

Obituary

CATHERINE COLE

Jaquetta Catherine Cole, MA, FSA, died on 7 December 1991, at the age of 86. Née Dodgson, she was educated at St. Anne's College, Oxford. She married the Revd. John Wilfrid Cole, MA, who combined the incumbency of various parishes (in the diocese of Oxford from 1936 until his retirement in 1971) with research into comparative and physiological psychology.

As a scholar, Mrs. Cole's special field of research was the stonemasons who worked in Oxford in the 17th century. She was encouraged to take up this study by her former tutor Margerie Venables Taylor, of Somerville. Her article on the Carfax Conduit, in *Oxoniensia* (XXIX–XXX, 1964–5), was based on a manuscript by Miss Taylor. Her first article in *Oxoniensia* was 'William Byrd, Stonecutter and Mason' (XIV, 1949), and this was followed up by 'The Painting or Staining of Marble as Practised by William Byrd of Oxford and Others' (XVII–XVIII, 1952–3). In 1958 the Palace of the Bishop of Oxford at Cuddesdon suffered a serious fire, after which it was (regrettably) decided to demolish it. Mrs Cole's article, 'The building of the second palace at Cuddesdon' (XXIV, 1959) is an invaluable account of the construction of Bishop Fell's palace, and of its remodelling for Bishop Wilberforce, with a number of significant observations derived from her own investigations during the demolition, and her quizzing of the workmen. She was also able to persuade Christ Church to rescue the main doorcase – carved by her beloved Thomas Wood – and set it over the entrance to the new Blue Boar Quadrangle.

Her other contributions to *Oxoniensia* were 'A lawsuit concerning Oriel quarry in 1609' (XXV, 1960), a piece on 'The execution of the work' in the joint article 'The painted roof of the Old Library, Christ Church' (XXVI–XXVII, 1961–2), and 'The building of the Tower of the Five Orders in the Schools Quadrangle at Oxford' (XXXIII, 1968).

These articles put onto a new and firm basis the study of the masons who were responsible for the remarkable flowering of architecture in Oxford at this period. They were beautifully written and a pleasure to read. It was characteristic of their author that she never forgot that her masons were real human beings. Even towards the end of her life she was involved in research into the alterations made at Christ Church to accommodate the visit of Elizabeth I.

In 1963 she was elected a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries, and took a great interest in the Society's proceedings. She contributed two reviews to *The Antiquaries' Journal*, which reveal both sympathetic appreciation and shrewd comment.

She served as one of the Honorary Secretaries of the Oxfordshire Architectural and Historical Society for twenty years (1952–1972), with loyal enthusiasm. But her special achievement was the foundation of the Society's Victorian Group. It is entirely characteristic that no-one is now sure exactly when the Group was founded, for Mrs. Cole had no time for unnecessary bureaucracy. The date was around 1967, and the intention was that the group should both encourage scholarly study of North Oxford and fight to save it, for at that time it seemed only too likely that demolition, once

started, would be impossible to stop. The Group's termly meetings were held in the drawing room of the house in Norham Road which had belonged to Mrs. Cole's parents, and it was obvious that the elegant hospitality provided was a vital factor in ensuring a good turn-out.

The Group's campaigning involved keeping a watch on the weekly lists of planning applications, and investigating and commenting on relevant ones. It was also instrumental in lobbying for the creation of the North Oxford Conservation Area, and for its subsequent extension. For the latter, the Group's second function, in stimulating research, came into play, as it provided the information required. Mrs. Cole rightly considered that, if North Oxford was to be saved, a scholarly basis of knowledge was essential. The principal result was the series of articles in *Oxoniensia* which were due to her encouragement. The first was by her sister, Miss E.O. Dodgson ('Notes on Nos. 56, 58, 60, 62, and 64 Banbury Road', vol. XXXII, 1967). There followed two magisterial articles by Andrew Saint ('Three Oxford Architects', vol. XXXV, 1970, and 'Charles Buckeridge and his family', vol. XXXVIII, 1973). I contributed 'Samuel Lipscomb Seckham' (XLI, 1976). It is a matter for regret that Mrs. Cole did not live to see the publication of Tanis Hinchcliffe's fine book *North Oxford*.

Mrs. Cole acted as Secretary of the Victorian Group for the best part of twenty years, handing over to Jeanne Sheehy in 1985. As long as she continued to live in Norham Road, she provided her customary hospitality. After she had suffered a serious accident, followed by severe complications, I visited her at St. Luke's, where her main concern was at once to discuss problems which the Group then faced.

In the last few years of her life, although she had to use a wheelchair, and her husband was blind, she retained her positive approach to life, her sense of humour, and her lively concern for other people.

PETER HOWELL