

# BRYERIANA

ANTHONY APPLEMORE  
MORNINGTON BRYER  
*Remembered*



## THE MAN HIMSELF

On a rainy November day in 2016, a throng of people filled the parish church of St Peter in Harborne. During the service and the reception afterwards, many of us struggled to pin a name on a face that sometimes only vaguely resembled one we hadn't seen in decades. My attention was drawn to the medley of fellow students from the 1980s; to fellow travellers on the road to Byzantium before our ways parted; to secretaries and academics and priests and members of a family I had not been in touch with since 'those days'. Many of the congregation had taken a train or a plane to be there. For sure, no one had come because they had to. We were all there because we wanted to honour and remember together A. A. M. Bryer. Looking at this very diverse crowd, an onlooker might have wondered: what did Bryer do, to have earned such loyalty and affection? The easy answer would be that Bryer put Byzantine Studies on the map in Britain, but few if any of us were there for that reason. We were there because of what lay behind his list of achievements: the man himself.

*Catia Galatariotou*

## CHILDHOOD IN JERUSALEM

The two years he spent in Jerusalem made a lasting impression on Bryer – memories of Steven Runciman and Freya Stark who was once scandalised when Anthony addressed her in kitchen-Arabic with a selection of the swear-words and obscenities the servants had jokingly taught him. Above all he remembered his beloved German nanny, Gisela – who took leave of him in 1944 and suddenly re-entered his life by post in 2009 in her 90s from New York:

'Hello, Anthony! I have some little stories about you. When your mother was hiring me, she wanted to see me for questions and answers. It turned out to be in a friendly atmosphere. While we were talking together you came a little closer to me, so I felt I should include you in the conversation. I turned to you and asked you, "What is your name?" You just went back to your toys without any answer. But when you

heard your mother saying to me, "So, Gisela, I will see you on Monday", in a moment you tugged my sleeve and made it quite clear: "My name is Anthony Applemore Mornington Bryer!"'

*Jenny Banks Bryer and Gisela Fobar*

## YOUNG BRYER

He was found crying beside a vase of flowers. 'Why are you crying, Anthony?' asked his mother. 'Because,' he replied, 'these flowers lived too long, so they died.'

On another occasion, she asked him to watch the milk that she had put on the stove to warm. When she returned, it had boiled over. 'Anthony, I thought I told you to watch the milk.' 'Yes, thank you Mummy, I did,' he replied, enthusiastically, 'It was MOST interesting.'

*Robin Bryer*

## BRYER AT PREP SCHOOL

Bryer spent much of his time between 6 and 18 at various boarding schools. One April Fools' Day, when he was about 10, his prep school headmaster's wife confronted him at breakfast and demanded 'Anthony, where is your tie?' A shame-faced Bryer returned to his dormitory and searched high and low for the offending item. On returning to the dining-room to admit that the tie was irretrievably lost, he suddenly found it – round his neck.

*Robin Bryer*

## THE UNDERGRADUATE

We first met in Crete in, I think, 1960. We were both indulging in long vacation travel with a purpose. Mine, from New College, was to go to western Crete with a friend and a small tape recorder, and record examples of rizitika songs. Having very enjoyably done this, with the help and advice of George Psychoundakis in Asi Gonia, to whom I had an introduction from John Leatham, we thought we should have a look at Eastern Crete, and drove in my sister's Ford Popular car, which she had lent us, to Agios Nikolaos. We were sitting in a seaside café there when a ferry boat came in and passengers poured out. The weather was

hot. Among the various tourists and others one figure stood out, a shortish, rather plump man in a white linen jacket, carrying a large battered suitcase, followed by a slim, beautiful girl. The man was sweating. They were Bryer and Liz, neither of whom I had met before.

We fell into conversation. Bryer's long vacation was to go round Greece visiting and recording Byzantine churches and chapels. The suitcase contained his meticulous notes and diagrams. He also took photos. He had come with Liz to see the church at Kritsa. I think the last bus had already left, and we offered them a lift. Much talk ensued, and probably after the Kritsa visit a meal and wine. They then departed the next day for the next port of call and the next church or churches.

That was the start of more than 50 years of friendship. I called on Bryer at Balliol the next term, and we stayed in touch. After leaving Oxford he went to Athens for a year, on a grant from the Greek government administered by the British Council. He and Liz lived in a small house at the top of Aristippou and

Ploutarchou, where now the funicular railway starts for the top of Lykabetos. I was one of the following year's grant holders, and took over the Bryer house, and a horrible cat called Mattou, when he left. I remember a fascinating visit, in autumnal rain, to Byzantine churches in the heart of Evvia.

It was good that we were able to recruit Bryer for the conference in Athens that the BSA put on in 2006 with Paschalis's institute, at which Peter Mackridge spoke about Dawkins, and Bryer about Dawkins, Hasluck and the crypto-Christians of Trebizond. (In fact that title does not do justice to the idiosyncratic nature of his talk.) He was on good form then. Of recent years we did not see much of him, largely because of his physical deterioration. When we did call on him in Birmingham I found it hard to understand what he was saying, and this was a deterrent to visits. I probably should have tried harder.

Of Bryer it can truly be said that we shall not see his like again! Although he could seem eccentric, and probably rather liked to be seen

House Report Name Bryer, A.A.M.

He is temperamentally unsuited to the life of a Junior Common Room in a public-school, and I expect he often feels like a fish out of water. However I hope he will not try to conform more than is necessary for his immediate peace of mind, because, eventually, his own interests will be of more value than anything the herd has to offer.

J.G.R. Nash

as such, he was in a good way conventional in his manners and beliefs. He was a good friend. I can't speak of his scholarship, but it was evident all those years ago in Crete that he already knew what he wanted to do and had the determination and intellectual equipment to do it well. Aionia i mnimi.

*Michael Llewellyn Smith*

### **BRYER IN GREECE**

I coincided with Bryer and Liz in Athens in the autumn of 1962. They lived in a house, not at all luxurious, on as high as you could go above Souedias and the British School. Its most startling resident was a huge tom cat, which they had taken in and which clearly ruled the surrounding district. I thought it must have been Bryer's familiar. I think it was there that there was a party, where Bryer was proposing to the man from the British Council that they should hire a camper van, I suppose, so that the British Council could go around Greece promoting Byzantine Studies. The British Council man was as wrapped up in this fantasy as Bryer. Did he try something similar in Birmingham? We also spent a holiday with Bryer, Liz and their daughters at

Monemvasia, where Bryer insisted that it was our patriotic duty to hold a party to celebrate Princess Di's marriage, which happened to be taking place and which we listened to on the radio. I can't remember whether Bryer was as infatuated with her as Cyril Mango clearly was. Perhaps he was doing it as a tribute to Mango. Bryer presided over the festivities in his nightshirt, which he decided was the perfect attire for a beach holiday - not that there is a beach at Monemvasia. On the bus journey to Monemvasia he had glimpsed what he thought was a medieval mill, which he was determined to explore. It was a good way away so he took the bus. He had to hitch back and got a lift on the pillion of a motorcycle and arrived in triumph - *Absolutely Fabulous* avant la lettre - back in Monemvasia. It was a medieval mill.

*Michael Angold*

### **BRYER AT OXFORD**

In the early 1960s when living near Oxford Bryer invited me to a Mad Honey Party he was giving in his rooms at Christ Church. As you probably know, Pontic honey made by the wild bees has a reputation of being toxic since it is made from the yellow azalea common in those



parts. According to a legend, a story much cherished by Anthony, Mithridates defeated a Roman attack by inveigling them into believing that he had abandoned the cave he was occupying. The Romans sallied into this cave and discovered pots of this Pontic honey and set to with relish, only to be intoxicated by it, whereupon Mithridates set upon them and defeated them. David and I have eaten of the modern version of this honey but though it is indeed delicious, it had no side effects. However, Bryer's party was a great success, for there was a generous amount of wine and good company. In some ways he was a great romantic, which did not stop him from being a careful academic. In my opinion his greatest asset to Byzantine Studies was his great enthusiasm and the encouragement of the young and old around him, especially at a time when Byzantine Studies were regarded as a somewhat recondite subject. *June Winfield*

### **BRYER AND THE WATERHOUSES**

When I was nineteen he was the lecturer on a holiday to eastern Turkey, nicknamed by my father Ellis 'the Ara-ratrace', and I went along as one of the group. We had some very memorable experiences, possibly the dodgiest being the evening we spent on the roof of a hotel in Diyarbakır, which was then under military rule. A group of us, rather the worse for wear on Turkish brandy and champagne, decided it would be fun to throw watermelons off the roof and watch them explode on the ground below. Being much the youngest and silliest, I decided to aim at a patch of light outside the hotel's main entrance so that I could see it explode. How was I to know there would be a group of armed soldiers sitting in the hotel foyer at the time? Thinking, quite reasonably, that a bomb had gone off, they dashed upstairs to find the culprits. We, of course, had scarpereed, hooting with laughter, led by Birmingham University's Professor of Byzantine Studies, with the Dean of the Arts Faculty and Director of the Barber Institute hard on his heels. *Eleanor Waterhouse*

### **MEETING BRYER**

It was in 1976 and I was a very inexperienced Byzantinist attending my first International Byzantine Symposium held that year in Athens where I was supposed to present an account of my doctoral thesis (the first edition of the *Treasury of Theognostos*). The organizers had kindly arranged a bus-trip to Delphi one afternoon; the plan being to call in on the return journey at the great Byzantine monastery of Hosios Loukas. Bryer had other ideas and on the way out to Delphi, he asked in the bus if anyone would like to get off at the turning to the monastery and walk for a few miles; we could be picked up by the bus on its return journey. I jumped at the idea, and so I found myself trudging alone with Bryer, whom I hardly knew, for a couple of hours before seeing the wonders of the monastery. Ironically I remember nothing of the mosaics, but Bryer was unforgettable and we became firm friends. He welcomed me with open arms when I came to live in Harborne twenty-three years later. *Joe Munitiz*

### **BRYER AND THE MOVIE STARS**

It was a sticky weekend night in the summer of 1977 in Georgetown, like so many others, but on this occasion the fellows at Dumbarton Oaks had planned a party. Bryer was one of the fellows at DO that year. This party was to take place in the Fellows' Building which was a guest house for visiting scholars but also the place where Fellows ate lunch every day. Directly opposite the Fellows' Building is a mansion, today the residence of the Harvard-appointed Director of Dumbarton Oaks. In 1977 it was the private residence of John Warner, a Republican senator from Virginia and his wife of a few months, Elizabeth Taylor. He was her sixth husband. They had married the winter before and the Fellows were always trying to catch a glimpse of her as they passed the residence on their way to the library at 1703 32nd Street from their apartments on Wisconsin Avenue. Some claimed to have seen her getting in or out of a car. On the evening of the party Bryer decided that it would be a

good idea to invite Liz to the party. He crossed the street, climbed the stairs and rang the bell. We waited in anticipation. She was, to our disappointment, not at home.

Many years later when the mansion had become the home of the Director of Dumbarton Oaks, some of us were shown the basement which still contained remnants of the Elizabeth Taylor days. Indeed, there was a jacuzzi with tiles that could have come from the film set of Anthony and Cleopatra. Had Bryer succeeded in bringing the star to our party, who knows what trajectory Byzantine Studies might have had.

*Ruth Macrides*

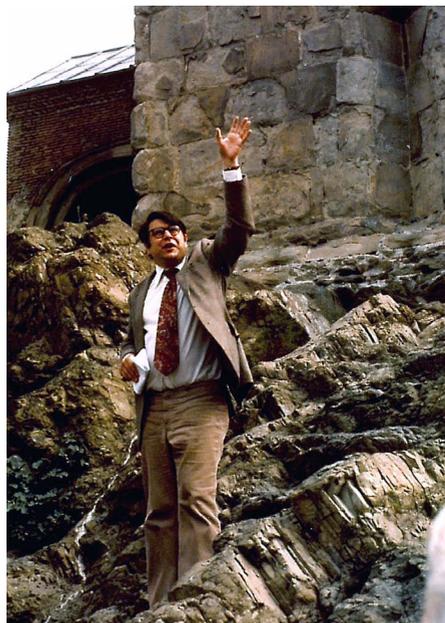
### **BRYER THE CONTEMPLATIVE**

I recall Bryer striding across the campus, agitatedly tugging on his beard, purposefully heading to his next assignment. Was there ever a quieter, more tranquil Bryer, I used to wonder. The answer came at a party at the Bryers' house when my son, then a very young child and left to his own devices, found a fishing rod in a corner and asked Bryer what it was for. I like the idea of a contemplative Bryer, pipe in hand, meditating on a riverbank somewhere. From then on for many years in my household he was referred to not only as the eminent Byzantinist but also as the Fisherman.

*Lucy-Anne Hunt*

### **BRYER AND HIS BLOOD-BROTHER**

In the summer of 1981, intrigued by what we had heard from Bryer about the wonders of Pontos, Jackie and I decided to go there on holiday. (It was then that we first came across local Greek-speaking Muslims, and for this reason it was Bryer who gave rise to my researches on 'Muslim Pontic'.) Bryer supplied us with the names of some local contacts, but the only one we actually got in touch with was Cumhur Odabaşoğlu. Like Bryer, Cumhur was a larger-than-life character. He was in the import-export and travel business in Trebizond. In his former capacity he ran a truck service across the Pontic Alps between Trebizond and Tabriz, while as a travel agent



he had made such an impression on Rose Macaulay that she had transformed him into a character named Mr Odabash in her delicious novel *The Towers of Trebizond* (1956).

Jackie and I knew that Cumhur had accompanied Bryer on some of his explorations in search of abandoned Christian settlements, and he took us to a number of interesting places too. One day, with a broad grin that reduced his eyes to narrow slits, he informed us that Bryer and he were blood-brothers. We asked him how that had happened, and he told us how he and Bryer were walking somewhere in the wilds when Cumhur was bitten on the leg by a poisonous snake. Bryer, like a good boy scout, rolled up Cumhur's trouser-leg, squeezed the wound between his lips, sucked the venom and spat it out. Cumhur reckoned Bryer's rapid reaction had saved his life. At all events, he ever afterwards considered Bryer to be his blood-brother. Their relationship was later consolidated when Bryer became a kind of godfather to Cumhur's granddaughter – an unusual relationship between a Christian and a Muslim that was no doubt facilitated by the already existing blood-brotherhood.

*Peter Mackridge*

## BRYER THE TEACHER

I did a new degree in Medieval Latin and Medieval History; I don't think anyone else ever did it. In my final year one of the two



medieval Latinists went on leave, converting all my exams to assessed essays, so that I ended up writing 35,000 words in that final term in 1970. I was very well looked after on the Latin side by John Wilkes who told me to stop trying to do research. On the History side was a dissertation attached to the Special Subject on 12th-century Art, East and West. (Liz James later read it and told me it was just as well I decided to be a text person.) The main problem then for me was not quality but quantity and I got writer's block alarmingly close to the deadline. Bryer's solution was to take me home to Liz at Crosbie Road, feed me, make me up a bed and set up a desk where I had to write to order. He organised my appendices and illustrations, talked me through the sticking points, and, miraculously, words began to flow. So I had a dissertation and all the Latin extended essays under my belt but I still had a week of exams at the end, including a general medieval history paper with 50 questions, not one of which was on monasticism. Failed, I said to myself. So with nothing to lose I had fun with the translation papers, showing off by including the music for Abelard's *Planctus*, and was pleased to be able to recognise the picture questions on the art papers. When the last was over I was a bit at a loose end. I went to the library. Then I remembered that Bryer was entertaining the Mongols Special Subject (he must have taught two that year) and had asked me. So I walked over to Crosbie

Road, a bit late as I met my friend Ralph on the way, and found that several jugs of Bryer's Mint Drink (the talk of that summer and very many since then) had already been consumed and that the class was seated cross-legged in the garden noisily consuming a feast, hurling sheep bones over their shoulders and spitting apricot stones outside the circle. One vomited carefully outside the circle too, and I realised that a lot of yoghurt had been consumed as well. The evening progressed splendidly. As it grew dark we heard sounds of a Young Conservatives bonfire starting up next door, and Bryer led a chorus of taunts over the hedge. The doorbell rang, back at the house (how did we hear it?) and an innocent Brummie policeman investigating a complaint was confronted by the sight of Bryer, wearing a fez, in full Bryer fettle... Weeks later I came back from Bordesley Abbey where I was digging with Philip Rahtz to get the results. I was plucking up the courage to look for the lists posted on the notice-boards in the Arts Faculty when Bryer appeared, pulled me away from the crowds and walked me over to the Barber saying, 'yes, yes, you got a first, now these Whitting coins are really important, they've just arrived, don't you want to have a look?'

*Margaret Mullett*

## DOING THE MA

I did the MA in Byzantine Studies at Birmingham after a trip to Greece with the BSA's Summer School had convinced me that Byzantium was much more fun than the Classical (I've not changed my mind). I remember going round in a blur of confusion for most of the year. Siriol Davies, whom I saw at Bryer's funeral for the first time in a very long time, said then she had felt the same: she never showed it though! The MA was an interesting experience. Bryer gave us seminars in his office translating Panaretos or he tried to explain Grumel and Byzantine timekeeping or he shared with us his views of luminaries such as 'Old Obbo', Tante H  l  ne (a fierce sort), Uncle Cyril (in Bryer's version, some sort of babe-magnet), Uncle Ihor (lots of languages), and closer to us in time, 'Averil' and 'Robin', and

stories of times at Oxford (I have been paid not to write these down), and two of whom Bryer spoke most fondly, 'Judith' and 'Margaret'. It took me a very long time to work out who all these people were and how they fitted in. This was the thing about conversations with Bryer: it was like a crossword puzzle or a private language; things were never quite explained or spelt out, there were things you were just supposed to know. Bryer might turn up for a class brandishing some agricultural implement and start to explain its use; or he might expect you to attend the Centre seminar translating the thrice-cursed and abhorrent Acts of Iviron; he might challenge you to find out about the more obscure polo-playing khans; or hurl out obscure words and invite you to fit them into an essay ('tappen', for example – get that into an essay on the Grand Komnenoi). He taught me a lot about Byzantium – the more obscure bits anyway – and even more about survival.

*Liz James*

### **AN EARLY PHD**

My story with him is the story of a teacher and student, a mentor and a friend. On 3 January 1975, when I arrived as a doctoral student at the Centre for Byzantine Studies, Birmingham University, he very graciously invited me to his house, introduced me to his wonderful wife Elizabeth and his daughters, and offered me the opportunity to live in his house until I found accommodation. During my first year at the Centre, I was particularly challenged by the workload and my concerns about my ability to do as well as my peers. Bryer and I had many personal conversations where he encouraged me and told me to keep working hard. He assured me my performance would ultimately be reflective of how hard I worked. Bryer became a great friend and mentor to me as I always turned to him to discuss life's challenges and opportunities. I know he took great pride in my successes, as he should. He had an incredible impact on my life. His generosity and friendship overwhelmed me over the years. He became a life-long friend and confidant. At the graduation ceremonies

at Birmingham University in December 1979, Bryer was there and told me privately how proud he was of me. He said, 'You have done well'. When I thanked him for all he had done for me, he said 'All I ever ask you for in return is that you give back to others in need'. It was a basic philosophy that what goes around comes around, and now it was my turn to help others in need.

*Wesam Faraj*

### **LECTURING WITH SLIDES**

I was always puzzled by Bryer's use of slides in his lectures. They always seemed to be the same slides whatever the lecture. In the course of the lecture the slides were from time to time changed. But since he never seemed to notice them behind him or refer to them, I came to regard them as purely wallpaper.

*Robin Cormack*

### **A LECTURE IN OXFORD**

During my first year as a graduate at Oxford I was elected President of the University's Greek Society. Our committee decided to invite Bryer to give us a talk, and he sent us the ambitious title 'The Greeks of the Pontos in Anatolia 1204-1922'. On the very rainy evening of 20 February 1969 Bryer turned up late and flustered at Stathis Gauntlett's room in Oriel. He apologized for not being fully prepared for his talk: he had come to Oxford from Birmingham earlier in the day to visit a friend, hoping to have some time there to complete his preparations, but his friend's ceiling had sprung a leak, and the two men had had to spend the time carrying buckets back and forth.

Stathis and I set off with him for dinner at La Sorbonne, but our trepidation increased when, no sooner having left Stathis's room, Bryer slipped on the wet staircase and just managed to stop himself hurtling down to the bottom. By the time we all reached the recently opened Blue Boar lecture theatre at Christ Church, Stathis and I were very doubtful that the talk would be a success – especially in view of the fact that the talk was to be illustrated with slides. Much to our amazement, however,

Bryer proceeded to give the most brilliant, wide-ranging and well planned talk, using his dripping broly to point at his slides, which were all in the right order, the right way up and the right way round.

My first experience of Bryer was utterly characteristic: the outward impression of a disorganized and eccentric Oxford professor disguised extraordinarily profound erudition and a systematic mind. (Thanks to Stathis Gauntlett, Treasurer of the Greek Society at the time, for providing some important details, though he cannot vouch for the leaking ceiling.)

*Peter Mackridge*

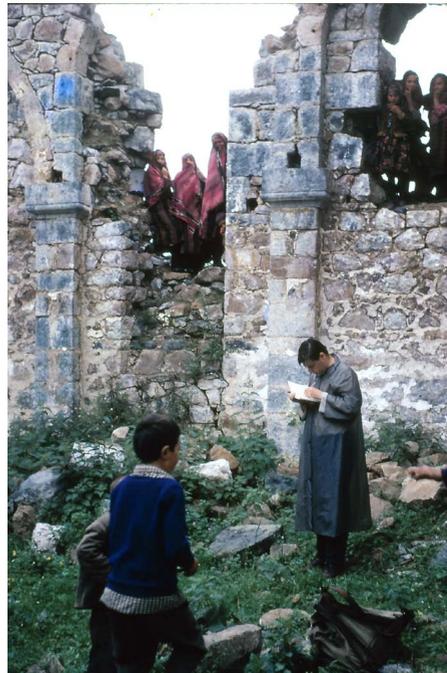
### THE RUNCIMAN LECTURE

Steven Runciman's name occurs from time to time in these anecdotes and indeed he and Bryer were very fond of each other in an undemonstrative British way, so Bryer was extremely happy when King's College London asked him to deliver the annual Runciman Lecture in early 1997. He was still using his faithful typewriter and settled down to produce a lecture which would do justice to the eminent Byzantinist, who was then in his early nineties. In pre-computer days errors and omissions were often corrected by literally cutting and pasting and Bryer, anxious to produce a text worthy of his mentor, went to great trouble to edit and rearrange his ideas, right up to the last minute. It should be said that he rarely lectured from a prepared text, usually preferring to rely on brief headings, but this time he was anxious to leave nothing to chance. Facing a packed lecture-theatre he tackled his presentation with aplomb and held his audience's rapt attention until suddenly, as the hour-long lecture was reaching its climax, he stopped in his tracks. Judith Herrin, who was chairing the event, looked at the clock and saw there were still ten minutes to go. Where was the grand peroration? She addressed her speaker along the lines of 'Is that it?' and a rather shifty-looking Bryer indicated that it was indeed it. Questions were invited and dealt with calmly and authoritatively and then the company adjourned to a convivial reception

in the King's refectory. I had to get back to Birmingham for some reason, so rushed off for the train. Late that evening I managed to get Bryer on the phone and after congratulating him on his lecture, ventured to enquire what had happened at the end. He admitted that he had been cutting and pasting his text up to the last minute and had inadvertently stuck together the last two pages of his lecture, thus finding a blank sheet when he turned over the penultimate page. Shortly after this he acquired his first Amstrad. *Jenny Banks Bryer*

### BRYER AT HOME

Bryer was a devoted father and grandfather but not exactly hands-on. Some of his grandchildren and god-children have vivid memories of the egg-throwing competitions, which he also tried out on students for a while, but I don't think he offered the students his piece de resistance which my then seven-year-old grandson still recalls – being handed an air-rifle and challenged to see how many apples he could shoot down from the tree at the end of the lawn.



Many years earlier Bryer was left in charge of three-year-old Katie while Liz took the older girls out. Bryer put her to bed for a nap but when he returned, some time later, Katie had disappeared. Distraught he searched the house but could find no sign of her. He rushed into the garden and then into the road calling her, at which point the next-door-neighbour suggested he had better call the police. The local constable arrived promptly and took out his notebook: what was Katie wearing? Bryer couldn't remember. Could he describe what she looked like? Katie's father had great difficulty in describing his daughter. How old was she? Bryer's face lit up – 'I'll go and look in the Visitors' Book', he offered. The policeman, who could not know that all family births were recorded meticulously on the back page of Bryer's well-known Visitors' Book, was beginning to look distinctly suspicious. Luckily at that moment the boy next door found her, fast asleep, wrapped in her sheet, having fallen down the side of the bed next to the wall...

*Jenny Banks Bryer*

### **PATERFAMILIAS**

Dad made up games for us to play; the Christmas card game was one that has been enjoyed by many. Dad also enjoyed keeping us entertained when he was given the task of babysitting during the long summer days. He would sit at his typewriter and make lists of things for us to find, and send us off on this treasure hunt, thereby giving himself hours of child-free time. Meanwhile we would be traipsing around Harborne finding random things to bring home to be judged by Dad. I remember a hair from the red setter dog next door, a blade of grass from the Moor Pool bowling green...(this is another story in itself!) Other child-care techniques that Dad used was putting us on the Number 11 outer circular bus at the end of Crosbie Road and paying the driver and telling him not to let us off until we got back to Crosbie Road: that was at least three hours of child-free time he got there!

*Anna Bryer*

### **BRYER EXPLORING**

Dad used to take us exploring in our neighbourhood – through the Harborne bus garage, though the bus drivers yelled at us, round the back of the church yard, across the wasteland and through the Queen Elizabeth hospital to get to the Uni. I have inherited this love of rooting around and exploring the back alleys.

Travelling with Dad could be a source of anxiety: he was a bit unpredictable. On a train journey to his parents' he decided he was desperate for a coffee, though there was no buffet car. At the first station we stopped at he disappeared and when the whistle blew and he had still not returned I bargained with the guard to hold on until he reappeared. He did, eventually (he hadn't got off) and we pulled out. At the next stop he disappeared again and when the whistle blew I knew that I had no more bargaining power. As the train pulled out he appeared on the platform with a coffee in either hand. I had some explaining to do when I arrived without him.

When we travelled by car, his role was to sit beside Mum and map read and keep us quiet with stories about our neighbour's dog, Dusty, and the tiger that lived under the brick seat



he had made in the garden. He would tire of this and when we quarrelled (space was tight in a pea-green mini van and there were three of us), he would whack the nearest child, indiscriminately. This all added to the excitement.

Our pocket money and other handouts were not straightforward. The cost of a packet of smarties every week, plus extra for inflation on some sliding scale, plus a bonus for room cleaning. Then it became a guinea (one pound and one shilling). His grandchildren appreciated the £123.45 they got for their birthdays from him and Jenny.

Sometimes he would do a welcoming talk at events at the Barber Institute. We would go along to see him spin the statue at the foot of the stairs – so cheeky! *Theodora Bryer*

### ENTERTAINING THE MCGANN STEP-KIDS

I got married in the summer of 1979 and in the summer of 1980 we decided to take the youngest step-children, Liz and Mike, to the Ionian islands. We flew from England so we visited English friends on the way including Bryer. He entertained us royally of course, and they had heard a lot about him: they thought it was odd that Bryer was the man and Ruskin the rabbit. The first event was competitive egg-throwing over the house from the garden into Crosbie Road. We were told that the eggs wouldn't break if we got them cleanly over the house. (Debris under the wisteria and in the street suggested otherwise.) After egg-throwing, Bryer produced a pop-gun and lined the kids up on the lawn. (His daughter Anna reports that this was the air rifle that he had as a child; he used to shoot the daffodils down in the garden when his mum asked him to pick them for the house.) He was part disgusted, part relieved that kids brought up in war-torn Belfast should have been such bad shots.

*Margaret Mullett*

### THE LODGER'S TALE

I first met my great friend Bryer in the spring of 1996 when, having been offered a lectureship

at the University, I was looking to rent a room nearby. Thus it was that I approached the delightful, red-brick house in Crosbie Road, its front garlanded with flowering wisteria, the home of the great Byzantinist. In that first meeting with the distinguished, bearded figure, rather to my surprise, there was no mention of rent. Instead I was given a rigorous academic interview. In order to qualify as a lodger, I was grilled about my performance in the Cambridge tripos: and did I agree with certain attributions of panel paintings in the Barber Institute? I was told that the most valuable objects in the house were the wooden spoons hand-crafted by artisans in Trebizond and that on no account must I use them; no such restrictions on the fine Victorian silver which was used every day and bunged in the dish washer.

Gradually my status rose from that of lodger to (as I was told) under-butler, working closely with Felix, the loyal and somewhat portly tabby cat to whom Bryer was devoted. My main and happy task in this new role was to identify and uncork various excellent bottles and ensure that glasses were charged among the assembled company – and at Crosbie Road a company was always assembled.

There was a sadness in the house when I arrived, the year after Liz's death, which had brought to a close, too soon, a long and happy chapter in his life. But even as he grieved, Bryer was the best of company. We began a friendship which continued through many always joyful and often bibulous evenings, with conversations that ranged across every continent and century, from East to West and from high to low, often punctuated by the search for some rare, leather-bound, illustrated volume which would be brought to the dining table in triumph to round off a point.

When special guests were expected, Bryer would take to the kitchen for a whole day, producing such memorable dishes as Sassenach Cullen Skink, a bright yellow concoction served in a vast Victorian tureen. Even breakfast came with an academic bibliography: as I ate my cereals one day, for example, Bryer handed me an offprint of his

memorable peer-reviewed essay 'A Short Contribution to the History of Porridge,' expecting a full and immediate critique. On another occasion, I had missed the dinner but arrived the next morning to find Bryer still asleep and the Orthodox Primate of the All the Russias, in regalia, attempting unsuccessfully to operate the toaster. Sometimes the postman would bring large packages from Eastern Europe, which resembled a small nuclear missile. Each contained a whole salami, sent by an elderly lady admirer of Bryer's in Poland. His circle of friends was as extensive and global as it was warm and intimate.

As we surely all remember, Bryer was one of the great conversationalists: he was not merely a raconteur: rather, he took delight in the people he met, people of all stripes. With skill and charm he would find out what made people tick, whether it was Mrs G, the home help, or some luminary nominated for an honorary degree. As University Orator, Bryer got to the heart of his subjects: he struck up such a rapport with John Bratby, painter of the Kitchen Sink School, that several works were presented to the University, now aptly shown in the faculty bar.

The historian in Bryer was always balanced by the aesthete. He had a collector's instinct and a particular love of the lyrical watercolorist David Cox, Harborne's local boy. One day at an auction his sharp eye picked out a drawing that would later cause a small sensation at Yale University. By an anonymous artist around 1800, the drawing shows the Ottoman arms dump at the Parthenon – a large, ungainly shed which eventually blew up, damaging the ruins. Bryer used this image as the introductory slide for a lecture to the Hellenic Society at Yale University. He teasingly suggested that if the Parthenon were to be restored correctly, the Elgin marbles should stay in London, but the arms dump should be lovingly reconstructed. After the talk, as he was pursued by irate Greek-Americans, we whisked Bryer off to an undisclosed location, where happily he was able to enjoy a substantial dinner unmolested. Bryer seemed to have known or met everyone: the Queen Mother, in her 90s, invited him to

lunch, and remembered from 1937 a dodgy handrail at the Barber which has still not been fixed; when Jonathan Aitken was disgraced, the BBC news showed an student photograph of him at Balliol with – who else? – a svelte and youthful Bryer in black tie. From the Duke of Buccleugh came the tale of a Leonardo hidden for safekeeping in the Landrover – safe, at least, until the Landrover was stolen.

There were trips to Greece, Turkey, Bulgaria and Albania, spells at Dumbarton Oaks, and cruises in the Mediterranean with Bryer as an unparalleled guide but he was never as happy as when in the beautiful house and garden on Crosbie Road that he and Liz had purchased in the late 1960s. A beloved home for the three girls as they grew up, it was a source of unending delight for Bryer, and for me as a lodger in the Trevelyan Room. In recent years, in happy partnership with Jenny, Bryer added the Orchard and the magnificent Dodonium, home to a marvellous Victorian roundel that he had somehow salvaged from a building site, showing the extinct bird. Bryer loved to recount that the land, which he acquired from the diocese, had thus had only two freehold owners, St Chad and himself.

Bryer was fortunate indeed to share an Indian summer with Jenny, involving much travel, delight and merriment; and when his health declined latterly, he was luckier still to have her as the most devoted of carers. We all owe thanks to Jenny and to Theo, Anna and Katie for working so hard to give Bryer every imaginable comfort in his twilight years.

I like to imagine Bryer, today, in a better place, as the host of some celestial high table, a freshly laundered linen napkin tucked into his collar, surrounded by family and friends. I see him presiding over a magnificent platter of heavenly cheeses from the New Deli in the sky: in hand is a fine Burgundy from an Elysian vineyard. Perhaps St Chad is there at his side, peeling an apple: either way, in my vision, Bryer is in his element – discoursing on Theophanes the Greek and the foibles of Tory politicians, suddenly cross-examining a shy guest from Turkey about the new traffic systems of Trebizond; or producing an

anecdote of some 18<sup>th</sup>-century Bryer who flew the flag of the British Empire in far-flung parts. Every time we reach for the cheeseboard, hear a finely turned phrase, or feel the spine of a well-bound book, let us take a moment to remember and celebrate our dear friend, the always splendid, occasionally preposterous, much loved and much missed Anthony Applemore Mornington Bryer.

*Tim Barringer*

### **BRYER ON WHEELS**

I realised that Bryer had a problem with wheels when we disembarked in Cyprus from a Swan cruise. He, as ever, was desperate to visit as many Byzantine churches as possible during what would be a very short stop. His daughter Katie resourcefully found a shop that hired out bicycles so a small group of intrepid travellers took to the road and guided by Bryer wobbled along to the first church. As we approached our destination, an anxious voice was heard enquiring 'How do you get off?' Several of us tried to demonstrate, but the only way he could manage was to fall off into the grass at the roadside. This process was repeated several times until all our visits had been accomplished and we headed back to the shop to return our bicycles. This time there was no convenient grass verge so Bryer made a spectacular dive into the shop forecourt, narrowly missing a row of bikes for other waiting customers, who gazed in horror as a dishevelled figure arose from a tangle of saddles and handlebars and marched with dignity back to the waiting ship. I think that was the last time he ventured out on two wheels.

His career as a motorist was even more inglorious. During National Service he had ignored the opportunity for driving lessons as, being adjutant in charge of his division's payroll, he was driven to the local bank by a batman. Once arrived in Birmingham, with no batman and a busy wife, he decided the time had come to learn to drive. He enrolled at the noted British School of Motoring for a course of lessons. His first lesson ended with the car marooned on a roundabout and the second with his driving into a hedge. When he

appeared for the third lesson, the instructor, with tears in his eyes, begged him to withdraw from further lessons, as BSM's advertisements boasted that 95% of their candidates passed the driving test at the first attempt and in his opinion Bryer, however many times he took the test, would have no hope of passing. So Bryer's motoring career was sacrificed to BSM statistics.

*Jenny Banks Bryer*

### **SWAN SONGS**

Travelling with Dad was always off piste; we never did normal holidays; it was always in search of a lost monastery or ruin. Dad got so excited and then he would make us pose under an icon or by a mosaic for the photo. It was my 21<sup>st</sup> birthday and we were on a Swan cruise and we had had a big grand night dining with the captain with speeches and toasts and a lot of drink. I was on deck a bit later after the meal with some of the younger people and I bumped into Dad wandering around in his socks, I asked him where his shoes were and he told me that he had thrown them overboard. The following day we were both rather hungover but Dad insisted on us going up the steep lanes of Thessalonike into a quiet suburb where we found a lovely little church; we had to knock on doors to find the old lady who had a key and she then found a shawl to cover my head. I asked Dad why he had thrown his shoes overboard (he spent the rest of the cruise in his slippers); he thought they were his old shoes, so it was just extra luggage to carry home. In fact Mum had bought him a new pair just before the cruise as his old ones were in need of replacing. He had thrown a brand new pair of Doc Marten shoes into Thessalonike harbour. Dad didn't seem to notice domestic things like shoes or socks, as long as they were Doc Marten and red! Mum was understandably cross!

Another thing I remember about being on the cruise with Dad was when he was lecturing on the move, walking through a small village square, we came upon a procession of people with a small boy on a donkey. Dad was very excited to announce to the crowd of Swan guests he had in tow that this boy was about



to go for his circumcision. He then stuffed money into the boy's pocket and encouraged everyone to do the same. He stood up on the edge of the fountain in the square to lecture on the surrounding buildings, and dropped his still lit pipe into the top pocket of his jacket, I noticed a few minutes later that his pocket was smoking gently, I had to jump up and smack the fire out, 'Dad, your pocket is on fire!' This happened quite often so it wasn't a big event for us, but the Swan guests thought it was hilarious.

*Anna Bryer*

### **THE INTERNATIONAL BYZANTINIST**

I will highlight just a few things for you out of many: obviously the symposia, the parties at 33 Crosbie Road and the champagne bus. But also the inclusiveness: Bryer did not have any boundaries about e.g. when Byzantium began, and Alan and I were made welcome from the beginning even though we did not then think of ourselves as Byzantinists. I learned so

much from Bryer, the basics about Byzantium, but also his fantastic enthusiasm and flair. Suddenly meeting him in Trebizond when I was lecturing in the early 1990s on a Swan Hellenic - there he was! And ladies on the cruise (pax in Bryer's terms) recognised him and told the story of being on an earlier cruise with him when his pipe caught fire in his pocket... I learned all I knew about Trebizond and the crypto-Christians marching up the main street in the nineteenth century, when Russia and the Ottomans were making common cause, from Bryer. But he never ever made me feel that he knew more than I did, which of course he did. He was also immensely respectful of other scholars, and basically modest, despite his showmanship ('le boyscoutisme', according to Ahrweiler). Early 1980s and founding the SPBS (1983, I believe). I argued for the model of the Roman Society and Bryer accepted it, and the result was the SPBS, with me as chair and Bryer as secretary (that arrangement was typical

Bryer), Later I brought in John Smedley as our publisher and Bryer totally supported that. A vivid memory is of when he and I went to an intercongress meeting of the AIEB at Ouranopolis, just outside Mt Athos (in 1983, preparing the Washington congress). The memory is seeing Zinaida Udalcova (Soviet Byz boss) and Ružena Dostalova (minder for our friends the Czech Byzantinists like Vladimir Vavřinek) bathing in the sea in their massive costumes (especially Udalcova). Bryer bathed too, and Johannes Irmscher, East German Byz boss, was also there though not bathing. Bryer knew all these people, though I didn't at the time, but the bathing made the most vivid impression. *Averil Cameron*

### **BRYER THE MARRIAGE BROKER**

In 1985 I visited Turkey with Bryer, Liz and a group of adventurous tourists. After Trebizond and some other sites, we went up to a summer village in the yayla, where we were taken out riding. The sight of the young men riding over the crest of the hill was like something out of a Western. As the youngest member of the party, I was befriended by the young people in the house. One evening at dinner, I became uncomfortably aware that Bryer appeared to be discussing my marriageability with the elders. He suddenly asked me what my father did for a living and how much he earned. After some rough calculations, he translated this into numbers of sheep and my likely dowry. This created a good impression and I could see that the eldest son of the family was being teased about his forthcoming nuptials. On the last day when we had boarded the bus to leave, the eldest son got onto the bus and came up to me: for a second I thought I was going to have to stay, but he had only come to say goodbye. Later Bryer asked me, with a serious face, how my parents would have reacted, had he returned home without me. He also later admitted that we weren't supposed to have gone to that village at all - there had been a mistake. While I know the winter quarters were less romantic, that summer village remains one of the most beautiful places I've ever seen. *Siriol Davies*

### **BRYER IN SCOTLAND**

Although I am not a Byzantinist, I owe Bryer debts of gratitude for many things, not least his encouragement to write my article 'Polis to Medina' which still attracts interest more than thirty years after publication, but a summer holiday with the Bryers at their country retreat is certainly another.

There are many large Victorian houses on the west coast of Scotland but none larger or more imposing than Ardtornish in Morvern just north of the Isle of Mull. The scale is vast and it makes Gormenghast look like a modest country cottage. The flat the family were staying in, one of a dozen in the building, was the size of a normal country house; on misty mornings, of which there are many in the western highlands, even in August, it was hard to see the other end of the bedroom, never mind anything else. The chatelaine of this stupendous pile was the redoubtable Faith Raven who was the aunt of Bryer's wife Liz and once we all went up to her flat, high in the steep gable, to be regaled of stories of Ardtornish days of old.

Days were organised according to a well-practised routine which allowed first-time guests, like us, to slot in easily. Until midday everyone was free to do as they wished, stroll in the policies (gardens) of the great house, a trip to the little village of Lochaline which lay beyond the gates of the estate. At noon everyone gathered with their picnic lunches and the day's expedition would set off. Sometimes it would be along the gentle wooded margins of the Sound of Mull, perhaps as far as Drimnin across the water from Tobermory. On other days it could be the high bleak plateau of the Table of Lorne. On days when Bryer himself did not feel like anything too strenuous he would go fly-fishing in the clear fast-flowing waters of the river which passed through the estate. Challenged by sensitive visitors who were critical of this apparent interest in blood sport, he would simply reply that it did not do him any harm and it did not harm the fish either, since, like most fishermen, he was never known to catch anything.

Evening meals were always communal affairs,

cooked socially and taken in the huge dining room. Here there was a strict hierarchy of repasts. On the first night there was 'hightum' with fine wines, best china and proper linen napkins. The next night was 'tightum' where the wines were more modest and the atmosphere less formal. Finally on the third night there was 'scrub' where beer and cider were drunk and the napkins were no more than kitchen-roll. Then the whole wonderful cycle was repeated. I have no idea where this scheme came from, probably some obscure work of 18th-century English literature which only Bryer had ever read, but it was all part of the wonderful, relaxed and welcoming hospitality offered by Bryer, Liz and their children.

Bryer had so many talents, warmth, encouragement, humour and a profound love of all things Byzantine, but West Highland hospitality was another that I and my family will always remember. What a great man!

*Hugh Kennedy*

### **BRYER THE PATRON**

Bryer was the external examiner for my PhD. I knew him before then through the Byzantine Symposium, but not well. As any recent PhD graduate can tell you, your external examiner is a vital source of references for years to come, and so you soon learn to know them better (or at least learn to be nicer to them) as you

apply for every job going. In 1995 I had to turn to Bryer - again - to ask for a reference when I applied for a post at Warwick. The expected reply came back: 'Of course. Usual terms apply'. The usual terms had been made clear at the first request: '10% of the first year's salary'.

On this occasion I got the job; so now was the time to meet the conditions. 1995 was the year of the London Symposium, *Through the Looking Glass*, so I sought to buy off Bryer and all my other referees by taking them to the Afghan restaurant in Marylebone. I thought it was suitably exotic, but it turned out to be a regular haunt for Bryer and all those who attended meetings at the British Academy. Bryer upped the ante by inviting Sir Steven Runciman to the dinner, and spent an enjoyable evening watching me try to fend off Sir Steven's close attentions. At 92, Runciman still had a wandering eye (and hand), and Bryer knew it; as the *Telegraph's* obituary put it, he was 'a celebrated aesthete... he remained a bachelor'. I have read Runciman's *Traveller's Alphabet*, and Mino Dinshaw's biography of Runciman, but suffice to say that neither account has as much, or as intimate, detail about Queen Marie of Romania and her son Michael, or Sibelius, as Runciman's reminiscences that evening. Bryer's eyes twinkled throughout. This was clearly just the encounter he had hoped to manufacture.



The *Traveller's Alphabet* is subtitled 'Partial Memoirs', and Bryer was always keen that we write *Runciman's Alternative Alphabet*, to include the more entertaining stories that for some unfathomable reason, never made it into print.

Bryer remains an inspiration: I now continue his legacy, and have the same 10% clause in all my references. *Antony Eastmond*

### **BRYER AND BOOKS**

Bryer was a bibliophile but hardly a great reader. He liked journals preferably full of articles by friends, colleagues and ex-students and whenever possible by himself. These he always read avidly. His collection began as far as we can tell in 1950 when, as curator of the Applemore Museum (founder Anthony Bryer) he subscribed to *The Numismatist* and *The Archaeological Newsletter*. Journals of all kinds arrived by every post for most of the rest of his life and were read often over breakfast when he had finished the obituaries in *The Times* and later *The Independent*.

Fiction he appreciated less. He whiled away his RAF National Service on the Isle of Man reading Proust in translation from end to end and, as a university tutor of mine remarked, once you have read Proust there doesn't seem much point in reading any more novels. He distrusted narrative which explains why he rather enjoyed *Tristram Shandy*. He liked Rose Macaulay's *The Towers of Trebizond* because it contained lots of references to places and people he knew, but I doubt if he followed the plot. Various unsuccessful attempts were made to interest him in the Brontës. When we married I insisted on my own work-space and he kindly agreed to a loft-conversion which provided me with a spacious study – but my quips about the mad wife in the attic fell on deaf ears as he hadn't read *Jane Eyre*. We took *Wuthering Heights* to Albania on a British Council lecture tour, but he abandoned it in the Hotel Daijti in Tirana, where I hope it was found by some more appreciative Albanian reader. *Jenny Banks Bryer*

### **BRYER THE MENTOR**

There is a sad tale of how Bryer got me a travel grant to attend a conference in Venice (which was very interesting) and insisted that I accompany him and Michael Rogers to the Armenian monastery of St. Lazaros on an island off Venice to look at medieval Armenian manuscripts. We duly took the vaporetto and walked up to the gate. The monks took one look at me and said, 'No way.' So Bryer and Michael left me outside with absolutely nothing to do while they went in to examine the beautiful illuminated texts ... We should have known! Today Trip Advisor advertises visits to the monastery, and a note posted by a female visitor reports that the tour was interesting and worth the 2 hour wait. So perhaps waiting outside the monastery is still compulsory though women are now allowed in. *Judith Herrin*

### **BRYER, THEY ARE ALL MAD**

When I was getting to the end of my three-year PhD scholarship, Bryer decided that I should go to Belfast to build up Byzantine Studies there. George Huxley had already created the post and put a First Arts course through Faculty and (I believe) had failed to persuade Judith Herrin to join him. So I was preinterviewed at the Symposium, interviewed in Belfast at Easter (I met my first Orange march on the way down from the airport) and was offered the job. Bryer was afraid I wasn't going to accept, and turned up on my doorstep in Oxford early in the morning to twist my arm. (Just as well, there were NO Byz jobs the following year or for several years). So I accepted, went off to Greece for the summer and arrived at the last moment to join the Greek department. I was lonely and freezing cold (all the wrong clothes), baffled by the students' accents and their commitment to Ulster Tea instead of lectures at 5 pm, and bemused by my kindly welcome by the department of elderly hellenists. I rang Bryer up. 'Bryer, they are all mad. One of them spends his time preaching all over the world and one told me about a skip at the end of the

street full of nuts and bolts and bits of wood. They are totally mad. There was a pause at the end of the line, and I could just see those shrewd blue eyes as the mild voice replied, 'but we like eccentrics, don't we?'

*Margaret Mullett*

### **BRYER AND ROYALTY**

Steven Runciman, a good friend of the late Queen Mother, hosted an annual lunch-party for her at the Athenaeum, to which he would invite a selection of guests she might find amusing. In 1997 the lot fell to Bryer and he duly appeared and found himself seated beside the 97-year-old guest of honour. Her Majesty confided that she was delighted to meet someone from Birmingham as she wanted to learn how to speak with a Birmingham accent to surprise her chauffeur. Bryer (whose accent could hardly have been recognised as Birmingham) gallantly agreed, explaining that the secret was to sound surprised, with an upward intonation while holding your nose. They rehearsed "yow aw roight chowffeur?" as they descended in the club's creaking lift. Sir Steven and Bryer stood on the steps of the Athenaeum as the royal Daimler pulled away and saw the chauffeur's head whip round in alarm as his royal passenger leaned forward holding her nose and whispered something in his ear... Later, in a thank-you letter to Steven Runciman, the Queen Mother said how she had much enjoyed the company of Professor Bryer, noting his 'gentle and perceptive blue eyes behind all that hair.'

Bryer's only other encounter with - this time - minor royalty happened in Windsor Castle some years later. A friend of ours was staying there while her husband went on an official visit with a royal party. We went to have tea with her and she arranged a behind-the-scenes tour of some parts of the castle not usually open to visitors. As we walked down one of the galleries, Bryer spied an interesting-looking map down an adjoining corridor and set off to inspect this curiosity. We went on, but suddenly heard a volley of barks and turned back to see Bryer emerging at high speed pursued by a quartet of indignant corgis

and followed some way behind by a flustered lady-in-waiting. That pair of red socks was never the same again. *Jenny Banks Bryer*

### **RED SOCKS**

Bryer's red socks became legendary. At his funeral many of those attending wore red socks in memoriam. Indeed, after the event a paragraph appeared in, I believe, *The Times* reporting that sales of red socks had mysteriously jumped by 11%. Although John Lewis put this down to Jeremy Corbyn's wearing a pair during his conference speech, we know better! Bryer's socks accompanied him on many adventures. On one of his many Swan cruises he became friendly with one of his fellow lecturers, the late comedian Frankie Howerd. One evening, after a very good dinner, leaning on the ship's rail gazing at the Aegean, Frankie threw his shoes overboard and dared Bryer to follow suit. Always game, Bryer hurled his shoes into the sea, remembering too late that they were his only pair. The



Swan passengers had considerable exposure to Bryer's socks until Anna, his daughter, pointed out that he could wear his bedroom slippers for the duration of the cruise. On another occasion we were travelling in Syria and Turkey and were, in those happier times, able to visit the monasteries of the Turabdin. At Mar Gabriel we were introduced to the abbot. He and Bryer eyed each other as we walked down the cloister - and realised that they were wearing identical socks! A lively conversation then ensued as to the best place

to buy red socks, Bryer recommending the Sock Shop at Euston while the well-travelled abbot preferred an outlet in Sweden.

*Jenny Banks Bryer*

### **BRYER AND FOOD**

We once went to a new French restaurant in Harborne. On arrival Bryer noticed that the security man standing outside was wearing a uniform with the tag 'St John's Ambulance Brigade'. Bryer asked: 'Is the food that bad?'

*Robin Cormack*

### **SELF-CATERING**

Just after Mum died I was living nearby and Dad invited me for supper. He loved potato salad so had served this up; as I bit into the potato I realised it was raw. 'Dad, you didn't cook the potatoes!' I said. 'Oh, it said salad potatoes on the packet.' 'You still have to cook them, Dad!'

*Anna Bryer*

### **THE BUCKLAND DINING CLUB**

One of Bryer's lifelong interests was food, and he was the Honorary Secretary of the Buckland Dining Club, so named after William Buckland, the Georgian eccentric whose mission it was to eat a portion of every animal in the world that was eatable (if not actually edible). The club met twice a year in Birmingham, often in the Staff Club of the University, and Bryer was never happier than when he was sourcing materials for the latest Buckland Club extravaganza.

*Stephen Hill*



### **SYMPOSIUM FEASTS AT UNIVERSITY HOUSE**

At the beginning of our hosting his conferences and their conference dinners, Bryer would invite me to his house for dinner, where his wife would cook a domestic edition of what he would like me to scale up for the Conference Dinner itself. Armed with this information and example, I consulted with my cook so that she could try to copy it. Usually with success! A slightly less satisfactory item I do remember on one occasion, was the last on the menu. This was apparently Byzantine chewing gum, of which Bryer was especially proud, even though it had the effect of sticking everyone's teeth firmly together! I seem to remember that a very large amount of Veuve du Vernay was ordered for one dinner, and it was amazing that they managed to consume it all. But all the dinners were marked by varying outbursts of exuberance – which Bryer happily remarked upon when we met him by chance in the restaurant of the Edinburgh museum. Bryer's table was behind a pillar, so we didn't at first see him, but we did note a pair of legs with red socks – which prompted us to investigate further, and lo, of course it was Bryer! Finally, for interest, there was a novel event. After one dinner, the delegates went to the Barling lecture room in University House, where Bryer had organised a demonstration of 'Greek fire', directed against paper boats floating in tubs of water. Overall, the annual Byzantine conference delegates were, I thought, both eccentric and entertaining, - good natured and

great fun – and very appreciative of our efforts (as Bryer certainly was). And, of course, I will always remember his exuberance and sheer enthusiasm.

*Sylvia Butterworth*

## TRAVELS WITH BRYER (AND AUNT DOT)

Bryer and Liz had become my friends not long after they came to Birmingham, where I was a postgraduate working on *Domesday Book*; and I had been privileged to become the god-mother of their second daughter, Anna, in 1966. Thus, when Bryer needed a measure-holder for part of his 1967 summer research trip to Trebizond, I was fortunate enough to be able to accompany him. In 1966, I had taken up a five-year post teaching mediaeval and economic history in Cambridge, and whilst I knew something of Western European mediaeval history after 800, I knew nothing of Byzantine history (outside the volumes of the old *Cambridge Medieval History*), yet, in Cambridge, was required to teach history from Diocletian onwards. I therefore hoped that, with the common base of an interest in medieval architecture and agrarian practices, I might catch some of Bryer's infectious enthusiasm for Byzantium and a smattering of Bryer's outstanding ability to pass on his keenness for this huge subject.

Once out in Trebizond (and the journey out took five days: by boat, three days of student train across Europe – no sleepers – and, finally, small plane from Istanbul to Trebizond – it had 'with radar' painted in wobbly letters on it), Bryer needed to explore the city again and check up on and re-measure Byzantine remains and other favourite buildings. Other aims were to diagnose, on the ground, inland and along the coast, fortifications known only from records and to scour the ground for unknown watch-towers. Then, there were the great buildings Bryer wished to visit or revisit: the monasteries of Vazelon, Peresteira and Soumela. A great number of notes, measurements, and films quickly accumulated. One of the easier expeditions, on the face of it, was the one to Vazelon, the monastery of

St John, the worthy Forerunner and Baptist. Built on the cliff-face of Mt Zaboulon, the monastery overlooks the Pyxites valley in the bandon of Matzouka, some 35 miles south of Trebizond. In 1967, the nearest road was not tarmacked, but of beaten soils and stones: quite wide, nearly wide enough for the bus to enable a lorry to pass by, but not wide enough for this to be done without one of them being within four inches of the unsupported edge and thus, from the passengers' viewpoint, poised over the valley floor a couple of hundred feet or so below, on which a few lorries and the odd bus rested, nose-down, at intervals. I embarrassed Bryer, the seasoned traveller, by squawking protests at the bus driver's continual conversations, head turned backwards, with the passengers behind.

We left the bus at a little roadside eatery, asked if we could leave our rucksacks there till we returned for lunch, and set out cross-country, downhill at first into the valley bottom, through patches of hazelnut and scrub, interspersed with small fertile patches where maize was growing. There was no path, only small beaten tracks leading zig-zag between maize patches. Then came the steep slopes and the conifers, with a goat path of old smooth stone, complete with goats with dark gleaming coats, a tiny stone bridge, and a clear stream to follow for a while. Then we struck off upwards through dense conifers to where we thought the monastery lay and, coming to a small clearing, saw it high up and off to the left. With a little effort, we were up and under it, with the ruins and the rock face on which it was built directly above us. In that position, photographs, let alone measurements, were out of the question. The first obstacle to access was an external stone staircase, nine-tenths collapsed, but just about navigable if one were flat against the wall, but the lowest windows of the next floor were still inaccessible without ladders. A few dead conifers gave inspiration; and we managed to hoist a fallen one up close to the monastery face, and climb up into the monastery by using the small dead spurs, albeit friable, as footholds. Perhaps this was somewhat reckless, but Bryer was the historian

of Trebizond: and I was only at Vazelon once. It proved easier to get along a rock ledge into the separate, partly-destroyed, much earlier 13<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup>-century small barrel-vaulted apsidal chapel of St Elias, measure it, and look down on the precipitous drop beneath.

Although unable to get to the highest existing floor of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century buildings, we returned quite satisfied, stopping only to drink at the stream, and reaching the wayside eatery late in the afternoon. There we were disappointed to find a single stuffed tomato and no tea – or stronger – available and an uncharacteristically cool reception. However, a bus was coming, and we returned to Trebizond looking forward to a well-earned lunch-cum-supper. But, at the Hotel Yeşil Yurt in the city square, central to Rose Macaulay's book - and to the Bryers when in Trebizond - we were awaited by a member of the police force, and taken immediately to the police station for questioning.

There we were asked if we could show anything to convince the authorities that we were respectable tourists. At that time, tourists were virtually unknown in Trebizond, and certainly the people in the villages of the hinterland could not at all comprehend that anyone might spend their savings to travel from the furthest western extremity of Europe in order to see their village or their valley, but they were usually welcoming, if incredulous. I never quite ascertained or indeed dared ask if we were now suspected of spying (it was quite common, apparently, around the Black Sea in 1967, as in Rose Macaulay's *Towers of Trebizond*) or, of simply being British historians taking photographs. But Bryer was able to cite as referee his great former contact Cumhur Odabaşioğlu: Trebizond entrepreneur and charitable donor, who also featured as the helpful young man in *Towers of Trebizond*. The inspector duly sent out for the man quoted and we waited until eventually an active middle-aged man was duly brought in to sit behind the table next to the inspector on the other side of the room. He came in without signs of recognition, and I had no means of knowing whether this man remembered Bryer,

wished to remember Bryer, or was indeed the right man. Pointing to Bryer, the inspector asked: 'Is this man a friend of yours? Do you know him?'

The man looked at Bryer and, banging his fist hard upon the table, asserted 'No! He is not a friend of mine!' Then came a silence in which there was time to think that the chance was now strong of seeing the inside of a Turkish prison. The man repeated severely 'No, this man is not my friend': another pregnant pause. Then he flung both his arms widely and claimed joyfully 'He is my brother!' There followed laughing embraces between Bryer and Cumhur. For Bryer and his friends, the bonds were strong indeed.

Several other of the 1967 sallies turned out to be hairier and even scarier than the Vazelon episode: the farewell to the Santa valley from its head-man consisted of some fun shots from his pistol whistling close to our ears. On one mountain path, the only track up to the yayla and into the next valley was, unknown to us, just being cleared of large fallen rock and was ready primed with explosives when we were, cause unexplained, strongly 'persuaded' to dally a few minutes. Shortly after the visit to the police-station, the first Hellenic cruise into the Black Sea came into Trebizond and whilst Mortimer Wheeler and Bryer harangued the passengers about the castle in Trebizond, I was detailed to select a sympathetic 'cruiser' to take all Bryer's films on board back to England out of harm's way, and post them to Liz. (I selected the only young person on the cruise, who was accompanying her mother and looked very bored, and the films arrived safely.) The worst was set at night in the mountains above Van, not far from the site of the Battle of Manzikert, and involved a drunken lieutenant in charge of six armed soldiers in a recently de-militarized zone. Yet, possibly the most real danger came from the trek to Peresteira, when, surrounded by thick cloud on the precipitous citadel, soaked with rain and cold, we resorted to eating a small sardine-size tin of rusty iron rations, once chocolate, now hard, grey and disgusting, saved from Bryer's National Service days at least nine years before.

Yet, exactly as I had hoped, fired by this adrenalin-fuelled introduction to its historic buildings and landscapes, I at last gained some feel for Byzantium: the slides I took back from those four exciting weeks, led, a year later, to a group of my historical geography students from Cambridge going to the Santa valley and gathering further data for Bryer; and, four years later, I put on a very popular first year option on Byzantium in the Leeds History department. 11 years later, Bryer gave the speech for me at my wedding (my father being no longer alive) and the following year became a loyal god-parent of my daughter.

This outsider's view of part of Bryer's 1967 expedition does illustrate some of the practical difficulties Bryer encountered when labouring at the rock-face of his research, and the friendships he rightly inspired and gave back many-fold.

*Sally Harvey*

## HOW WE WERE MAROONED AT FAKAS

The trouble with Turkish travel stories involving Bryer is that one midnight swim, one dropping of watermelons off roofs, one village drunk out of Buzbag tends to fade into another....but in the summer of 1972 I finally got to join Bryer

on one of those field expeditions about which I'd heard so much. (Bryer riding over the Pontic Alps shouting *Thalatta, thalatta*, Bryer climbing up to the precipitous castles high on the yayla, Bryer using his nautical skills in the Black Sea and so on). This time the expedition was to Paphlagonia because Jim Crow was writing his dissertation on the region, and the team foregathered in dusty Çorum: three oldies (we thought): Bryer, Maurice Byrne the physicist who reconstructed Greek Fire in between importing Pontic orchids for his Leamington garden and putting on an opera every year for his birthday, and Sally Harvey, the Domesday expert, in little black dress and garden party hat. There were three of us young'uns too: Crow, me, and an Oxford history undergraduate called Michael Trend who played the patriarch with an enormous beard made from his own hair in Bryer's reconstruction of the *De Cerimoniis*. We covered a lot of ground on the expedition, made the acquaintance of the home of the Komnenoi at Kastamonu, consumed a lot of Efes beer, dark and light, read a shared copy of Vryonis's new book on Anatolia. Two episodes are particularly memorable. One was the heroic ascent of Amasya. While three of



us were detailed to do some rather pedestrian measurement-checking, the other three went straight up the walls, including Sally, who straightened her hat, tucked her frock into her knickers and went valiantly upwards. The ground party was awed. The other episode was when we made it to the coast and planned to sail westwards from Inebolu to Amasra. The village was called Fakas, and it became very clear that the Black Sea was not going to allow us to set sail for days: there was a high sea and all the boats were drawn up on the shore on rollers. We went back to the village and found accommodation, one room for the oldies, one for the young'uns. The first day we ate them out of food, the second drank them out of raki (the great equestrian Sally did manage to commandeer some horse-meat). On the third morning the winds abated and we took ship out of Fakas. But not before Bryer had entertained us by inventing a board-game entitled Turkish General Elections which we played enthusiastically until we were finally liberated...

*Margaret Mullett*

## **WITH BRYER IN PAPHLAGONIA AND TREBIZOND, 1972**

Why this town? It was where we were meant to meet, but why? I got there in good time, a day early at least. I suppose I had expected something to see? My notes from 1972 tell me that Çorum had a fort, probably Ottoman and a museum mostly Hittite. I had last seen Bryer in Istanbul. He'd arrived, inevitably in a grand manner on a Swan's Hellenic cruise and I joined him for the 'Alternative Constantinople Tour'. Of course it was not for Bryer to take the normal trip, although 'alternative' did not have the *Rough Guide* meaning it has today. But we did stick to the fringes of the city and went to the Tekfur Saray, the Golden Gate and St John Stoudios, where he showed us a cistern then home for a noisy sub-ground plastic bottle factory, subsequently wrecked by fire. It was my first visit to Turkey and Constantinople, and there was not yet a bridge to Asia. I was on a study tour compulsory for all second-year undergraduate students in Archaeology

and Ancient History at Birmingham and I planned to reach as far as Elazığ and Erzurum before heading for the Pontos where Bryer had set me a series of chores in Trebizond. A sort of remote tape holding, as others describe assisting him, but I came back with a notebook with pencilled measurements for him to use. He'd already given me a Black Sea theme for my third-year dissertation, that is a whole middle-Byzantine province – a theme- as a dissertation subject in my third year. Adjacent to his own study area of Trebizond, Paphlagonia was the reason I came to Çorum to meet Bryer and party including Margaret Mullett, the first time we met (see Margaret's Tale). It was more than three weeks since Bryer and I had met on the upper deck of the S.S. *Ankara* to finalise the itinerary over a raki, looking across the Golden Horn to Hagia Sophia. But I have often wondered why we chose Çorum. I'm pretty sure Bryer had told me in Birmingham that he'd seen an airport marked on a tourist map, but there was no sign of it, and still isn't. The town was quite close to another smaller town where new inscriptions from the Byzantine city of Euchaita had been brought and we did see those. So perhaps that was why we came there, but as I waited I did wonder.

It was a long way by bus from the Bosporos to beyond the Euphrates and up to the Black Sea. After several days and the long dry vistas of the high plateau it was welcome to meet for the first time the deep forests and orchards of the Pontos. In Trabzon I was to find Bryer's cankardeş (blood brother) Cumhuriyet Odabaşıoğlu, a large welcoming man who had rescued Rose Macaulay. Bryer had set everything out, I stayed in the Yeşil Yurt Hotel, which only a decade before had hosted a grand reception for the US Navy, but now housed lady residents whose rooms were cluttered with pots of cosmetics. Cumhuriyet helped me to visit a group of villages but there was little more than a ruined nineteenth-century church and a fragment of wall painting. But the real challenge was the bell tower of the monastery church of Hagia Sophia (Ayasofya) then a museum since David Winfield's five seasons of conservation and restoration. Bryer had

an idea that it was a lighthouse, belonging to the lost (or rather unidentified) monastery of the Pharos at Trebizond. What I did not realise until Bryer and I returned for an official survey near Trebizond twenty years later, was that Bryer suffered from what he called 'the Indigos', a genuine fear of heights. For all his dedication to the Byzantine Pontos with its soaring mountains, precipitous valleys and vertiginous roads not only did he suffer from vertigo, he did not enjoy the heat either, much preferring the Isle of Mull in Scotland for family holidays.

To test Bryer's hypothesis, it was necessary for someone to climb up to the wide unglazed openings in the top of the tower. David Winfield must have made the ascent as there are photographs taken by him, but maybe he was sceptical of Bryer's idea, so a student was needed to measure the windows etc. Cumhur ensured that there was permission from the museum director and so I began the climb. The interior was furnished with a series of inclined ladders barely attached to the four walls of the tower walls, and the whole structure rocked within the open shaft of the tower. But I got to the top, took the measurements, a compass bearing or two and cautiously descended. The following term Bryer gave a seminar about the tower of the Pharos monastery in Birmingham, but he no longer seemed convinced and eventually the idea of a light house tower was dropped and never figured in his great book on the monuments of the Byzantine Pontos, written with David Winfield.

From Trebizond I travelled west towards Paphlagonia, first to Sinop and then around the interior before heading towards our rendezvous at Çorum. On reflection I'm often astonished at the tolerance of our Turkish hosts: we must have been a pretty bewildering bunch as the photograph at the fountain at Tosya reveals, Middle Common Room will travel. At Amasya, Margaret and Sally recall perilous ascents; I remember better Bryer's mischievous (and vain) attempt to persuade the keeper of a hamam to introduce a mixed bathing evening. The request was politely but firmly rejected and only the men of the party

were cleansed. Then off to Sinop and the Black Sea where it was the turn of Michael Trend to be Bryer's monkey, scampering up a near vertical tower to read an inscription; it is now lost, but the text was read. In ancient times a Roman road is marked along the Black Sea shore from Sinope west towards Amastris (Amasra) where we were heading. We took dolmuşes as far as Inebolu and then asked about the route along the coast. Like the airport at Çorum, it was marked on a map, but not finished or perhaps even started. Undaunted Bryer acquired a boatman to take us around Karambis Burunu the most northerly point on the Turkish coast and closest to the Crimea. A long open skiff with a diesel motor, seven İngiliz and their luggage; Bryer's painted with his name in bold yellow letters, as if to announce his coming in advance when it rolled off the airport belt, or his passing when it bobbed ashore after our capsizing. At first a clear sky, but as I remember it was not so early in the day when we set off. We passed the Cape, there was a squally wind, with big grey clouds ahead. The boatman turned back. The İngiliz remonstrated and he was obliged to try again, but the waves were higher and we were reluctant to return. So he set us down on the shingle beach of a cove, where some boats had been drawn up. All disembarked on the shore, he turned away returning to Inebolu and we were left in Fakas, a large village set back from the sea, with an otel, but no land communications apart from forest tracks. Bryer and Maurice Byrne designed a board game of exasperating complexity called Turkish General Elections. With some relief after three days the weather cleared and we witnessed the launch of wooden transport ship, not the fancy gület of Aegean holidays, but a kayik, closer to the working caique of the Greek Aegean. Supported on the shore with props and heaved into the sea until it floated by the village men, this was the village sea bus to Amasra, where we and the village travellers landed a few hours later.

There is no longer a regular shipping line from Istanbul to Hopa, calling at Samsun and Trebizond, let alone wooden boats



plying along the coast between villages. Bryer introduced us to a Turkey before extensive air travel and air conditioned buses. Fifteen years later I returned to the walls of Amasra with Stephen Hill which we planned and studied, but we never saw this form of transport. After that summer, I returned, and kept returning to Turkey, searching for a Roman and Byzantine past; few have such a privileged introduction.

*Jim Crow*

### **BRYER AND TREBIZOND, 1990s**

For me, Bryer was the archetypal mad professor – how not, with the beard, the glint in the eye that usually meant trouble, the love of a double-entendre or vulgar story (I was at that Steven Runciman dinner and learnt about Mr Sibelius, though I wasn't chatted up, unlike Tony), but also kind and supportive and willing to help out ('you want to work on art? You must go to Robin then; I'll sort it out'). I started my MA just after everyone else in the Centre had made a trip to Trebizond; at least people were always talking about having been to Trebizond with Bryer and how Siriol Davies was nearly sold by him for several camels. Throughout the year, I was always very puzzled by the fascination with Trebizond in Birmingham. Mind you, I have since been to

Trebizond on several occasions and I remain puzzled. Bryer was distinctly miffed when we chalked up on the blackboard of the Whitting Room 'Trebizond is the back of beyond/And no easier to keep tabs on now that it's Trabzon', but it made me feel better.

I didn't go on any of the great memorable trips to Turkey in the '70s and '80s. Rather, I went with Bryer and Jim Crow on Jim's archaeological expeditions to Buzluca, a small hazel orchard at the arse-end of nowhere outside Trebizond where once upon a time Bryer had spotted something obscure and Jim was on a mission to find out what it was (a small fort with a church, in the end). We spent eternities clearing scrub with scythes and oruks, Bryer encouraging, urging, evading snakes. He took us to Soumela and to all the small and hidden churches in and around the area; he took us up the yaylas; he sent Jim and myself up a sheer precipice with only a ranging pole between us to investigate whether an odd rock formation was indeed a small castle (it was, but there were moments I thought I would leave my bones there); we saw Baladan, the small painted church Bryer had found and recorded, beautiful, but battered and now, I imagine, gone. His excitement for this remote part of the world remained undimmed even

in 1990s Trabzon, a slightly grim town with Russian refugees and natashas, the awful Hotel Horon, and the lovely Sevtap and Senna Türko, daughter and granddaughter of Bryer's blood-brother Cumhur. One year Bryer took a fly-fishing rod all the way as a gift for Senna to use, coming close to taking several people's eyes out in the process. One evening at dinner after a hard day among the hazels, in the seedy little restaurant that was all there was in the seaside town of Sürmene, Bryer had after many days managed to get a local kemence player out to perform and was so pleased. Truthfully, the kemence, the Pontic lyre (a bit like a lyre that you put on your knee and play with a bow) makes a shocking noise. We sat there, praying it would stop soon but suddenly Bryer leapt to his feet, 'He's doing it! He's doing the dik! In the villages, the young men keep it up for hours', and tried to encourage us all to join in. Our enthusiasm for the dik was limited, but Bryer's for all things Trapezuntine never faded.

*Liz James*

### **BRYER AT ÇİFTLİK IN 1997**

Bryer had immense presence, indeed a sort of aura of grandness which drew fascinated crowds when he came to Sinop to join our excavation at Çiftlik in 1997. Princess Diana died on 31 August 1997. That was a Sunday, our day off. Several of us set off for a picnic at Hamsilos Fjord, where we heard the news of the car crash, through the medium of Pidgin English: 'Di die, Dodi die' shouted at us out of context didn't make sense either as English or as Turkish. Bryer had declined to come, saying that he would sit in a cafe by the harbour writing an oration in his capacity as public orator for the University of Birmingham. We arrived back in Sinop to find him smoking his pipe and enjoying the local blackberry ice cream for which he had developed a particular liking. He was attended by a group of Sinop elders who were sympathising with him over his terrible loss in long-winded sonorous Ottoman condolences. Bryer was in his element, especially as the sonorous Ottoman condolences were to be repeated for days thereafter.



Sinop was, for Bryer, an inferior relative of Trebizond, too far west for the kemence, the Pontic lyre, but it still had the Black Sea, hamsi, and tarhana, so it was OK. He was immediately accorded the title of Hoca by the Sinopitans. When we took him out to Çiftlik, our villagers similarly immediately acclaimed him as Bryer Hoca, whereas it had taken me years to be promoted from Amca to Hoca. Once there were two hocas at the excavation, it was necessary to find an epithet to distinguish one from the other, and, because his socks were an object of fascination to the village boys who carried drinking water for us, Bryer quickly became known as the Hoca-with-red-socks. In truth, Bryer was more of an armchair archaeologist than a digger, and when he came out to the site, he was inclined towards sitting in the shade of the *çağdır*, the tea-hut, chatting to the workmen about food and agricultural implements. Bryer Hoca made particular friends with Talep Bey who masterminded the construction and the operation of the tea-hut. He had served as an army cook during his National Service, and always wore a characteristic pork-pie hat which Bryer coveted. Talep was Deputy Muhtar in the year when Bryer came out and made a point of personally greeting Bryer at the site with condolences on behalf of the village for the death of Diana.

It was Bryer, of course, who identified our site as Kyphtasia, and the church we were excavating as the martyrrium of St Phokas of Sinope, the patron saint of gardeners. Phokas was martyred at the hands of Roman soldiers who were marching from Amaseia to Sinope. When Gina Coulthard and I announced that



we were planning a weekend excursion to visit Amasya, Bryer insisted on coming too, saying 'But we must also go to Tokat.' When we asked him, 'Why Tokat?', the unexpected response was 'tablecloths – Tokat tablecloths; we must have tablecloths from Tokat!' At the time we were planning a Buckland Club meal and Bryer was determined to acquire for the Çiftlik dinner a supply of the naively block-printed tablecloths which are a speciality product of Tokat.

The trip to Amasya and Tokat was set for Saturday 6 September, but there was a problem. 'How will I be able to watch Diana's funeral?' This surprisingly Royalist anxiety could only be countered by 'Well, you wouldn't be able to watch it in a field beside the Black Sea anyway.' The trip to Tokat became something of a royal progress, with the Bryer of *The Byzantine Monuments and Topography of the Pontos* providing running commentary and demanding occasional detours to important places like Merzifon, which was declared to be 'disappointing'. But between Amasya and Tokat, we were bidden to stop in one of those çayhanes which act as service stations on Anatolian highways. The customers, as they do, were contentedly eating, drinking tea, and watching football on the television. Bryer

made his grand entrance, and disappeared to talk to the proprietor. As if by magic, a space was cleared beside a television, and the channel was changed. Thus it was that Bryer was able to watch Princess Diana's funeral in the middle of Anatolia.

We were not very successful in our search for tablecloths in Tokat. The factory was closed, and we succeeded in sourcing only one tablecloth which presumably survived being acquired by anyone else because it was dyed a particularly lurid, high-vis, yellow. Bryer liked it nonetheless, and, on our return to Sinop, we discovered that we could buy a supply of suitable white Tokat tablecloths in a shop a few doors from the apartment where we were staying. It was Bryer who said, 'All's well that ends well'.  
*Stephen Hill*

## **BRYER IN WATER**

Dad loved swimming, and I remember at the Dumbarton Oaks pool and the outdoor pool at King Edward's Boys' School, he would swim underneath us like a great big whale and then jump up and throw us into the air. I used to scream with anticipation as he swam underneath us. I remember one time he jumped into the shallow end instead of

the deep end, and compacted his vertebrae in his back; he had to be stretchered off to the accident hospital. The next day I went with Mum to collect him and we expected to find him in a wheelchair feeling sorry for himself; instead we found him getting very excited by the intricate architraves, cornices and marble archways that adorned the old hospital building.

*Anna Bryer*

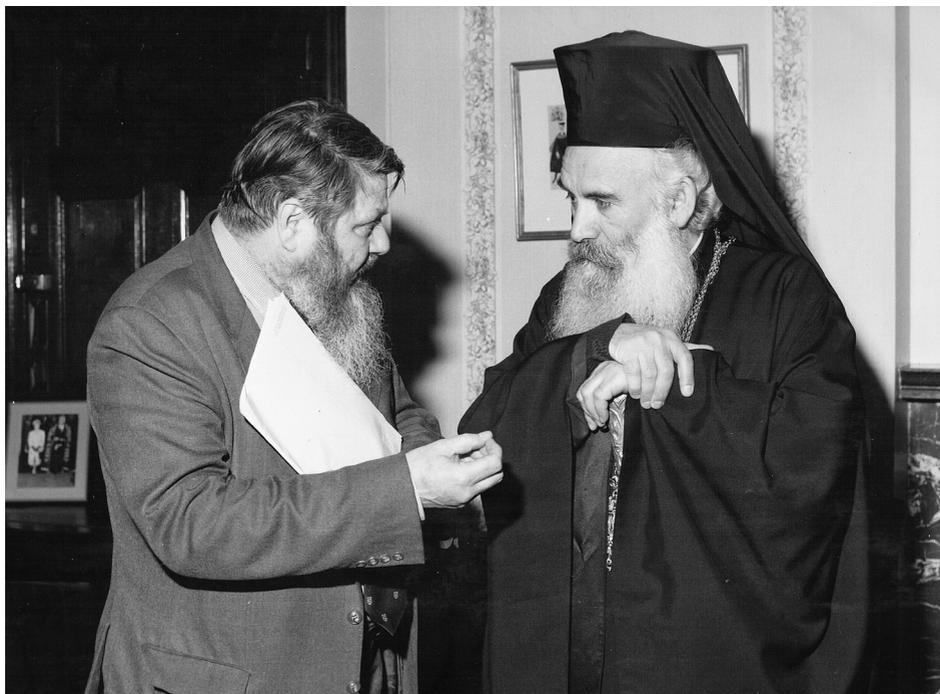
### **BRYER THE COLLECTOR (AND GOSSIP)**

'We are gossips,' he greeted me. 'Speak for yourself,' I said, somewhat taken aback, unaware of the Old English meaning of the word. 'We share the same godchild' (the playwright Leo McGann), he explained. It was a typical cryptic Bryer comment. Like all Byzantinists, he began in the middle, and if you were not totally on the same wavelength, then you were lost. I am not a Byzantinist although, oddly, many of my friends are, but over the years I have observed they all share the same characteristic. Thus it was that for a

long time I thought Dumbarton Oaks was a horse race.

Bryer always made me laugh. In the corridor, of a morning, Bryer would mutter, as he passed, the name of some saint and the place of his or her martyrdom. The correct response to this bizarre statement was 'To which particular sticky end did he or she come?' and then he told you, in great detail which either made you laugh or ruined your day. He'd been at his Calendar of Saints, as he did daily, always ahead with the news.

The last occasion I saw Bryer, he and Jenny had asked Ken and me over to give me his hats. He was particularly fond of his fezzes and a Doge's hat which he had bought in Venice, hot from the smouldering remains (if you believed him) of La Fenice. This famous theatre was selling its costume collection for which it had no storage space and to help finance the restoration after the latest fire there. Sadly we do not have a photograph of him wearing this hat! His white fez must have come from his trip to a conference in Albania in 1976 when he, like others, had to be clean shaven - an



Albanian requirement for the issue of a visa. This fez was loaned by Bryer for an exhibition of some of my Balkan costumes at Queen's University Belfast in 2005 to accompany a pair of potur (black and white woolly trousers from Northern Albania) which had once been owned by the Cadbury family.

Bryer's interest in the ethnography of the Balkans led him on the same Albanian trip to collect up a copy of the telephone directory from his hotel room, so that he could research the size of the Greek population on the basis of the surnames listed. Its absence had been quickly noted and the bus could not leave until he had returned it, the kind of close shave with authority with which he was often familiar.

With these hats was a long shirt in coarse cotton. Jenny and I were pondering its provenance and wondering if it went with a pillar-box shaped hat when a voice from behind us, clear as a bell, said 'Saffron Walden'. Could this be right? This was hardly a centre of Orthodoxy or Ottoman costume. Earlier, after the doctor's visit, Bryer had been teasing Jenny about the pronunciation of 'senile' which he maintained was pronounced 'sennile' not, as she said, 'seenile'. Then I remembered: Bryer had entertained us some years earlier with a story of ordering a smock from 'the last smock-maker in Saffron Walden.' No trace of senility at all, though we had never learnt why he wanted a smock, nor why from Saffron Waldon.

Bryer was not a collector per se, but he was acquisitive, and collected things that interested him and that had a story. Always a story: he would entertain you with this until the next object caught his eye. On one occasion, Bryer was hugely excited by an old agricultural implement I was exhibiting. A rusty old corn shucker to you and me, it now suddenly had a name, a kladeferion, an instrument of great antiquity illustrated in a Byzantine manuscript and published by Bryer in the *Annual of the British School at Athens*. He knew the illustration well, but had never seen the object. We were tamata rivals: his collection of these little metal votive plaques attached to icons together with my collection make a

comprehensive group much enhanced by Bryer's and Jenny's gift of large wax examples from Cyprus. He was always generous with his lending of both books and objects. Many exhibitions have been enhanced by his collections and his knowledge.

Liz was the handyman in the Bryer household. Amongst other things, like the magnificent block printed wallpaper (how I wish she had painted the vaulted roof in the kitchen as she intended), she built all the beautiful bookcases. Bryer's lack of practicality led on one occasion to his downfall. A book on the top shelf being unreadable (thank you, Microsoft, but I wrote unreachable), Bryer stood on a four-legged wheely chair, which, as these chairs do, wheeled away. Grabbing at the bookcase he pulled it and the books down on top of himself. Liz, hearing the crash, came in and was so diverted by the sight of Bryer on the floor covered in books and with one open on his head, that she said 'Don't move, I'm going to get the camera.' In the later telling of this story, Bryer, with his broken thigh in plaster, blamed the whole disaster on Liz for not fixing the shelves properly!

Bryer's legendary care for younger colleagues and pupils may be the result of his early experiences at Birmingham. As he was wont to tell us, 'Tomlinson and I suffered as toads under Tritsch's harrow,' a typically Kiplingesque reference – or was it also medieval? Fortunately Bryer had only one thing in common with the formidable Professor Franz Joseph Tritsch – he was allergic to wheels and did not drive and thus escaped the fate of less fortunate colleagues who were expected to drive Tritsch the eighteen miles home at the end of the day, regardless of other commitments.

One cold day we had a fire alarm at the University of Birmingham - not an unusual occurrence, but this time not a scheduled one. Black smoke had been seen issuing from under the door of a fourth-floor room in the Arts Faculty building. The alarm was raised, the building cleared and the fire brigade summoned, arriving in Hazmat gear like alien creatures from outer space. Bravely they broke down the door to find Bryer reading at his desk

and tranquilly puffing away at his malodorous pipe, oblivious to the tocsin and commotion. After this Bryer said his popularity with the authorities was at an all-time low.

Bryer had no time for unnecessary protocol. The University had been offered an exhibition by the Cyprus High Commission about the monuments of the island endangered after the partition of 1974. We organized an extra-mural day school to accompany it and arranged for the Cypriot community in Birmingham to lay on a feast at midday. We puzzled over who should be invited to start the proceedings. Perhaps the High Commission could provide a representative? We asked and they could – the High Commissioner himself. We were delighted to accept this offer. The Vice Chancellor, however, felt that he should himself have issued the invitation and the icy blast from on high was only too palpable. Who but Bryer could have forestalled the VC's official welcome by accepting a lift to the University with the High Commissioner?

Our shared interests in agricultural implements, tamata and nomads too, as well as our pride in the fortunes of our godson, gave us much to gossip about. I shall miss him.

*Diana Wardle*

### **BRYER BELOVED OF CATS**

It is hard to know where to start. Bryer was in residence at Dumbarton Oaks when I was a Junior Fellow at Dumbarton Oaks, and that is when I first met him. This was when Fellows all still lived at 2702 (Wisconsin Avenue). Bryer was ensconced on the top floor, where he entertained every Sunday afternoon with an – of course – eclectic variety of nibbles (it was the first time most of us had ever tried, let alone heard of, some of the fishy spreads that he favoured) and an – also of course – array of alcohol. He distributed bon mots, and, oddly, spare toilet seats (why? where did he get them?) to great effect. What came through then, and did forever, was his sense of fun, of enthusiasm, and, especially, his (faux) innocent enjoyment of the moment. When I moved to Birmingham, Bryer and (mostly, to be honest) Liz found us the house



we now live in, built by the same architect who built theirs, though our house is less grand than 33 Crosbie Road and, alas, has no dodo. Our back gardens almost touch at the corner, and Anna Bryer – who spent hours and hours with me digging the garden after we moved in – remembers crawling through the underbrush between them as a child. My favourite photograph of Bryer shows him striding up our garden path, our cat Zoe trotting along by his side with her tail up (she loved Bryer, who of course loved all cats right back), as he went to see whether the crawl between our houses was still possible. God knows that if it had been, Bryer would have managed it. He didn't, but our cats did, and regularly visited Bryer in his back garden. Probably he sneaked them more of those horrible fishy spreads. Bryer will be remembered for many things: he founded Byzantine Studies in the UK, and his life touched many people in many countries, trailing Byzantium in its wake. But I will remember him as a purveyor of quirky food, quirkier gifts, and as a man beloved of cats as well as people: cats are pickier and more discerning.

*Leslie Brubaker*

## **'BRYER IS... BRYER!'**

Instinctively liberal, he not only tolerated diversity but actively embraced it. He was endlessly fascinated by people and the varieties of cultural expression. Unstintingly supportive of his students, he was enormously generous with his time and efforts on their behalf – and he did this with such self-effacingly apparent ease that it was all too easy to forget that he'd done it in the first place: he simply did not keep account of what he'd given, nor did he expect anything in return. He imbued the Centre he had created with an atmosphere characterised by the very rare combination of serious scholarship, freedom of academic thinking, true creativity, and fun - lots of it.

Behind the slightly 'eccentric professor' exterior – the flustered charge down the University corridors, the long beard, the red socks, the occasional absent-mindedness, his love of the theatrical – behind all this there was something elusive about Bryer, something gentle, childish even in his demeanour and infectious enthusiasm. That he was – self-evidently - one of this world's great enablers, had a lot to do with the fact that in promoting the study of Byzantium he served the subject rather than himself, for his interest in it was not tied to some personal, self-serving agenda but to a deep gratitude for what he thought of as his, indeed any academic's enormous good fortune: as he once said, softly, in the midst of a heated departmental debate about posts and salaries, 'Yes, but we love what we do.' It was a love Bryer never lost, and which he expressed through acts that proved to be seminal, hugely creative and deeply affecting at both the professional and the personal level.

*Catia Galatariotou*

Put together by Margaret Mullett, Ruth Macrides and Liz James. Turned into a booklet by Simon Lane. And many thanks to everyone who sent in Bryer memories and pictures: other Bryeriana will appear on the SPBS and CBOMGS websites.

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## **PHOTOGRAPHS**

Front cover: Bryer riding in the yayla (Katie Bryer)

1. Bryer's School Report, 1951 (Theodora Bryer)
2. Bryer, Judith Herrin and Sally Harvey at Graduation (Sally Harvey)
3. Bryer in his youth at Tbilisi
4. Bryer and Cumhur (Jim Crow)
5. Bryer in the ruins
6. Bryer and the white fez (Diana Wardle)
7. Cruising (Peter Burridge)
8. Bryer reading (Jenny Banks Bryer)
9. Bryer at Mar Gabriel (Jenny Banks Bryer)
10. Bryer in the Back Garden (Jenny Banks Bryer)
11. The Three Beards (Rosemary Morris, Manchester 1986)
12. Bryer riding in the yayla (Katie Bryer)
13. Bryer with Talep Bey, the Deputy Muhtar (Stephen Hill)
14. Piratical Bryer amid the hazelnuts at Buzluca (Jim Crow)
15. Baladan, Bryer's small painted church in the wilds of the Pontos (Liz James)
16. Bryer and the Archbishop of Thyateira and Great Britain (Jenny Banks Bryer)
17. Bryer with a Cat (Robin Milner-Gulland)
18. 1972 expedition with Beardless Bryer trying to fit in (Jim Crow)

Back Cover: Bryer on foot in the yaylas (Liz James)

