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*Corrigendum*

Owing to a printing error, which occurred after the page proofs had been checked, the text of the inscription on the Roman distance-slab found at Cleddans was given incorrectly on page 124 of volume 101 of *Proceedings*. It should read:

Im[p](eratori) [C](aesari) T(ito) · Ae(lio) · Hadriano Antonino Aug(usto) · Pio · p(atri) ·  
p(atriciae) · vex(illatio) · leg(ionis) XX · V(aleriae) · V(ictricis) · fec(it) · p(er) · p(edum)  
III (milia)

# Obituary

JAMES SMITH RICHARDSON LL.D., H.R.S.A., F.R.I.A.(SCOT.), F.S.A.SCOT.  
1883–1970

'At North Berwick on 12th September, 1970, James Smith Richardson, LL.D., H.R.S.A. (late Inspector of Ancient Monuments, Scotland)' etc. These words record the passing of a great figure in Scottish antiquity.

'Jamie' was one of the united family of five sons and a daughter of Dr James T Richardson of North Berwick and his wife Christina Thomson, sister of Arthur Thomson the renowned anatomist. He was born in Edinburgh on 2nd November 1883. His father, a man of diverse interests and considerable artistic talent, inherited by his son, removed to North Berwick in 1889 and encouraged the boy's interest in the past at an early age, for in 1902 he appears in these *Proceedings* (*PSAS*, xxxvi (1901–2), 654) as joint author of a paper on 'Prehistoric remains near Gullane'.

Educated first at North Berwick High School, he studied drawing at the old RSA Institute, and architecture in the office of Robert Lorimer. Later he worked in the architectural partnership of Richardson and Mackay. Already his appreciation of Scottish craftsmanship had shown itself, for by 1910 his design for the carved wood chancel screen at St Baldred's Church, North Berwick, was favourably noticed in the *Studio* which reveals that he did not cross the Border before 1906 when, with the late Aymer Vallance, he travelled to England, absorbing a lasting knowledge and love of woodcarving.

His work in the antiquarian field too was becoming known, 'Notes' on a miscellany of topics having been published in these *Proceedings* in 1907 (*PSAS*, xli (1906–7), 424), and he became a Fellow of our Society in 1912, his address given as 4 Melville Street. On 2nd March 1914, he was appointed the first Inspector of Ancient Monuments for Scotland (part-time) under the late Sir Charles Peers, and he began a survey of remains in this country.

War in 1914 stopped work. As early as 1900 a private in the V.B. Royal Scots, this experience helped him soon to be commissioned to the local battalion, the 2/8 Royal Scots, spending the whole war in the United Kingdom, in Ireland and in France, and finishing as a Captain; three of his brothers served, the youngest being killed in 1915 with the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders. Even on active service, his eye was alert; in 1916 there is a record of a gift to the Museum of Celtic pottery 'found while trench digging at Bantaskine' and years later, one of flints and pottery 'picked up on the shore at Wimereux'. France familiarised him with the language, life and buildings of that country.

After demobilisation and on appointment on 8th November 1920, as full-time Inspector of Ancient Monuments for Scotland, there followed a period of intense activity, during which he travelled Scotland from end to end with hardly any staff, sizing up the nature and volume of work, devising plans for the conservation of visible remains, writing notes and helping the investigators for the R.C.A.M., many of whose inventories acknowledge indebtedness to him.

From 1922 to 1946, he lectured at Edinburgh College of Art on various aspects, mainly historical, of architecture.

When opportunity offered, he was quick, aided by the Chairman of the Ancient Monuments Advisory Board, Sir John Stirling Maxwell, to set wheels in motion for 'guardianship', and during his term of office many of the best known 'tourist attractions' of Scotland came into the care of the Crown. He, with his architectural colleague, the late Mr Wilson Patterson, initiated a style and technique of conservation and display which is still envied and followed. One may mention only a few; the Palace of Linlithgow, the Castles of Dirleton, Edzell, Balvenie, Tantallon, Carnassary and Castle Sween, in Argyll, the Cathedral of Elgin, the Abbeys of Dryburgh, Arbroath, Dundrennan, Sweetheart, and Melrose, where his foresight restored and adapted the Commendator's House to receive the many beautiful fragments of shattered stone-carving. Smaller sites did not escape his attention; one thinks of the excavation and interpretation of Crossraguel, Glenluce and Inchmahome and the little chapels at Kilmory, Knapdale and St Ronan's in the Nunnery on Iona, where his cunningly devised inverted glass roofing preserved the external appearance and at the same time prevented further decay of the lovely in-gathered examples of late medieval West Highland sculpture, which had till then been 'lying around'.

In Orkney, he noted the vast extent of the prehistoric significance of the already-known site of Skara Brae, later helping the late Professor V Gordon Childe in his now world-famous excavation; and by himself he supervised the excavation of the Broch of Aikerness at Gurness. In these two places, as at Brough of Birsay, Midhowe, and at Jarlshof, Shetland, his foresight led to the construction of breakwaters, without which much of the work would have perished.

The mere existence of ruins, however well conserved and displayed is not enough: the visitor must learn about them; and here he turned a sometimes unwilling pen to the compilation of the now familiar Ministry of Works guide books and leaflets, often adding the historical as well as the descriptive accounts. At least ten castellated or domestic, and six major ecclesiastical buildings, are described by his pen, and these include the Palace of Holyroodhouse and the Castles of Edinburgh and Stirling, besides those already mentioned.

He became a Fellow of the Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland in 1922 and, by now fully established in his profession, was in 1925 appointed one of the Honorary Curators of the Collection of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, housed at Queen Street; he held this appointment until 1954, when the Board of Trustees for the National Museum of Antiquities was set up and he became a Trustee and 'expert adviser', so remaining until his death. Here he did much to further the artistic as well as the purely archaeological side of the collections and was instrumental in the acquisition of major objects of Scottish craftsmanship, such as the five Cathcart panels from Killochan and the eighteen Montrose panels, with help from the National Art Collections Fund, and a stone cross-shaft from Texa, Islay. Hardly a volume of our *Proceedings* fails to record donations from him of one kind or another, from flints and potsherds to much of his own splendid collection of Scottish woodcarvings, including a beautiful figure of St Andrew, given in 1962 in memory of his brother, the late John Richardson, W.S., for long our Society's legal adviser.

In 1945, Lord Normand, on the opening of the Exhibition 'Scotland from the Stone Age to the '45', paid tribute to his arrangement, his loans, and his lively drawings. His reputation spread to the continent when he was made Life Member of the Société Préhistorique Française.

Between 1926 and 1929, he contributed four major papers to our *Proceedings*:

1. (1926) 'Some unrecorded Scottish woodcarvings', (*PSAS*, LX (1925-6), 384) with many illustrations of the 40 examples, more than a dozen of which belonged to the author and most of these have been subsequently gifted by him.

2. (1927) 'Campbell of Lerags Cross', (*PSAS*, LXI (1926-7), 143) which, after lying for many years in three pieces near Kilbride, has been recently pieced together and re-erected by the

Ministry of Works. This paper contained a far-reaching examination into late medieval West Highland crossheads, with 20 illustrations, largely from his own pen.

3. (1928) 'Fragments of Altar Retables in Scotland', (*PSAS*, LXII (1927–8), 197) mentions all known stone and some wooden examples and deals with their subjects.

4. (1929) 'A thirteenth-century tile kiln at North Berwick', (*PSAS*, LXIII (1928–9), 281) describes his excavation in 1928 of a site connected with the Cistercian Monastery, which analyses not only those tiles found on the site but medieval tiles generally, reconstructing the possible layout as at Newbattle Abbey and Melrose, with parallels from English sites.

Besides his major papers, there are frequent notes on his discoveries as Inspector, such as the mural decorations and plaster-work at Kinneil Castle, saved by his efforts from further demolition by the Town Council of Bo'ness.

So many tasks cannot have been accomplished without occasional friction. Strong views, which he did not hesitate to express, often struck sparks. When called in as Inspector, about the design of the Scottish National War Memorial, he criticised the addition of a dome. He won his way and the profile of Edinburgh Castle was saved.

His last major contribution to this Society was the series of Rhind Lectures on 'The Mediaeval Stone-Carver in Scotland' delivered in 1949, which were not, however, published until 1964, and then only after much pressure by his friend, the late Professor Croft Dickinson.

After his retirement in 1948 from the post of Inspector, unsought but richly deserved honours came his way. St Andrews University made him an LL.D and, in 1953, the Royal Scottish Academy made him their Honorary Professor of Architecture. His activities continued; he devoted much advisory work to the National Trust for Scotland, notably in restoring the old Scots layout of the great garden at Pitmedden, with its charming ogee-roofed summer-house; Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother, recalls his great help in arranging the adaptation of the Castle of Mey; and many National Trust 'cruisers' will remember his lively guiding round Scotland.

Virtually all his life was spent in his home town of North Berwick, every foot of which was dear to him, and it was from the upper half of the family house in Tantallon Terrace that he carried on his unending activities in a veritable treasure-cave of oil paintings, woodcarvings, jade and porcelain. He excavated the medieval parish church by the harbour and persuaded the Town Council to preserve the old Town House and to establish in another building in 1957 a Burgh Museum, to the formation of whose collection he contributed or 'scrounged' the greater part, enlisting the help of local residents in the arrangement and enlargement of an already existing Natural History section.

In 1967 North Berwick conferred on him the Freedom of the Burgh, whose War Memorial near by the harbour he had designed. Advancing years and ill health curtailed outside activities, but friends and old colleagues were made welcome at his home. A year before his death a severe heart attack laid him aside; he rallied but at last he had to surrender.

A bare catalogue of such an active life would be no tribute to a man of his stature without giving some idea of his personality.

It would be unfair to describe one of such versatility as a 'character'. A retentive memory enabled him to impart his encyclopedic knowledge of things artistic and antiquarian to those whose motives he trusted. An observant eye led him to acquire many relics, often hidden in obscure sale-rooms, either for the Museum at Queen Street, or for his own collection. His impeccable taste was freely placed at the disposal of others. With a resonant voice – often heard demonstrating the echo in some medieval chapter house or aisle – and skill in stagecraft, he could hold an audience spellbound while he unravelled and re-assembled complexities, making them understandable to his listeners.

Listeners? Yes, because he preferred the spoken to the written word; and, unlike many present day 'archaeologists', he was unwilling to rush into print. Indeed, to the regret of his friends, his only work which appeared 'between boards' is *The Mediaeval Stone-Carver in Scotland*.

His facility with pencil, pen and paintbrush was unrivalled. A few deft strokes on the back of an envelope would explain a point to a county architect or planning officer. Lucky are those who own his humorous cartoons often enlivened with a few well-turned verses, or his pictorial records of travels or 'splores', and National Trust 'cruisers' treasure the sketches auctioned in aid of some good cause. In all these his puckish, occasionally barbed, sense of humour was well expressed.

His warm-hearted consideration for others ignored social distinctions, as well as making him an ideal travelling companion. Helpers were drawn from all walks of life, and, during his term of office as Inspector, he took particular interest in the custodians of the monuments under his charge. Even today his name strikes a chord in the memory of the few survivors.

At a social gathering he was the life of the proceedings, not only by himself but in his capacity to 'egg on the lave'. His culinary skill enabled him to fend for himself on lonely treks, and those who shared it will never forget his gastronomic talent.

But, above all, for children whom he loved, he was an ideal companion. Never did he talk down to them, but shared with them his sense of fun yet treating them as intelligent beings; while for those of riper years who were trying to learn, he would point the way, leaving them to find out more for themselves.

So much accomplished in so long a life by one who endeared himself to so many, young and old, surely earns the epitaph: 'Here was a man'.

A. R. C.



James Smith Richardson