ancient Monuments Society and she invoked my aid in protecting Bradford-on-Avon, where she had settled—her marriage with Victor Bruce had broken up in 1941—from spoliation. She embarked on a characteristically fierce controversy with the local planners. There were occasions when I thought she might fall foul of the law of libel. Though she did not always win, there can be no doubt that her determined stand helped to make the town as beautiful as it is.

Mary Bruce wrote five autobiographical books. The last was aptly entitled *Nine Lives Plus*. She is survived by a son.

IVOR BULMER-THOMAS

L.S. Colchester

Linzee Sparrow Colchester (1914–89) was by education a classic with a special aptitude for inflected languages, later to make him expert in Swahili. After Marlborough and Exeter University (then University College), where he graduated B.A., he became a master at Wells Cathedral School in 1936 and most of the remainder of his life was devoted to the interests of Wells, its cathedral, and the diocese with its superb churches.

Service in World War II took him to East Africa and to Palestine and he became profoundly interested in both primitive and sophisticated buildings. In collaboration

with R.L. Collison (later Chief Librarian of Westminster) he issued a booklet *House Building for Africans* (1947) and from 1951 onwards, after his return to Wells, wrote guides and histories to the Organs, the Statuary of the West Front, and the Stained Glass, published by the Friends of Wells Cathedral and revised by him for many successive editions. In 1956 he contributed to this Society's *Transactions* (N.S., 4 1956, 79-94) an important paper on 'The Victorian Restoration of Wells Cathedral', written shortly before he left England for East Africa, a move partly dictated by the chronic lumbago from which he suffered. Before leaving Wells Linzee had completed, and revised, detailed accounts of the building of the cathedral in typescript. After his return to Wells he wrote many articles of accurate scholarship for the annual reports of the Friends of Wells Cathedral (of which he was Secretary 1969-82), and with the present writer contributed a paper on the cathedral to *The Archaeological Journal* (131 for 1974, 200-14) and 'Wells Cathedral: Architecture and Conservation' to these *Transactions* (25, 1981, 104-12).

From 1976 until his seventy-fifth birthday in July 1989 Linzee was Archivist and Assistant Librarian to the Dean and Chapter of Wells. In the Library he personally cleaned and waxed the splendid panelling, received the notable collection of books from Bath Abbey, and organized the modern re-cataloguing. As Archivist he listed, calendared or translated, typed and indexed the cathedral registers 1660-1982, three series of accounts (1327-1600), and the old leases of chapter estates. He also edited the documents of the Vicars Choral of Wells, the Wells Almshouse Charters, and completely revised A.J. Jewers, *Wells Cathedral: its Inscriptions and Heraldry* (1892). He was elected Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of London in 1977.

This bare account gives no idea of the charm of his off-beat personality, generous to a fault and attracting friends and correspondents from all over the world. His personal tours of the fabric with home and overseas visitors, or for specialized archaeologists and historians, were notable for many years and probably unparalleled elsewhere. The result of his activities is that the detailed history of Wells Cathedral is better known than that of any other in Britain. A fine address at the memorial service on 1 December 1989, given by Patrick Mitchell just after his retirement as Dean, is to be printed in the 1990 *Report* of the Friends of Wells Cathedral.

J.H. HARVEY

Dr Vivian Lipman

The amenity world in general, and the Ancient Monuments Society in particular, suffered a severe loss by the death on 10 March 1990 of Vivian Lipman at the comparatively early age of sixty-nine. An orthodox Jew himself, and a strict observer of the requirements of his religion—that is why we could never have his attendance when our annual meetings were held on a Saturday—he was an outstanding historian

of Jewry; but in this Society we think more especially of the services he rendered as Director of Ancient Monuments and Historic Buildings in the Department of the Environment from 1972 to 1978 and as one of our own Fellows. He joined the Council immediately on his retirement and was promptly made a Vice-President. In welcoming a newcomer a few years later he said, 'All the best people end up on the A.M.S. Council'.

Vivian David Lipman was born on 27 February 1921, the son of Samuel N. Lipman, M.B.E. and Cecilia (née Moses). Educated at St Paul's School and Magdalen College, Oxford, where he was a Classical Demy, he pursued postgraduate studies at Nuffield College. During the Second World War he served from 1942 to 1945 in the Royal Signals and the Intelligence Corps. His professional career began in 1947 when he entered the Civil Service as an Assistant Principal, becoming a Principal in 1950 and Assistant Secretary in 1963.

In 1964 he married Sonia Lynette Senslive, and their lives were subsequently closely bound together in Jewish studies. He had been given a D.Phil. by the University of Oxford for a study of Anglo-Jewish social history, published in 1954 as *Social History of the Jews in England. A Century of Social Service* (1959) was quickly followed by *Three Centuries of Anglo-Jewish History* (1961), of which he was editor. One of his most scholarly works was his *Jews of Medieval Norwich* (1967) based on Latin rolls and money-lending documents earlier than 1290. *The Century of Moses Montefiore* was edited jointly with his wife in 1985. His last work appeared only a few weeks before his death—*Americans and the Holy Land through British Eyes 1820-1917*. Hardly less important than his own books were his contributions to the *Transactions* of the Jewish Historical Society of England, which he served both as Editor and as President. As one of the editors of the Littman Library of Jewish Civilization he made accessible to a wider public texts and monographs previously known only to those familiar with Rabbinic Hebrew. In all this work he was greatly helped by his wife, and after her death in 1987 he was never quite the same man again. They are survived by one son.

These studies were, however, the leisure activities of a busy civil servant. He had been made an Under Secretary in 1972 and appointed Crown Estate Paving Commissioner. In that same year he was promoted to be Director of Ancient Monuments and Historic Buildings, and the nation owes him a great debt for the work he did in that post. He was the author of the scheme for the preservation of historic towns under which the Department and the local authority each paid a quarter of the cost of repair, leaving the owner only one-half to find; Chester, York, Bath and Chichester were chosen as the first beneficiaries. He was responsible for the fabric of the royal palaces and for the royal parks—which won him the C.V.O. from his Sovereign. He showed his sense of history by insisting on preserving one of the lamps in St James's Park at which Edward Grey was gazing from his room in the Foreign Office when he made his famous remark at the beginning of August 1914, 'The lights are going out all over Europe'. When it became necessary to find a new home for the British Library outside the British Museum Lipman proposed a new site in Euston Road in preference to destroying fine houses in Bloomsbury. He required, and displayed, all his skill in devising a scheme of State aid for churches in use which would be acceptable to ecclesiastics clinging to the ecclesiastical exemption. Not only

has this provided money without which many historic churches could not have survived but it is quietly eroding the exemption by requiring recipients to submit future repairs to scrutiny even if a grant is not sought.

When he retired from the Department, Lipman's services were much in demand elsewhere. In addition to the Ancient Monuments Society he was made a member of the Redundant Churches Fund, Chairman of the Library Committee of the Athenaeum, a member of the Committee of the S.P.A.B. (which gave him its Esher Award), a member of the Council of the Architectural Heritage Fund, and a member of the Council of the Textile Conservation Centre. He had been elected a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries in 1968 and was also a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society. His stated recreation was 'Reading detective stories'.

IVOR BULMER-THOMAS