

PLATE LVII



A. H. McDONALD

*Edmond Leigh*

## ALEXANDER HUGH McDONALD

1908–1979

ALEXANDER HUGH McDONALD, born in New Zealand on 15 May 1908, was of Scottish Presbyterian stock, a son of the Reverend William and Mary McDonald, and he grew up with a love of the open air and of herding sheep on horseback. He was deeply devoted to his widowed mother and his brothers; and late in his life he moved to London mainly in order to act as a father to two orphaned nephews. It was his capacity for deep affection and unswerving and unselfish loyalty which were to win him friends in all walks of life and in many countries. One of his loyalties was to New Zealand. Educated at Auckland Grammar School, he went on to win full honours at Auckland University College (as it then was), ending with a Double First in Latin and Greek and a Travelling Scholarship in Arts. Although he was destined to live mainly in England and Australia, he kept close contact with many New Zealand scholars of his generation in England, acted for New Zealand Universities in appointments, and never failed to attend an All Blacks match, having been a keen scrum-half himself at school and university. Indeed, he had the attributes of a scrum-half: a short, stocky, stalwart figure, dogged tenacity, courage, and quickness of mind.

In 1930 he was admitted to Clare College, Cambridge, to read for the Classical Tripos Part II as an Affiliated Student, and entered into college life with immense energy and exuberant spirits. His love of sport and his skill at tennis and squash were social assets in those days, and they went together with a twinkling eye and an exceptional geniality. He enjoyed company and discussion over a pint of beer, and later in life he was a member and sometimes a founder of dining clubs which debated matters of academic and political interest. He was extremely hard-working and undertook two special subjects instead of the usual one. His diligence and persistence, and his voluminous essays in rather crabbed handwriting, nearly drove his supervisor into the ground, but they came through the ordeal as lifelong friends; and Alex obtained his First Class in Part II, a College exhibition, and a research award which enabled him to spend the academic years of 1932–4 at

Göttingen and Clare. His subject, 'The sources of Livy', which demanded very wide reading, sensitive scholarship, and fine judgement, was an ambitious one for a young scholar, but he produced an outstanding thesis and obtained the Ph.D. of Cambridge University in 1936. Meanwhile he had been appointed Lecturer in Ancient History at Nottingham University College in 1934, where he made a deep impression and won many friends. While he was there he was chosen to succeed S. K. Johnson in the preparation of the text of Livy xxxi–xl for the Oxford Classical Edition, a task for which he had the highest qualifications, for he had already studied many of the manuscripts of Livy and specialized in the history of the Roman Republic. He published an article, together with F. W. Walbank, his contemporary and lifelong friend, 'The origins of the Second Macedonian War' in *JRS* xxvii (1937), and another 'Scipio Africanus and Roman Politics in the Second Century B.C.' in *JRS* xxviii (1938). His rise to prominence in Latin studies of the Roman Republic had been rapid, and he had derived great benefit from discussion and friendship with U. Kahrstedt, F. E. Adcock, H. M. Last, and W. B. Anderson and with many scholars of his own generation. He was well placed for an outstanding academic career in England, when the invitation came to go to Australia.

A new chapter opened in 1939 when he accepted appointment as Reader in Ancient History at Sydney University, where he was to remain until 1952. His career in Australia was remarkable for its wide scope and influence. Being so energetic and public-spirited, he took on many assignments in his University, acted as Professor of Latin in 1945, and in the same year was elected to a specially created Chair of Ancient World History. Between 1945 and 1951, when Australian Universities were crowded with a double stream of students, his lectures on 'The Whole Story of Mankind to the Discovery of America' were famous. They were delivered to such huge classes—up to 500—that broadcasting techniques and repeat performances were necessary. His pithy humour and infectious chuckle endeared him to many thousands of students. At this time he put new life into the teaching of ancient history in the secondary schools by inspiring the teachers of history and devising an appropriate syllabus. His influence was so profound and long-lasting that in the year of his death seven thousand candidates—a fifth of the whole—were offering ancient history in the Higher School Certificate in New South Wales.

During the years of the Pacific War his lively mind and quick interest made him an ideal commentator on current events for the Australian Broadcasting Company and the most suitable man to edit the Current Affairs Bulletin which was issued to Australian troops in all theatres. He became a household name in Australia and an expert in problems of the Pacific. He visited Japan as a member of a study-group, sat on an Australian Government Committee at the time of the peace treaty with Japan, and helped in the appointment of Colonial Service officers for the Pacific area in 1946-51. He was founder-editor of the journal of the Australian Institute of International Affairs, *The Australian Outlook*. He published a book *Japanese Imperialism* in 1944 and edited essays on *Trusteeship in the Pacific* in 1948. His public services as well as his scholarship brought him the honorary degree of LL.D. at Glasgow University in 1948. These years in Australia laid an almost intolerable burden of academic and governmental work on his broad shoulders, and he was greatly helped in carrying it by his happy marriage in Australia to Joan McIlwraith, who was trained in librarianship and shared his interests. His eminence in the University and in governmental affairs marked him out as a future Vice-Chancellor in New Zealand or Australia at a time of University expansion.

In 1952 he returned to Cambridge as a University Lecturer in Ancient History in the Faculties of Classics and History and a Fellow of Clare College. Strong among the reasons for his move was his wish to pursue his researches in Livy, which were possible only with fewer commitments and with residence on this side of the globe; and also his attachment to friends in Cambridge with whom he had remained in touch. He took to college life again like a duck to water, played tennis and squash with unaging energy and skill, and liked nothing better than dancing a ha'aka at an undergraduate party. Articles began to flow again from his pen in *Fifty Years of Scholarship* (1954), in *JRS* xlv (1955) and in *JRS* xlvii (1957), 'The Style of Livy', in which he acknowledged his debt to U. Kahrstedt, F. E. Adcock, and E. Fraenkel. But his readiness to respond to calls of duty quickly and, given his nature, inevitably diverted him from concentration on Livy. In 1954-7 he was Senior Tutor. It was a heavy task at a difficult time, when there were changes in the air. His genial manner and ready sympathy made him very accessible to his pupils, and he stimulated them to think for themselves by his careful analysis of their problems. He

developed a tutorial office which had been lacking, and his wife gave valuable help to the College in organizing a Students' Library.

From 1958 onwards he was able to devote his energies to Livy, and he was never happier than when discussing a variant reading or a knotty textual and topographical problem. In 1965 he published his Oxford Classical Text of Books xxxi–xxxv, which was acclaimed as a work of outstanding scholarship, editorial independence, and shrewd judgement. As the first full critical edition of these books, based on the collation of very numerous manuscripts and the construction of a stemma and founded on an expert knowledge of the historical and topographical subject-matter, it marked a new stage in Livy studies—'blazing a trail' as one reviewer wrote. He published in 1966 an excellently illustrated book for the general reader, *Republican Rome*, which contained many neat summaries derived from his study of the Republic such as 'the Romans made a habit of turning a series of improvisations into a convention'. In that year he started work on Livy xxxvi–xl at the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton, where he held a Fellowship, and he wrote there an article, 'The Treaty of Apamea (188 B.C.)', in *JRS* lvii (1967), which showed his scholarship at its best in his mastery of text, topography, history, and all previous literature and in his careful and commonsense judgement. Another article on the naval clauses in that treaty appeared in *JRS* lix (1969).

In 1967 he was elected a Fellow of the British Academy. There followed an Honorary Litt.D. of Auckland University and the award of the Litt.D. of Cambridge University. Now an elder statesman, Alex shouldered new responsibilities as Chairman of the Archaeological Faculty of the British School at Rome 1967–70, and President of the Roman Society 1971–4. In these offices he took immense trouble and showed himself most considerate in all personal matters. His Presidential address, delivered in 1973 and published in an expanded and annotated form in *JRS* lxxv (1975), drew upon his long experience in the study of 'Theme and Style in Roman Historiography' and marked out the lines for further research in this important linguistic and historical field. It was a typical example of his ability to see a subject as a whole and to look ahead into the future. In Cambridge he was President of the Philological Society 1968–70; and as Steward of Clare College 1963–5 he laid down some excellent vintages in the Fellows'

cellar. He edited *The Clare Association Annual* for almost twenty years, a labour of loyalty, which kept him in touch with Clare men of his time. He continued to serve Australasian universities; once, when asked if he had difficulty in selecting suitable candidates, he replied: 'No difficulty at all. I have just sent a telegram recommending A. McDonald and B. McDonald, signed A. McDonald.' He was most generous in advising scholars both young and old. He treated them alike with a natural courtesy, gave an open-minded hearing, and weighed his answers carefully. He wrote admirable reviews, for he was exceptionally well-read and fair-minded, and not hypercritical. He participated in collaborative works punctually, such as *The Oxford Classical Dictionary* and an *Atlas of Greek and Roman Lands*; and it was typical of his work that the cartographer named him as the most precise and considerate of the thirty contributors.

His health had always been robust. But early in the 1970s he contracted in Iran a serious illness, not at first diagnosed but involving hepatitis, which affected him mentally and physically at the time and left his health seriously impaired. Although he continued his work on Livy, especially the close study of the manuscript tradition, his pace was much decelerated. He retired from his University Lectureship in 1973, and he and Joan lived thereafter in Perth, where the University of Western Australia elected him the first of their Honorary Research Fellows and the Australian Academy of the Humanities made him an Honorary Fellow. In Perth too he inspired colleagues and students alike by his ready interest and infectious enthusiasm, and he became a much loved figure in the Department of Classics. He and Joan had many friends too in other Australian universities, many of whom treasure the memory of his famous lectures at Sydney University; and they came often to London to the delight of their colleagues and friends. It was a tragedy for many in many parts of the world when he died in Perth on 9 July 1979 after a short illness.

In so full and productive a life the most memorable quality of Alex McDonald was his unfailing friendliness and consideration for people of every kind, and his complete devotion to those on whom he bestowed his affection, especially in their old age. He was extraordinarily good to young people, whether undergraduates or relations or his friends' children. Wherever he lived, he gave unstinted service to his fellows in his staunch and cheerful way with a slightly quizzical look and a

sturdy humour. He was indeed the nicest of men. And he was a devoted scholar, tenacious in pursuing his aim when there were many calls upon his energies, meticulous in his scholarship, thorough in his reading, independent in thought and balanced in judgement. His contributions to the text of Livy and the history of the Roman Republic give him an assured place in the annals of scholarship.

N. G. L. HAMMOND