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IN MEMORY OF ELIZABETH ANN BONNER (1937-2020)



This edition of the *Journal of the Sydney Society of Scottish History* is dedicated to the memory of our long-time member, and past vice-president, Dr Elizabeth Ann Bonner.¹

Dr Elizabeth Bonner was born in Sydney on 6 October 1937 and raised in the harbourside suburb of Manly. Elizabeth died of natural causes on 31 May 2020. She spent most of her adult life living in Paddington, Sydney, and for the last forty years in her very much-loved home in Moore Park Road, a stone's throw from Paddington. Elizabeth trained as a registered nurse in Sydney, which she used as a stepping-stone to work abroad in the USA, England and in Italy, where she honed her European language skills, and completed postgraduate courses in Critical Care and Theatre Nursing. One of her greatest passions at this time was skiing, and she often found work not only in

¹ My thanks to Assoc. Professor (Emeritus) Sybil Jack for information used to help support this memorial note.

the ski fields in Australia, but also abroad; she could be found wherever the snow was good. She continued her enjoyment of skiing into her 60's. While Elizabeth had an exciting and well-lived youth, her greatest love in life was Franco-Scottish History, which she discovered after completing an Arts degree at the University of Sydney in her early 40's. She then went on to do a PhD, under the supervision of Associate Professor Sybil Jack in the History Department, who helped Elizabeth to learn and perfect her Latin. It is during this time that she became a member of the Sydney Society for Scottish History.

Elizabeth's involvement with the SSSH was much more than cursory; she actively pursued the production of a reputable scholarly journal for the group, with the first volume appearing in 1993, with an annual publication every year (for the most part), ever since. Elizabeth became great friends with Malcolm Broun the founder of the SSSH, who was persuaded by Elizabeth to create the journal and to extend the lectures and connections from local scholars and interested parties to Historians abroad, mainly from Scotland, although there were others from Canada and New Zealand as well. The late Malcom Broun wrote this accolade about Elizabeth's contribution to the SSSH in the first journal:

One of our most important driving forces of this Society has been our Vice President, Dr Elizabeth Bonner. She first delivered a paper to us in 1986 when she was then a Ph.D. student. Her personal studies and work in the field of Scottish History has put us in touch with many scholars, and in particular she has brought to us the participation of many members of the Department of History at Sydney University. She had delivered a major paper of original scholarship and research to us each year since 1986. The publication of this journal is mainly the result of her enthusiasm and persistence. The Society owes her a great debt.²

Elizabeth gave her last paper just two years ago (she never missed giving a paper every year), and she was in the process of preparing one for this year when her health took a turn for the worse.

Elizabeth was an inveterate traveller all her life but was particularly at home in France, Scotland and Italy where she trawled the archives in search of solid evidence old and new, while adhering to the rigour required of sound historical research. Scholars, at home and around the world, have been the beneficiaries of her devotion to archival research with much of our own work enhanced by her publications, and generosity in sharing and sourcing sometimes hard to locate evidence, in the archives of Europe and Britain.

Elizabeth is widely published in both English and French. Many of her articles and chapters resulted from papers she had presented at conferences. She hardly ever missed a Celtic Conference in Sydney, the Australian and New Zealand Medieval and Early Modern Society conferences, the George Rudé conferences, or international conferences and gatherings in Britain and Europe when she could get there. Her research was crucial to who Elizabeth was as a person, and in that vein, it was not only

² Malcom D Broun, 'Introduction to the First Edition', *Journal of the Sydney Society for Scottish History*, 1 (June 1993): p. 3.

important to her, but to scholars across the world. Elizabeth was a perfectionist with details, and this is evident in her work. Her research, even if creating controversy at times, was well regarded internationally. While a visiting fellow at the Institute for Advanced Studies at Edinburgh University in 1994, she was invited by the French Consul to celebrate the 700th Anniversary of the Auld Alliance and delivered some radio programs addressing this topic.

The study of the Auld Alliance was a topic that Elizabeth pursued right up to end of her life, and it informed a good portion of her research and writing overall.³ Much of her recent work was centred around the archives held at the Chateau de la Verrerie in France, which is the French home of the Stuarts of Aubigny; Elizabeth was hosted here, while enjoying the exclusive rights (for the most part), to these rich family archives. Many members of the SSSH enjoyed the colourful photos and lectures related to this beautiful establishment on several occasions, and of which Elizabeth was so very fond. Elizabeth's final publication, which is related to the Auld Alliance and the Stuart's of Aubigny, was in press at the time of her death, and was published posthumously in December of 2020.⁴

Although Elizabeth did not have a tenured university position, this did not deter her from continued research, and she enjoyed the support of many Franco-Scottish Historians at home and abroad.⁵ Her research was formally honoured in 2005 by the French who named her a Chevalier de l'Ordre des Palmes Académiques; an honour normally reserved for long tenured academics. This award was celebrated at Sydney University with a special reception in the Nicholson Museum. Many members from the SSSH also supported Elizabeth at this most proud, and well-deserved moment, in her life.

Elizabeth was a member of the Scottish History Association, a fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland and a member of many other groups related to Late Medieval and Renaissance History. She had many friends and colleagues at home in Australia and from across the world. Elizabeth was a most treasured and colourful friend to all, but particularly to the Sydney Society of Scottish History, to which she contributed in many different and important ways over many, many years. She will be greatly missed.

Dr Lorna Barrow (FSAScot)
Vice President SSSH

³ Please see Appendix 1 for a selection of Elizabeth's most important works pertaining to this topic and her expertise, more broadly.

⁴ Elizabeth Bonner, 'Scottish Soldiers in Fifteenth-Century France: Remembering an Early Scottish Diaspora', in *Memory and Foresight in the Celtic World: Perspectives from the Late Medieval through Modern Periods*, edited by Lorna G. Barrow and Jonathan M. Wooding (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 2020).

⁵ Elizabeth, while not tenured, enjoyed a position from the completion of her PhD as an Associate of the Medieval and Renaissance Studies Centre at Sydney University until the 2019.

A SELECTION OF PUBLICATIONS BY ELIZABETH ANN BONNER

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