

Obituaries

Sir Duncan Cumming, KBE, CB 1903–1979

Sir Duncan, the founding President of the Society from 1969–1974, died in December 1979. He brought to the Society many years of experience in African affairs and administration and first hand acquaintance with Libya. All those from the Society who knew Sir Duncan were constantly impressed by his remarkably broad awareness and grasp of political, social and scholarly issues of concern to the Society. He put all of this experience at the disposal of the Council of the Society and consequently guided its discussions from the chair with special shrewdness and insight but also with extraordinary economy through his elegant deflection of gratuitous diversions.

Sir Duncan was educated at Giggleswick School and read geography in his final degree at Cambridge where he showed for the first of many times his talent for excelling in a wide range of activities. In addition to scholarly interests he played rugby three times for Cambridge and later for England. He began a long and distinguished career in the administration in the Sudan Political Service. The years in Sudan brought him competence in Arabic and experience which was to prove invaluable when the British Military Administration was set up by Montgomery in 1942 in north west Libya. Montgomery was professional in seeking administrators with an understanding of the society and language of the regions for which they were to be responsible. Duncan Cumming came from Sudan via the position of Chief Secretary, Eritrea to assume the post of Chief Administrator, Cyrenaica. Cyrenaica was in a very low state in 1942 after a decade or more of guerrilla resistance to Italian colonisation up to 1931, followed by the ultimately abortive attempt to settle Italian farmers in the 1930s and finally the depredations of armoured warfare which swept back and forth across Cyrenaica between 1939 and 1942. When recalling this period of his career Sir Duncan always revealed a deep awareness of the harsh conditions prevailing in Libya at that time; the poverty and shortage of food. At the same time he made many friends and is warmly remembered by a number of the Libyan staff with whom he worked

The scholarly bent of Sir Duncan was in evidence in his years in Libya. Amongst the military personnel over whom he assumed responsibility were a number of eminent or potentially eminent scholars, and they were given opportunities to study Cyrenaica's history and archaeology and to observe and record features of its society and economy. *The Handbook of Cyrenaica* (Cumming 1944) testifies to the quality of this work and is also a signpost to much more that followed via the writings of such as Evans-Pritchard, Ward-Perkins and McBurney.

From Libya Sir Duncan was promoted to the position of Chief Civil Affairs Officer, Middle East and after the War he returned to Sudan as Governor of Kordofan and later as Deputy Chief Secretary of Sudan. In 1952, he was seconded to the Foreign Office to advise on the federation of Eritrea and Ethiopia in accordance with a United Nations resolution. Unfortunately the degree of autonomy recommended by him has not been observed in the tortured recent history of that area. After these long years in public service Sir Duncan embarked in 1953 on a commercial career involving amongst other posts Managing Director of BOAC Associated Companies, and BOAC's consultant on Africa; he also formed his own business to advise on trade in Africa.

After 1969 most of Sir Duncan's time was devoted to the activities of learned societies. Following his presidency of the Society for Libyan Studies he became a very active president of the Royal Geographical Society and took a close interest in the British Institute in Eastern African. From time to time he was called on by national review committees such as the Roskill Commission which examined the issue of the development of a third London airport in 1971.

Throughout his busy public and commercial life Sir Duncan found time for research and those who have had the privilege to discuss with him the many countries of Africa with which he gained familiarity were always impressed by the depth and the relevance of his scholarly enquiries. He worked and published until his death and the determination with which he

remained active in his last years despite arthritis and the onset of a terminal illness were symptomatic of the way he had lived the whole of his life. The Society for Libyan Studies is just one of the many organisations which gained from his administrative energy, and from his skill and his leadership in creating space in which others could innovate and develop. Sir Duncan's contribution in the Middle East was recognised in the award of the CB in 1948 and his other work was marked by the award of the KBE in 1963. He became the first Honorary Vice-President of the Society in 1974.

J. A. Allan

Professor C. B. M. McBurney MA, PhD, ScD, FBA, FSA (1914–1979)

Professor McBurney, who died in December 1979, was Britain's leading Palaeolithic archaeologist. He was also a founder member of the Society for Libyan Studies, and had served on its Council and Executive, as representative of the Prehistoric Society, since the Society's inception in 1969. Charles Brian Montagu McBurney was born in 1914 at Stockbridge, Mass., U.S.A. He was educated privately and at King's College, Cambridge, where his life-long interest in Palaeolithic Studies was aroused by the teaching of the late Professor Dorothy Garrod, to whose influence he always expressed a deep debt of gratitude. After graduating in 1937 he held a research studentship (1937–39) and then a research fellowship (1940–53) at King's College, which was interrupted by War Service. His interests and experience were, from this early stage, extremely wide-ranging: his fellowship dissertation discussed aspects of the Palaeolithic in various European countries and was prepared at the *Institute de Paléontologie Humaine*, Paris, while his contact with eastern European and Soviet prehistory began equally early.

It was while serving with the R.A.F. in the Western Desert (1942–3) that Charles McBurney first became interested in North African prehistory, an interest which was to lead to some of his most important work and principal publication. After the War he returned to Cambridge, becoming, in succession, Lecturer in Anthropology (1953), Reader in Prehistory (1967) and Professor of Quaternary Prehistory (1977), a personal chair. In 1962 he was elected a Fellow of Corpus Christi College, and in 1966 a Fellow of the British Academy. He was also a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of London, an active member of the Prehistoric Society (on whose council he served for three spells, including four years as a Vice-President), a Corresponding Member of the *Instituto Italiano di Paleontologia Umana*, and a Knight of the Order of Dannebrog (First Class).

Charles McBurney's interest in Libya was long-standing and during a period of well over twenty years he frequently visited the country to carry out fieldwork and excavation, which led to various archaeological publications, including three works of major importance. The first was a joint volume with Dr. R. W. Hey, *Prehistory and Pleistocene Geology in Cyrenaican Libya* (1955), which set out the results of field-work in the Gebel Akhdar, together with a description of the Pleistocene geology of the Gebel terraces and coastal area. This was followed in 1960 by *The Stone Age of Northern Africa*, an impressive study of the whole region, which stressed the reciprocal influences that effected the immigration of men from Europe into Africa in the Pleistocene and from the Levant and Western Asia in the Neolithic. Then, in 1967, came the monumental *The Haua Fteah (Cyrenaica) and the Stone Age of the South-Eastern Mediterranean*, a detailed study of his excavations in the great cave near Marsa Sousa, which produced what is almost certainly the longest continuously dated sequence of archaeological deposits known from such a site, covering a time-interval of approx. 80,000–90,000 years.

But Libya was only a part of Charles McBurney's wide field. He organized a survey of Lower and Middle Palaeolithic finds in Britain for the Council for British Archaeology, and directed a programme of research into the British Upper Palaeolithic for the Prehistoric Society. Further afield he carried out extensive survey in the Kopet Dag Range in north-eastern Iran (including