

DONALD AUBERON BULLOUGH

13 June 1928–26 June 2002

The School loses in Professor Donald Bullough one of its most vigorous and longstanding supporters. He held the Rivoira Scholarship 1950–1 for a study on 'Wall paintings in Rome and its environs, eighth to twelfth centuries', followed by the Rome Scholarship in Medieval Studies 1951–3 to work on 'Institutions of Italy under foreign rulers, c. 780–970'. He served as a member of the Faculty of Archaeology, History and Letters 1966–83, and as its Chair 1975–8. He was a member of the Executive Committee 1975–9, and of Council 1979–95. He was Acting Director from the end of January 1984 for six months.

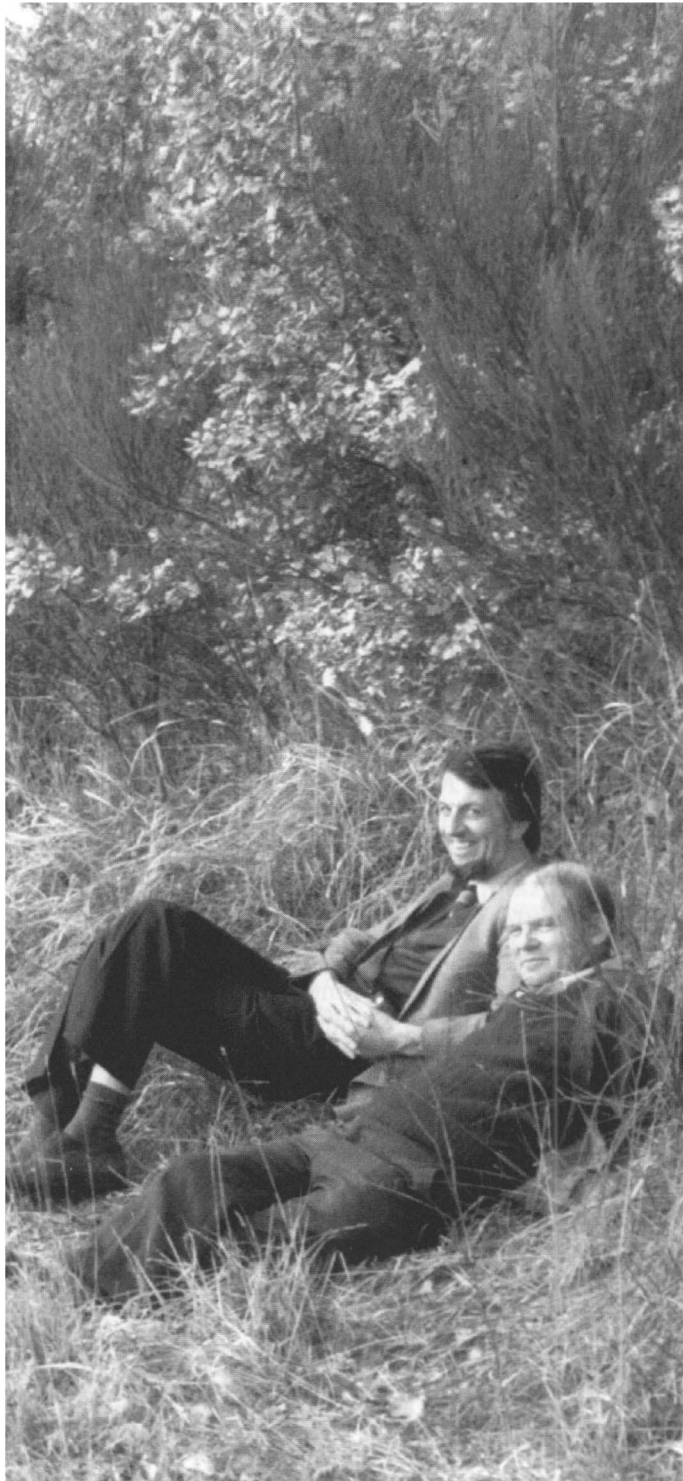
Professor Rosamond McKitterick writes:

Einhard, biographer of Charlemagne, said of Alcuin, the deacon from York who became a close associate of the emperor, that he was a *vir undecumque doctissimus*.¹ The same might be said of Donald Bullough, who made Alcuin the principal subject of his research in the last 30 years of his life. Proofs of his book *Alcuin: Achievement and Reputation* were received shortly before Donald died of cancer a fortnight after his 74th birthday. His engagement with Alcuin is clearly to be discerned in his earlier work. In his *The Age of Charlemagne*, first published in 1965, for example, Alcuin's letters and comments are drawn on constantly, to excellent effect. Yet the first concentrated discussion of Alcuin was in the 'Settimane' of Spoleto in 1973, which had taken as its theme the problem of the eighth century.² Of the important group of papers focusing on Alcuin and the court culture of Charlemagne, which Donald published from 1981 onwards, only one, 'Alcuin and the kingdom of heaven: liturgy, theology and the Carolingian age', was included in *Carolingian Renewal: Sources and Heritage*, a volume of eight reprinted essays published by Manchester University Press in 1991.³ Donald may well have wished to expand and revise

¹ Donald Bullough himself rendered this phrase as 'a man who in any place would have been thought most learned': *The Age of Charlemagne* (second edition) (London, 1973), 15. For a bibliography of Donald's work, compiled by A. Harting-Corrêa, see J.M.H. Smith (ed.), *Early Mediaeval Rome and the Christian West: Essays in Honour of Donald A. Bullough* (Leiden, 2000), xxi–xxxii.

² 'Alcuino e la tradizione culturale insulare', in *I problemi dell'occidente nel secolo VIII* (*Settimane di studi del Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo* 20) (Spoleto, 1973), 571–600.

³ 'Hagiography as patriotism: Alcuin's 'York poem' and the early Northumbrian *vitae sanctorum*', in *Hagiographie, cultures et sociétés, IV–XIIe siècles (Études Augustiniennes)* (Paris, 1981), 341–59; 'Albuinos deliciosus regis, Alcuin of York and the shaping of the early Carolingian court', in L. Fenske, W. Rosener and T. Zotz (eds), *Institutionen, Kultur und Gesellschaft im Mittelalter: Festschrift für Josef Fleckenstein* (Sigmaringen, 1984), 73–92; 'Aula



Donald Bullough (right) with Peter Wiseman in the Roman Campagna.
(Photograph courtesy of Amanda Claridge.)

the others, along with the Ford lectures delivered in Oxford in 1980, in the context of his book. He always gave the impression of a man who could not bear to stop in the pursuit of still another enticing piece of information that just might shed another glimmer of light on his subject or alter one's perspective of something in a crucial way.

Donald's writing was often so allusive as to create difficulties for readers without his remarkable library to hand. In his later years his work became increasingly embedded in minutiae of learning, with both main avenues and byways of learning explored with zest and enthusiasm, often far from the point being established, but with many treasures buried therein. One characteristic example might be quoted (in full) from his Hector Munro Chadwick lecture. This documents his discussion of the man from Rottweil in 771 who had killed a count's bees and stolen the hive and wax in order to try and ingratiate himself with the local saint. The Saint Gallen hagiographers do not record, Donald tells us, whether the saint's miracle saved the thief from the 'heavy penalties prescribed in Frankish and other early law-codes for the destruction of bee-skips and the killing of bees'. He adds the following note, even though what he was really concerned with was the man having set out for the saint's tomb *cum vicinis et cognatis*.⁴

See, for example, *Lex Salica (Pactus legis salicae)* tit. VIII, 1–4 and cf. *Lex Salica (100 Titel Text)* tit. IX, 1–2 (ed. K.A. Eckhardt, *Germanenrechte N.F. Westgermanischer Recht* (Weimar, 1953), 118); *Lex Visigothorum* tit. VIII, 6.22–3 (ed. K. Zeumer, *MGH, Leges* (Hannover, 1902), 349–50). For the even more severe penalties prescribed in high and late medieval customary law, see C. Warnke, 'Bienen', *Lexikon des Mittelalters* 2 (1981–3), 128–36, esp. pp. 130 and 132–3. Woodland (wild) bees came under different laws: e.g. *Lex Visigothorum* tit. VIII, 6.1 (ed. Zeumer, p. 349); *Edictus Rothari*, ch. 319 (ed. F. Beyerle, *Die Gesetze der Langobardorum, Germanenrechte* 3 (Weimar, 1947, 126). See also the OHG Christianized bee-swarm spell, added at Lorsch in the early tenth century to Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Pal. lat. 220, 58r (ed. E. von Steinmeyer, *Die kleineren althochdeutschen Sprachdenkmäler* (Berlin, 1916), 396–7 (no. lxxviii), and its OE counterpart (ed. E.V.K. Dobbie, *The Anglo-Saxon Minor Poems*, *ASPR* 6 (New York, 1942)), 125; and cf. the reported

renovata: the Carolingian court before the Aachen palace' (Raleigh lecture), *Proceedings of the British Academy* 71 (1986), 267–330; 'Reminiscence and reality; text, translation and testimony of an Alcuin letter', *The Journal of Medieval Latin* 5 (1995), 174–201; 'Alcuin before Frankfort', in R. Berndt (ed.), *Das Frankfurter Konzil von 794* (Mainz, 1997), 571–85; 'Alcuin's cultural influence: the evidence of the manuscripts', in L.A.J.R. Houwen and A.A. MacDonald (eds), *Alcuin of York (Germania Latina 3)* (Groningen, 1998), 1–26.

⁴ *Friends, Neighbours and Fellow-drinkers: Aspects of Community and Conflict in the Early Medieval West* (Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic, University of Cambridge, *H.M. Chadwick Memorial Lectures* 1) (Cambridge, 1991), 2, n. 4.

belief of the central African Bemba that 'to find one beehive with honey in the woods is luck, to find two is very good luck, to find three is witchcraft' (from A.I. Richards, *Land, Labour and Diet in Northern Rhodesia* (London, 1939), as cited by M. Gluckman, *Politics, Law and Ritual in Tribal Society* (Oxford, 1965), 59).

Yet before *Alcuin* appears, it will be for his earlier work that Donald will be best remembered. Much of the first phase of his work was devoted to investigating the period of the early years of Carolingian rule in Italy at the end of the eighth and in the early ninth centuries. Like many early medievalists, he had been inspired by Thomas Hodgkin's monumental, if thoroughly Victorian, *Italy and her Invaders*,⁵ but Donald's postgraduate research under Michael Wallace-Hadrill's supervision was on the territorial divisions of early medieval Italy. His time as Rome Scholar in Medieval Studies in 1951–3 at the British School at Rome undoubtedly consolidated his knowledge and familiarity with early medieval Italian history. It bore fruit in a number of path-breaking papers thereafter, namely his studies of local government in Carolingian Italy, and of Pavia as an example of urban change in the early Middle Ages.⁶ His association with the British School never faltered thereafter, and in 1984 he served as Acting Director.⁷ Scholars who came in contact with him both in Rome and elsewhere will above all remember him for his conversation: Donald loved to talk. I well remember my own first visit to him when I was a research student while he was still in Nottingham. I met him in the university and he took me home for tea and to show me his books, talking energetically about Carolingian history and other matters (mostly book-buying coups) virtually non-stop the entire afternoon.

Donald's independence of mind was demonstrated fully in his splendid synthesis, *The Age of Charlemagne*. It was written while he was a junior lecturer at the University of Edinburgh (1955–66) and appeared in a revised version after he arrived in Nottingham as professor (1966–73). It remains a most valuable introduction to the subject. Published in 1965 by Paul Elek and richly illustrated with all kinds of (then) unfamiliar images, manuscripts and

⁵ His inaugural lecture at Nottingham University was entitled *Italy and her Invaders* (Nottingham, 1968).

⁶ 'Leo qui apud Hlotharium magni loci habebatur, et le gouvernement du Regnum Italiae à l'époque carolingienne', *Le Moyen Age* 47 (1961), 221–45; 'Baiuli in the Carolingian regnum francorum and the career of abbot Waldo (ob. 813)', *English Historical Review* 77 (1962), 625–37; 'Urban change in early medieval Italy', *Papers of the British School at Rome* 34 (1966), 82–130; 'Late antique and early medieval Pavia; topography and social change', *Atti del convegno di studio sul centro storico di Pavia, 4 luglio* (Pavia, 1968), 79–98; 'I vescovi di Pavia nei secoli ottavo e nono: fonti e cronologia', *Atti del 4° congresso internazionale di studi sull'alto medioevo* (Spoleto, 1969), 317–28 and 'The writing office of the dukes of Spoleto in the eighth century', in D. Bullough and R.L. Storey (eds), *The Study of Medieval Records: Essays in Honour of Kathleen Major* (Oxford, 1971), 1–21.

⁷ See A. Wallace-Hadrill, *The British School at Rome: One Hundred Years* (London, 2001), 130.

buildings, it was a breath of fresh air. So many of the general books were then tediously stuck in the Emperor Charlemagne/Carolingian Empire groove, with umpteen discussions of the year 800, a few who addressed the culture of the court, and most who confined themselves to a very narrow source base. Donald's book, however, offered a synoptic appraisal of the king's entire career and achievement, interspersed with many small asides bringing in the evidence of buildings, art, liturgy, urban topography, manuscripts, and his own knowledge of a wide range of literary sources, not least Alcuin's letters and treatises. To be sure he did not question the old-fashioned view of the relative status of and development of Latin and Romance, and underestimated the role of the written word and of literacy in the period. Nor did he challenge the narrative sources in the way we have now learnt to do. Many aspects he touched on very briefly, furthermore, have now been developed fully, such as the early Carolingian court that he himself in relation to his work on Alcuin has done so much to elucidate. The royal women and the career of Tassilo, church reforms, liturgy, law and theological disputes. historical writing and book production have been and are all now being discussed by the current generation of early medievalists.

In the years since *The Age of Charlemagne* was first published, Carolingian studies have been transformed. It was the publication, also in 1965, of a four-volume compilation of essays, *Karl der Grosse, Lebenswerk und Nachleben*, in conjunction with the Council of Europe exhibition in Aachen, which was the major catalyst. Donald himself insisted on the importance of these volumes,⁸ and it was they that set the agenda for subsequent study. How much has changed since then, not least in our understanding of Carolingian politics, culture, archaeology, art, music and book production, can readily be seen if one compares the 1965 catalogue and essay volumes with those produced in connection with the Paderborn exhibition in 1999.⁹ Donald's subsequent work, produced while he was Professor at St Andrews (1973–91) and in his retirement, was part of this late twentieth-century revolution in the study of early medieval history.

Apart from his preoccupation with Alcuin, Donald also offered an intricate study of Columba of Iona¹⁰ and a number of papers extending his interest in topography, art and archaeology, most notably his study of burial contributed to the *Festschrift* for Michael Wallace-Hadrill.¹¹

⁸ 'Europae pater: Charlemagne's achievement in the light of recent scholarship', *English Historical Review* 85 (1970), 59–105.

⁹ C. Stiegemann and M. Wemhoff (eds), *799 Kunst und Kultur der Karolingerzeit. Karl der Grosse und Papst Leo III in Paderborn*, 3 vols (Mainz, 1999).

¹⁰ 'Columba, Adomnan and the achievement of Iona, Part I', *Scottish Historical Review* 43 (1964), 111–30; and 'Columba, Adomnan and the achievement of Iona, Part II', *Scottish Historical Review* 44 (1965), 17–33.

¹¹ 'Burial, community and belief in the early medieval west', in P. Wormald (ed.), *Ideal and Reality in Frankish and Anglo-Saxon Society. Studies Presented to J.M. Wallace-Hadrill* (Oxford, 1983), 177–201.

In all these, underpinning his accumulation of detailed material was his strong conviction of the role of the historian and a realistic understanding of the historians' limitations as he saw them. Thus he reminded us in 1965 that any account of the Carolingian period should make clear what the sources do not permit us to say as well as what they do.¹² In 1998 his concluding remarks in his H.M. Chadwick Memorial lecture stressed that 'even in early medieval studies ... aphorism — like patriotism — is not enough: while sociological postulates and technological analogies are merely methodological tools, not (in themselves) examples of inter-disciplinary historical enquiry ... social structures and social changes are the proper preoccupation of the historian'.¹³

Professor Geoffrey Rickman adds:

It is right that a tribute to Donald Bullough should concentrate on him as a scholar, for he was that to a rare degree. It was, after all, what took him to the British School at Rome in the first place. But he was a man of many gifts and the widest range of interests, which is what made the School so congenial to him in the longer term, and his period as Acting Director so happy for himself and others: a natural linguist, deeply interested in architecture and the fine arts, musically knowledgeable, administratively talented, with an abiding concern for the young, and devoted to a whole range of tough and adventurous physical pursuits. It was fortunate for the School that such a man allowed himself to remain involved, in one way or another, with its life and management for nearly 30 years, particularly at a time when, with changing circumstances, there was a pressing need to find new structures for the School's governance. To that long process, which led ultimately to a new Royal Charter, Donald Bullough contributed more continuously and over a longer period than any other person. For that alone, woven into his busy life of scholarship, we owe him a profound and lasting debt of gratitude.

¹² *Age of Charlemagne* (above, n. 1), 18.

¹³ *Friends, Neighbours and Fellow-drinkers* (above, n. 4), 26.