



I. E. S. EDWARDS

Roger Wood Studio

Iorwerth Eiddon Stephen Edwards

1909–1996

IN MOST MATTERS Eiddon Edwards was a traditionalist, and particularly in the formalities of life and the use of the English language. Usage did not excuse slackness, and he could never accept that personal habits in behaviour, speech, and writing could be changed from what he had learned in school, university, and social life in the 1920s and 1930s. I am not at all sure that he would have approved of the ‘Eiddon Edwards’ at the start of this memoir. He was much more comfortable with the formality and impersonality of ‘I. E. S. Edwards’ or, latterly, ‘Dr Edwards’. He did not appreciate being addressed as ‘Eiddon’—his preferred Christian name—by anyone who had not been invited to do so. By preference, even with relatively close colleagues, he chose to use surnames in address. It was nothing to do with the fact that most people who attempted ‘Eiddon’ failed to pronounce it correctly.

The names Iorwerth and Eiddon proclaimed a Welsh connection, and for much of his life he maintained good contacts with family roots in farming communities in and around Llanidloes and Newtown, Montgomeryshire (he certainly would not have approved of Powys). From this part of Wales his father came, but Edwards himself was a Londoner, born in Highgate on 21 July 1909. His parents were Welsh-speakers, and the language was spoken at home, but not exclusively. The young Edwards, as he later claimed, spoke Welsh more than English in his early years; as he grew up, bilingualism in Welsh and English was not considered necessary, and he did not maintain his competency in Welsh.

His father, Edward Edwards, was a Persian scholar in the Department of Oriental Printed Books and Manuscripts in the British Museum; his mother, Ellen Jane Edwards (*née* Higgs), was an acclaimed soprano, performing professionally in oratorio and opera. From his father Edwards inherited a propensity for, and interest in, oriental languages which would in due time

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determine the course of his own career. His mother's musical talents were perhaps less evident in his own cultural interests in later life. He was not a concert-goer, and showed little interest in music apart from an abiding love for the works of Gilbert and Sullivan. He did not in later life often attend the theatre, not greatly relishing the stuffy atmosphere of the houses. Things had been different in the 1930s, and he frequently invoked the lighter comedies and musical shows of his youth—Aldwych farces, for example—which he had undoubtedly enjoyed, and remembered with affection and some precision.

Remembering, in fact, was something which mattered considerably to Edwards, fuelling his talk and making him a remarkable conversationalist and raconteur. In company he was never short of a suitable anecdote to illustrate a point, and his witty retelling of significant—and not so significant—events in his past, usually related in an engaging self-deprecatory manner, made him a welcome guest at any gathering of Egyptologists, especially of younger scholars for whom Edwards could bring to life long-dead luminaries of the subject, rendering them a deal more human than their published works suggested. And the gathering need not have been Egyptological for him to monopolise the talk. One old friend, Lord Coggan (Archbishop of Canterbury 1974–80), writing of dinners he had with Edwards and another contemporary, says: 'He was a better talker than listener! He engaged in a flow of conversation, recollections, etc. which allowed only for intermittent contributions from the other two of the trio!'

At Merchant Taylors' School, which at that time was still situated in Charterhouse Square in the City of London, Edwards had the opportunity to take up the study of Hebrew in the sixth form. Lord Coggan recalls the time when he first met Edwards in 1926. Both were members of the Hebrew Class at Merchant Taylors', probably the only school in Britain with such a class at that time, an extraordinary experiment in the extension of classical studies, which sadly did not survive the subsequent headmastership of Spencer Leeson, who disapproved of such early specialisation. 'My main recollection of Eiddon is that he and I competed (at school and at Cambridge) for various scholarships(?) and prizes. He went to Caius, and I to St. John's in 1928.' When he had left school, in the summer before he went up to Cambridge with a Merchant Taylors' Exhibition and a college major scholarship, he was able to start elementary Arabic studies. He was, therefore, well prepared to undertake the Oriental Languages Tripos, in both parts of which he gained first classes in 1930 and 1931. With University prizes and scholarships he then embarked on postgraduate research in Arabic.

His years at Cambridge remained halcyon to him for the rest of his life. He was comfortable in his studies, and greatly appreciated the freedom which the University offered. There were also rewards in recognition of his academic

abilities. He further received an annual allowance of £100 throughout his University years, from Alfred Chester Beatty, the mining-engineer and industrialist. Beatty had, by the late 1920s, already begun to acquire oriental manuscripts with the help of specialist advisers in the various fields. Edwards's father provided Beatty with advice in acquiring, and help in cataloguing, Persian and Arabic manuscripts, and through him the younger Edwards had met Chester Beatty. The latter, with characteristic benevolence, ensured that Edwards, throughout his time at Cambridge, was able to live without financial strain and to travel in Europe. Such was the purpose of the allowance.

It would be unworthy, I believe, to suggest that Chester Beatty saw in the younger Edwards a possible successor to his father, who could be an orientalist adviser in the future. Nevertheless, Edwards did not forget that early generosity, and, after the Second World War, was able in some measure to repay his benefactor in a number of practical ways: by arranging the mounting of manuscripts, by then housed in the Chester Beatty Library in Dublin, by conservation officers of the British Museum during their vacations; by enabling the young, but difficult, Rolf Ibscher, son of the great Papyruskonservator Hugo Ibscher, to tease out and mount the fragile pages of Coptic Manichaean codices in the workrooms of the Egyptian Department in the British Museum; by finding for Beatty young scholars capable of studying and publishing manuscripts in that great Dublin collection.

In retrospect it seems strange that Edwards with his interest and training in oriental languages, should have in 1934, by examination, entered the Department of Egyptian and Assyrian Antiquities in the British Museum as an Assistant Keeper on the Egyptian side. There was, it must be accepted, a degree of practical opportunism in this move. The time was not good for conventional academic appointments. Edwards's father was a long-standing servant of the Trustees of the British Museum, and understood the advantages of a permanent post in times of economic crisis. And Edwards himself was not without interest in the ancient Near East and Egypt. While he was at Merchant Taylors' he had taken an active part in the school's Archaeological Society. The 1920s was a time of great discoveries: Tutankhamun's tomb in 1922, and Leonard Woolley's remarkable excavations at Ur. The pages of the *Illustrated London News* fed the public interest, offering well-illustrated reports on a regular basis.

It was the Near East rather than Egypt which attracted the young Edwards principally. Through his father he was able to meet, and receive encouragement from, H. R. H. Hall, the jovial successor to Sir E. A. W. Budge as Keeper of the Department of Egyptian and Assyrian Antiquities, and C. J. Gadd, the unassuming but impressively learned Assyriologist in the Department. Sidney Smith, the other departmental Assyriologist, who would succeed Hall as Keeper in 1930, was absent, seconded in the mid-1920s to direct the Iraq

Antiquities Department. The interest and glamour of Tutankhamun, which were so to concern Edwards in later life, were distant and intangible; the wonders of Ur, on the other hand, came in part to the British Museum, and could be inspected at close quarters, and the excavators questioned. But Egypt was not wholly neglected. Edwards recalled a moderately disastrous lecture on the pyramids which he delivered to his schoolboy contemporaries. It was, as he said, completely derivative—how could it have been anything else!—but it serves as a first indication of an interest in those great monuments which would in due course play such an important part in his studies and publication.

It was no unusual thing for new Assistant Keepers to arrive in the British Museum with little expert knowledge in the areas in which they were to specialise. A good degree in an established discipline determined a candidate's academic abilities. Some interest in the appropriate field would help. Edwards was well qualified by scholarly record and interest; he already knew the Museum and the senior members of the department in which he was to spend the whole of his career, apart from the war years. In 1934 the Department had in theory two vacancies to fill. Edwards replaced S. R. K. Glanville, who had moved in 1933 to University College London to become Reader in Egyptology, and succeeding Sir Flinders Petrie as the Edwards Professor in 1935. The second vacancy was filled shortly after Edwards's appointment by Richard Barnett, a classical scholar, who moved laterally from the Department of Greek and Roman Antiquities. Like Edwards, Barnett was a child of the Museum, being the son of Lionel Barnett, the distinguished scholar of Indian languages, who was Keeper of Oriental Printed Books and Manuscripts. The careers of Edwards and Barnett marched in parallel for the next forty years, both in the end achieving the Keeperships of their parts of the old department when it was divided in 1955 into the new Departments of Egyptian and of Western Asiatic Antiquities. There was more than a small element of rivalry in the relationship between Edwards and Barnett, which in later years brought benefits to both of the new departments. It could be said that they enjoyed a close, but uneasy, relationship.

During his first years in the British Museum Edwards turned himself into an Egyptologist. He worked in an environment particularly conducive to the learning of a new discipline. The tradition of his department was rooted in publication, and its emphasis was linguistic. Stephen Glanville, his predecessor, who had himself entered the department as a classicist and neophyte Egyptologist in 1924, had set a particularly hard example to follow; he had shown just how much could be done from scratch in a few years, becoming a perceptive editor of hieratic texts, a demotist of exceptional ability, and a sensitive writer on ancient Egyptian works of art. Glanville's was a testing record, and he contributed more to Edwards's development as an Egyptologist than being a stimulus to achievement. Teaching Egyptian at University

College London, he could readily include Edwards in his classes, and indeed extend his tuition in an informal, but particularly agreeable manner after hours in the more relaxed environment of public house or restaurant. Edwards was an apt student; being already well accustomed to Semitic oriental languages, he was readily capable of tackling the special difficulties of the hieroglyphic script and the successive stages of the ancient Egyptian language. It was not, however, until after the Second World War that he seriously came to grips with the niceties of that language.

Within the department there was one other Egyptologist, Alan Shorter, whose fields of interest were Egyptian religion and funerary papyri. Shorter did not find it easy to work with Sidney Smith, his Keeper, and indirectly Edwards profited from this conflict of personalities. For matters Egyptological Smith came increasingly to rely on Edwards, providing him with opportunities to advance his Egyptological studies, to travel to see the great European collections, to take part in the excavations of the Egypt Exploration Society in the Sudan, at Amara and Sesebi (1937–8); he even organised classes in Coptic in his Keeper's residence in the British Museum. As ever, the Museum was a focus of interest for foreign Egyptologists, and Edwards had exceptional opportunities to meet many of the leading scholars from Europe and America. His position as the Egyptologist in the British Museum was confirmed after Shorter's tragically early death in 1938.

The principal scientific fruit of his pre-war years was epigraphic. *Hieroglyphic Texts from Egyptian Stelae, etc.*, Part VIII, was published in 1939. This series had lain in abeyance since Part VII, by H. R. H. Hall, had appeared in 1925. The early volumes (especially the first) had not been seen as reliable; the drawings of texts were of very variable accuracy. A radical change was made in the textual presentation in Edwards's volume. All the texts were reproduced in photographic plates, and also printed in hieroglyphic type in the body of the work. It was not an ideal method, especially as the best available hieroglyphic type (the Gardiner fount) was not used. Such presentation did not allow the editor to deal in a satisfactory way with the kinds of sign-variation and significant detail which good epigraphy demands. Yet, within the restrictions imposed by the method of publication, Edwards dealt more fully and more satisfactorily with the individual monuments (mostly of Eighteenth-Dynasty date) than any of his predecessors in the series.

Epigraphy, however, was not a discipline which Edwards could have practised with ease. From childhood he had suffered from poor eyesight, which had greatly restricted his participation in many activities, like team games. It did not, however, limit his scientific work until his last years. He was, for example, well able to read poorly preserved and badly written hieratic documents. Monumental texts, on the other hand, often require a degree of close

inspection, especially in damaged areas, which he would have found difficult to provide, especially in the field.

The outbreak of war in September 1939 put an end to serious work on the collections of the British Museum, and Edwards was put in charge of the dismantling of the Egyptian Department, and the removal of many of the objects to relative safety in Boughton House in Northamptonshire, made available for the purpose by the Duke of Buccleuch. Edwards, as one of the few younger members of the Museum's staff still out of uniform, spent considerable periods of time on duty in the country. It was an unreal existence, in which it was difficult to pursue conventional scholarship. Some reading could be done, but few books were available, and there were irksome, but necessary, duties of care and inspection to be carried out.

The tedium of restricted country life, with little intellectual stimulation for the most part, was for Edwards relieved first of all by his provisional call-up for the army. It had been deferred since he was involved in work regarded as being of national importance. He left on mobilisation leave in London in February 1942, and shortly after received a summons from the Foreign Office, who offered him a wartime post at the British Embassy in Cairo. After due consideration he decided to accept the offer, and left for Egypt by sea from Gourock in the *Mary Slessor*. The remainder of the war he spent in the Near East, in Cairo, Baghdad, and Jerusalem, a period of particular importance for his career. He became well acquainted with those countries which were of importance as far as the collections of his Museum department were concerned. He had so far not passed much time in Egypt proper, and his period in Cairo—spent refreshing his Arabic and reading Arabic newspapers for intelligence purposes—gave him opportunities for travel within the country, and to become better informed about the sites and great monuments. In Egypt he was happily joined by his wife, Elizabeth (*née* Lisle) whom he had married in 1938.

Of the monuments that captured his attention in particular were the pyramids, and they provided him with a very suitable subject for study and research, especially as most of the major examples lay within easy driving distance of Cairo. Shortly before the War he had been approached by one of his British Museum colleagues on behalf of the publisher Allen Lane, with the suggestion that he might consider writing a King Penguin on the pyramids for them. At that time he was too busily occupied with learning as much as he could about the Egyptian language, and about ancient Egypt in general, to contemplate an extra commitment requiring specialisation in such a large subject. Now, some four years later, he wrote to Allen Lane to enquire whether anything had come of the suggestion. In consequence, he was then asked to produce a Pelican book on the pyramids himself. This time he accepted the offer. It was a momentous decision. Pyramids would form a dominant feature

of Edwards's work for the rest of his career. For the general public interested in ancient Egypt, Edwards and the pyramids would be almost synonymous.

Writing to Alan Gardiner from Cairo in September 1943, Edwards reported his acceptance of the Penguin/Pelican offer, and continued:

Since last summer I have read almost all the publications on pyramid excavations and I plan to finish the remainder very shortly [there were good Egyptological libraries in the French Institute and the Borhardt Institute]. I have also visited all the Pyramids, to which access was remotely possible, between Giza and Meidum, including the Bent Pyramid. It has been an arduous, and sometimes a little hazardous, job, particularly for one like myself who has a tendency to claustrophobia, but it was worth the effort.

Later in the same letter he describes the problems of gaining access to the chambers inside the Bent Pyramid at Dahshur:

It was, in fact, only with considerable difficulty, and by lying completely prone, that I was able to push myself through the space available. Even then my difficulties were not over, because I still had to cross the pit at the entrance to the chamber. Eventually I succeeded by getting the ghafir [Antiquities Service guard] to stand in the pit while I put one foot on his shoulder and leapt across to the threshold of the room. These acrobatics in a place lacking in fresh air and full of bats, not to mention a difficult retreat in the event of need, was scarcely to my liking, but there was no alternative. In both pyramids at Dahshur, [the other being the northern 'Red' Pyramid] the most impressive feature was the magnificent corbel vaulting of all the chambers.

I am probably boring you with too detailed an account of my experiences, but Pyramids have been my one recreation for over a year and writing about them is now one of my weaknesses.

The result of his wartime reading and physical inspection of the pyramids was published in 1947. *The Pyramids of Egypt*, was, like its fellow Pelicans, authoritative. It was also comprehensive. From the outset it was seen to be just what was needed—a work on the pyramids, which traced their history and architecture from the great brick *mastabas* of the early dynasties to the steeply-angled constructions of Napata and Meroe. The latter Edwards had seen during his pre-war visit to the Sudan. The book's content was made up essentially of descriptions of the individual monuments drawn from the best authorities, and confirmed by himself on the ground. The treatment was critical and systematic. He dealt also with the various theories of construction and interpretation of purpose. His judgements were sober, and only occasionally adventurous. Pyramidologists and their wild beliefs found little place in his book.

The success of *The Pyramids of Egypt* went far beyond what might have been expected. It was not an easy read, but it was a triumph of synthesis, and an almost unflinching source of detail for both specialist and general reader. It

has remained in print up to the present, having been fully revised in 1961, 1985, and 1993, with many improved reprints in between. Taking advantage of the friendships he developed over the years with those field-workers who advanced pyramid studies by their excavations—in particular Professor W. B. Emery, Monsieur Jean-Philippe Lauer, Dr Dieter Arnold—he kept in touch with the latest archaeological developments. Throughout his subsequent career he pursued the pyramids, engaging in the many controversies which occurred from time to time, but ever keeping an open mind in a field prone to speculation and wild theorisation. Many of his occasional publications dealt with pyramid matters, and it was fitting that the volume presented to him in 1988 was entitled *Pyramid Studies and Other Essays*. Not surprisingly, in matters concerning the pyramids—a never-ending subject of enquiry and also of discovery—Edwards was always among the first to be consulted, and his sober, not to say unencouraging, responses often provided the necessary depressant for over-enthusiastic claims. The use of a small robot buggy in recent years to examine the unexplained shafts leading from the so-called Queen's Chamber in the Great Pyramid, provided him with an opportunity, on the one hand to encourage the technological success of the method of investigation, and, on the other hand, to question cautiously the somewhat extravagant claims of some of the investigating team.

Pyramids and the book did not wholly engross Edwards's spare time in Egypt. Egyptologically, Cairo was by no means dead. W. B. Emery, living in his house-boat on the Nile worked on his Early-Dynastic publications when his duties in Military Intelligence allowed; Jaroslav Černý, who in a very few years would become Edwards's closest professional colleague, worked in the Czech delegation; Bernard Grdseloff, a brilliant young scholar of very wide interests, looked after the Borchardt Institute; Herbert Fairman, most recent director of excavations for the Egypt Exploration Society, was also attached to the British Embassy; in the French Institute was Alexandre Piankoff, a specialist in royal funerary texts. These and others met from time to time at Groppi's and the Turf Club, exchanging ideas and abundant gossip. While he was in Cairo, Edwards was Egyptologically able to act with far greater freedom than would have been possible in the British Museum. For example, he found that in matters concerning the care and organisation of the ancient monuments in Egypt and associated affairs—of especial interest to the Oriental Secretary, Sir Walter Smart, and to Sir Robert Greg, recently retired as British Commissioner for the Egyptian Debt (later to be the President of the Egypt Exploration Society, 1949–53)—his opinion was sought and his judgement valued. It was so in the case of the possible establishment of a British School in Cairo. The idea was strongly backed by the British Embassy, and there was for a time the possibility that the Borchardt Institute, with its fine library and twin villas in Zamalek, might become the base. A long and detailed

memorandum was prepared, and Edwards played a not insignificant part in promoting the idea through correspondence with colleagues in Britain.

In the end nothing came of the discussions, and the same was the case on several occasions subsequently when Edwards was again involved, particularly in 1950, when Sir Mortimer Wheeler, recently appointed Secretary of the British Academy, encouraged Edwards, as Treasurer of the Egypt Exploration Society, to enlarge the application for the annual grant to the Treasury to include a sum for the setting up of an institute in Cairo. Again a nucleus library was available, offered by the widow of Professor P. E. Newberry, who had died in 1949. The time was not ripe, and again nothing came of it. But Edwards had in his Cairo days, and in Baghdad and Jerusalem, learned much about negotiation, and the need always for the careful presentation of cases and the importance of diplomacy. In later life he practised his acquired skills with considerable success, although sometimes these skills could be misinterpreted.

Returning to the British Museum after the war, Edwards found himself the sole curatorial officer on the Egyptian side in his department. H. R. G. Bass, who had come to the Museum in 1939 after Shorter's death, had been seconded to the Admiralty in 1940, and he chose not to return after the war. For five years Edwards shouldered the increasing burden of Egyptian matters in a department, which, like the rest of the Museum, was struggling to rebuild itself, rehousing the collections and restoring scholarly contacts. The Egyptian galleries in the Museum had been damaged only superficially by bombing, and it was possible to reinstall the exhibition in the great Sculpture Gallery which had been reorganised with considerable improvements by Sidney Smith in the 1930s. It was a slow process, involving the moving of hundreds of stone monuments, some weighing many tons, with a small staff of masons, and inadequate resources. In the upper galleries changes could be made in the presentation of funerary materials and small objects, and a very creditable series of thematic displays was organised in a remarkably short time. Publicly, the Egyptian galleries were among the first fully to open in their entirety in the Museum. The preparation of the various exhibitions could only be undertaken after the hundreds of boxes had been returned from their last wartime billet, in subterranean quarries near Bath, unpacked, and their contents sorted into categories and stored. This last task, which had never previously been dealt with satisfactorily in the Egyptian collections, became a major preoccupation, and Edwards had little time beyond it and the exhibitions for serious scholarly work of a systematic kind.

An opportunity for escape from the daily round of museum business came in 1947, when he was awarded the Peet Memorial Travelling Scholarship by the University of Liverpool. It enabled Edwards to spend some months in Egypt, collecting material for the chapter he had undertaken to write on the Early Dynastic Period in Egypt for the recently planned new edition of the

Cambridge Ancient History. Coming so soon after the war, this welcome interlude allowed him to refresh old contacts, professional and diplomatic, in Egypt, to visit more ancient sites than was possible under war conditions, and to meet European and American colleagues, newly returned to their pre-war concessions in the country. His chapter was completed not long after his return to London, but various set-backs delayed the appearance of the revised *Cambridge Ancient History*, by which time he had himself succeeded Stephen Glanville as the Egyptological editor.

Edwards's efforts on behalf of the *Cambridge Ancient History* are now little known, although at the time any contributor, and not only those writing about Egypt, was soon made aware of the very high standards set by the editors, of whom Edwards as editor-in-chief was a determined upholder of verbal precision and conventional stylistic purity. The history itself could in a sense look after itself; that is, the individual contributors could, except in a few cases, be trusted to produce texts which would be up-to-date, comprehensive, and not too innovative. When Edwards joined C. J. Gadd and N. G. L. Hammond on the editorial team in 1958, the position of the new edition was somewhat chaotic. Some of the chosen contributors to the first two volumes had completed their chapters, but wanted to bring them up-to-date; most chapters were still to be submitted; some contributors had died, others were still to be chosen; some were yet undecided, many were just slow in producing. From 1961 chapters for the first two volumes began to be printed and issued as individual fascicles, and the completed volumes were published, each in two parts, between 1970 and 1975. For Parts 1 and 2 of Volume III, published in 1982 and 1991, Edwards continued to play a major editorial role. Throughout his long association with the *Cambridge Ancient History* Edwards sustained a remarkably tenacious engagement in his editorial duties. For the first two volumes he was editor-in-chief, and he must be given the greatest credit for the form of the volumes, and for maintaining, even if slowly at times, the momentum towards publication. Most editorial work is subject to criticism, and that for the *Cambridge Ancient History* was particularly so. Like all multi-authored works, the volumes, as they appeared, were criticised, often condescendingly, but often with some justice, especially over technical aspects, some of which concerned editorial decisions, such as the Bibliographies and form of footnotes. Many editors with less determination and sheer stamina than Edwards would have withdrawn long before the end. But here he displayed a pertinacity which characterised his commitment to many projects in his career, sometimes pursued, as some thought, beyond the point of advantage. Edwards was not, and would not have claimed to be, an historian in the strictest sense, but his careful approach to all scholarly matters ensured that his two chapters for the *Cambridge Ancient History*, 'The Early Dynastic Period in

Egypt' (Vol. I, 2) and 'Egypt from the Twenty-second to the Twenty-fourth Dynasty' (Vol. III, 1), presented the surviving evidence fairly and clearly.

Scholarship and its pursuit were serious matters for Edwards. As things were in the British Museum it was not easy in the post-war period to pursue a line of research with regularity, no matter how great one's commitment might be. With little professional support, he was for many years obliged to spend most of his time on the periphery of scholarship. There were, and would be, chances of escape to universities, but the Museum was, in a sense, in his blood, and he felt an abiding loyalty to that, often ungenerous, institution. In 1948 he had been encouraged to put his name forward for the Brunner Chair in Egyptology in the University of Liverpool, following the retirement of A. M. Blackman. Edwards explained his reluctance to do so in a letter to Alan Gardiner:

I feel I am under an obligation to stay in the B.M., at least for some time. They have generously given me leave to spend the winter in Egypt, when it was most inconvenient for them to spare me, and it would be a shabby return on my part if I were to leave their service just now. I have therefore replied to the Vice-Chancellor briefly to that effect. It was a rather difficult decision to make because the chance of enjoying considerably greater leisure for study and research was not one to be lightly discarded, and, in addition, there was the undeniable attraction of a far more lucrative post, as you yourself pointed out. However, I feel sure that I have made the correct decision and the only possible one in the circumstances.

It is possible that, in addition to his genuine feeling for the Museum, he did not relish the idea of a move to Liverpool. The British Museum was in London and at the centre of things Egyptological. And there might be other opportunities in the future. One such came in 1951, when Jaroslav Černý resigned the Edwards Professorship at University College London to succeed Battiscombe Gunn at Oxford. Again Edwards was a strong candidate to succeed Černý. On this occasion, and with the knowledge that there were moves afoot to divide the Department of Egyptian and Assyrian Antiquities into two, he again agreed not to put himself forward as a candidate on the understanding that he should be promoted to the position of Deputy Keeper in the interim. In 1948 Sidney Smith had left the Museum to become Professor of Ancient Semitic Languages and Civilization in the School of Oriental and African Studies. His successor, C. J. Gadd, was due to retire in 1955, and that event would provide the occasion for the departmental division. So it happened. In 1955 Edwards became the first Keeper of Egyptian Antiquities, and Richard Barnett the first Keeper of Western Asiatic Antiquities.

In the winter of 1953–4 Edwards was invited to spend a semester in Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island, to teach in the recently established Egyptian Department of that university. It gave him his first serious experience of university teaching, and it was very much to his liking. He had, not long

before his transatlantic visit, showed signs of nervous tension, and the complete change from the British Museum, and the different scene of New England proved to be very therapeutic for him. He also had the chance for the first time to get to know the great collections of Egyptian antiquities in American museums. It was an exceptionally happy experience, and he wrote: 'Perhaps the highest praise I can give the Americans is by saying that I have never been happier since my undergraduate days at Cambridge.' To the end of his life, his Cambridge years were remembered with particular pleasure, and it would have given him great satisfaction if he had been able to end his academic career in his own university. The Herbert Thompson Professorship, which had been founded in 1946, was held by Stephen Glanville, Edwards's first instructor in the ancient Egyptian language, and by now his closest Egyptological friend. Glanville had in 1954 become Provost of King's College, and he had intimated to Edwards his hope that when he resigned his professorship in a few years, Edwards would succeed him. Tragically, Glanville died unexpectedly in 1956, and in the ensuing search for a successor for the Herbert Thompson Chair, Edwards was not seriously approached. It was, probably rightly, thought that an approach would have placed Edwards in a very difficult position. Only a year had passed since the establishment of the independent Department of Egyptian Antiquities in the British Museum, and his own appointment as the first Keeper. If he, after such a short time in office, had left for Cambridge, the very future of the Department might have been in jeopardy.

Quite differently, and in the end much more satisfactorily, Edwards's becoming the first Keeper of Egyptian Antiquities gave him the senior status which was a matter of concern to him. It also allowed him to begin the process of establishing in the British Museum a centre of Egyptological studies. It was a slow process; but traditions of service to scholars and to the general public, characteristic of the Museum in general, were expanded beyond what had previously been possible. His acquaintance with a great many foreign Egyptologists, and his willingness to allow them easy access to unpublished materials, resulted in the steady increase in the scholarly exploitation of the Egyptian collections, and their consequent publication.

Edwards's capability to pursue his own scholarly interests was, as formerly, constricted by the demands of office. Nevertheless, with the encouragement of Černý, he embarked on the study of a group of unusual texts, written on long, narrow strips of papyrus in the Twenty-first and Twenty-second Dynasties (c.1069–715 BC). They were oracular amuletic decrees, as Edwards termed them, personally written for named individuals—women as well as men—to be carried in small tubular containers as amulets against a variety of dangers and hazards in life. They were issued by the priests in charge of various oracles, and they throw great light on the extent to which the ancient

Egyptians considered their lives to be governed, even interfered with, by a huge number of spirits and influences, mostly hostile.

Six of these texts were identified in the papyrus collection of the Egyptian Department, mostly by Jaroslav Černý in the late 1940s, while he was still at University College London. In 1949 a seventh example was acquired by the Museum, arousing Edwards's special attention, and proving to be the spur which stimulated his studying the whole group with the intention of publishing in due course a fourth series of *Hieratic Papyri in the British Museum*. To begin with it was to be a joint publication, and for years Edwards and Černý worked through these very difficult texts, written in crabbed, cursive, hieratic hands. As time passed, however, other examples turned up in various collections—in Turin, Paris, Cairo, New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, and one known only from photographs in Berlin. Some were identified by Černý, others by Edwards; they were alerted about others by helpful museum curators. Even after his move to Oxford in 1951, Černý would visit the British Museum almost weekly, and spend much time going through what had now become Edwards's personal work in progress. *Oracular amuletic decrees of the Late New Kingdom* appeared in 1960. Twenty-one texts were published, their transcriptions alone representing a work of major achievement. In the tradition of the series, commentaries were not extensive, but in all respects reflecting the great attention to detail and sober judgement which were characteristic of Edwards's scholarship. It was a publication of first-class importance, leading in 1962 to his election as Fellow of the British Academy.

He was a very regular attender at Section meetings of the Academy, being a lively contributor to discussions. On two occasions of some significance in the development of Academy activities, he served on the organising committees. In 1969 the British Academy and the Royal Society held their first joint symposium. The subject was 'The Impact of the Natural Sciences on Archaeology', and it was held to celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the discovery of radiocarbon dating. Edwards and Sir Mortimer Wheeler represented the Academy on the organising committee. He had first learned about the technique when he was in America, and had been introduced to Willard Libby, its discoverer. There was something a little bizarre in his being involved in such a scientific matter. His own competence in science was practically negligible. A former school friend, Sir Irvine Goulding, recalls that he had been asked by Edwards's father 'to give him some coaching in Maths for School Certificate. I can't remember why I was selected for the purpose, but the result was that Eiddon asked me for occasional calculations (mostly very elementary) to the end of his days.' In spite of his lack of confidence with numbers, Edwards recognised the significance of the carbon-14 process for dating in antiquity, and he had played a central role in setting up a Carbon-14 Committee, based on the Research Laboratory of the British Museum, which for many years

screened the applications sent in by archaeologists for the testing of their samples. At the symposium Edwards himself contributed a paper, 'Absolute dating from Egyptian records, and comparison with carbon-14 dating'.

He again formed part of the Academy representation on the organising committee for a second joint symposium with the Royal Society. On that occasion the subject was 'The Place of Astronomy in the Ancient World', the subsequent volume of contributions being published under the same title in 1974.

During the 1960s at the British Museum, the infant Egyptian Department developed steadily towards a robust and active maturity. New permanent exhibitions were prepared in the upper galleries, and a fruitful programme of publications was developed. In particular, Edwards initiated a new series of catalogues of objects in the Egyptian collection. Until that time, scholarly publication had concentrated on written material, papyri, ostraca, and inscribed stone objects. By the time of his retirement in 1974, four volumes of other categories of antiquities had been published, and other volumes were in the process of preparation.

In 1962 the Arts Council of Great Britain, with the Royal Academy, sponsored an exhibition in Burlington House of Egyptian works of art drawn chiefly from museums in Cairo and Alexandria. The core items in '5000 Years of Egyptian Art' represented the first loan exhibition from Egypt to be shown in Great Britain. Edwards was the principal Egyptological organiser, and through his involvement he became acquainted with the Minister of Culture and National Guidance of the United Arab Republic (as Egypt was then termed), Dr Sarwat Okasha. In due course, the friendship which developed between Edwards and Okasha provided a solid basis of understanding during the long-drawn-out negotiations which led to the successful launching of the great Tutankhamun loan exhibition at the British Museum in 1972.

'The Treasures of Tutankhamun' marked the high point of Edwards's career in the British Museum. No exhibition, before or since in the Museum made such a mark on the British public, attracting throughout its nine months (from April to December) unprecedented crowds of visitors. Edwards spared no effort to ensure both the success of the exhibition as a public event, and also the maximising of receipts for the UNESCO fund for the preservation of the temples of Philae, a cause very close to his heart. In every aspect of the organising of the show, he took a central part: in the choice of objects, in securing their careful conservation where needed, in negotiating with Egyptian officials, in writing the catalogue, in the supervision of souvenirs for the shop, in the daily reception of special visitors to view the exhibition in advance of the public opening, in the multifarious activities that attended the show. It became an obsession with him throughout the year, and the resources of his department were strained to their limits.

It was undoubtedly his exhibition in almost every respect, although others connected with the Museum, including certain Trustees, were eager to claim credit for securing this loan to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the discovery of Tutankhamun's tomb. But the success was complete, spectacularly and financially. Yet Edwards was left with a sense that his efforts had not received the recognition they deserved, especially from the British Museum. He was, however, awarded the CMG in 1973 on the recommendation of the Cairo Embassy for his part in securing the notable improvement in relations between Great Britain and Egypt. He had previously, in 1968, been appointed CBE for his services to the Museum.

One consequence of his involvement with the London success was the invitation to help with the subsequent Tutankhamun exhibition, organised by Thomas Hoving, then Director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Edwards had no part in choosing the objects, or the physical organising of the show in its progress to six places in the USA in 1976–7; but he wrote the catalogue entries for the exhibition and the texts for two lavishly produced volumes, *Tutankhamun: His Tomb and its Treasures*, and *Tutankhamun's Jewelry*. He was also much consulted by Hoving over a wide range of matters, from negotiations with the Egyptian authorities to the marketing of products associated with the exhibition. Throughout America 'The Treasures of Tutankhamun' was a great success, but Edwards was disappointed that the strong commercial emphasis, promoted by Hoving, failed to produce a financial return at all comparable with that of his exhibition in London. Monies from the six American showings were to be used for the rehabilitation of the Cairo Museum, in which it was planned that the Metropolitan Museum would play a major role. This task remains to be done.

After his retirement from the British Museum in 1974, Edwards devoted much time to participation in a series of joint committees of UNESCO and the Egyptian Ministry of Culture: for the saving of the monuments of Philae, 1973–80; for the reorganising of the Cairo Museum, 1985; for the planning of the proposed new National Museum in Cairo, 1985; for the protection of the monuments of Giza, 1990. Through his successful efforts on behalf of the Philae appeal during the London year of Tutankhamun, he had developed very good relations with the Under-Secretaries in charge of the Antiquities Service, Dr Mohammed Gamal ed-Din Mokhtar, and then Dr Ahmed Kadry. Edwards was seen to be a true friend of Egypt, and, perhaps more importantly, a safe pair of hands, who could be trusted to carry through difficult negotiations, and tiresome bureaucratic processes, with determination. Some of the joint committees deliberated, reached conclusions, but saw no subsequent action on their recommendations. The outstanding exception was the Philae committee for which Edwards acted as unofficial secretary, pushing matters forward and instituting imaginative initiatives.

The most interesting and important of these initiatives involved the recovery of the Gate of Diocletian, which lay forgotten in the Nile mud outside the coffer dam built around the principal monuments on Philae Island, to allow the pumping out of the water submerging the temples, and the subsequent dismantling of the buildings. At a reception at the British Embassy in Cairo in 1975, Edwards had met a group of Royal Naval Minehunters which had been engaged in helping to clear the Suez Canal and its approaches. In 1976, when Edwards realised that no provision had been made for the recovery of the Diocletian Gate, he remembered the Royal Naval divers. J. E. Thompson, Lieutenant-Commander RN (retired) has confirmed the sequence of events:

Not only did Dr Edwards draw attention to the monument, but he also suggested that perhaps, bearing in mind the recent clearance of the Suez Canal, it may be that a request to the British Government for assistance in the underwater recovery might be greeted favourably and, that the Royal Navy, whose members had recently worked in conjunction with the Egyptian Navy in the successful clearance of the Suez Canal, could assist in the project.

From October 1976 until April 1977, British and Egyptian divers successfully raised the blocks of the gate, and visitors to Philae may now see, if they penetrate to the northern end of Agilkia Island—where the Philae temples have been re-erected—the rebuilt Diocletian Gate and associated quay. They form an unmarked memorial to Edwards's care and ingenuity.

On retirement Edwards was determined to return to a more active programme of scholarly research. In particular, he had plans for a comprehensive revision of the important series of Tomb Robberies texts of the Twentieth and Twenty-first Dynasties in the British Museum, some of which had been conserved and remounted during his Keepership. Unfortunately, the demands made on his time, by his involvement with UNESCO committees, the American exhibition, and other commitments, diverted him from the regular study of these papyrus documents, and finally, with the rapid deterioration in his eyesight, he was obliged to abandon his plans. It was, there can be no doubt, a sad decision to make, for he was deeply committed to scholarship, and was well aware that he had not fulfilled all that he had hoped to achieve. He was fortunate, however, in retaining throughout his last years his mental capacities, and, while his excellent memory became a little less reliable, he was still able to present papers, to make valuable contributions to academic discussions, and generally to be welcomed at international gatherings. His advice was widely sought—he was for many years a valued member of the Committee of Visitors for the Department of Egyptian Art in the Metropolitan Museum of Art—his judgement was valued, and his encouragement and support were enlisted in a wide range of matters. Over the years he was appointed a Member of the German Archaeological Institute and the Austrian Archaeological Institute; he

was a Corresponding Member of the Fondation Égyptologique Reine Élisabeth (Brussels) and the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres (Paris).

From 1962 until 1988 he was a Vice-President of the Egypt Exploration Society. An unfortunate dispute over constitutional and procedural changes in the Society led, sadly, to his resignation from the Vice-Presidency. He had served the Society well in many capacities since he had first become a member of the Committee in 1936. As Treasurer (1949–61) he had brought to a satisfactory conclusion the negotiations to secure a government grant for the work of the Society initiated by his predecessor, Hugh Last, in 1946. At the outset the application for funds was made directly to the Treasury, and Edwards did not welcome the development arranged by Sir Mortimer Wheeler, by which the grant was channelled through the British Academy, and, shortly afterwards, administered wholly by the Academy. In the Society he also introduced new financial procedures which established the publications programme of the Society on a firm and prosperous basis.

Edwards always placed great emphasis on sound judgement, and in his own dealings, both scholarly and administrative, he took time to reach decisions, and then adhered tenaciously to what he had decided. Tenacity could lead to stubbornness, and an unwillingness to be swayed by others whose judgements he might not respect. There were times when a little flexibility might have led to a quicker solution to a problem. Principles were important to him, and he was rarely inclined willingly to compromise them. In general, however, he was kind and sympathetic, more understanding of human weakness than might have been expected of one who laid so much store on convention and proper practice. He was a social person, although not indiscriminately so, enjoying company, and very generous in hospitality. For many years Morden Lodge, the dower house of Morden Hall in South London, was the Edwards family home. Its large garden provided Edwards himself with a challenge and an escape from museum administration. Here, he and his wife Elizabeth welcomed and entertained many visiting scholars, especially during the eventful year of Tutankhamun.

There were two children of the marriage, and it was an exceptionally bitter blow when Philip, a young man of great charm, ability, and promise, died prematurely of leukaemia in 1968 during his second year at New College. It was a tragedy borne with remarkable fortitude by Elizabeth and Eiddon Edwards and their daughter Lucy. He rarely spoke of Philip in later years; his reticence in personal matters was characteristic. He did not readily understand how different the young people of the 1960s were from those of the 1920s; but he could appreciate that in the culture of post-war Britain, Philip was an outstanding example of all that was best. He also became more understanding as time passed, and enjoyed a very happy relationship with Lucy's daughters.

Although failing sight restricted his last years, Edwards never indulged in self-pity, or ceased to pursue activities in which he was interested. He continued to travel regularly from Deddington in north Oxfordshire, where the family had moved in 1980, to London. He also settled down and composed his autobiography, which is yet to be published. He died unexpectedly, but mercifully quickly, in London on 24 September 1996. He was 87. A memorial service, at which an address was given by Professor H. S. Smith, FBA, was held in St George's Church, Bloomsbury, on 1 November 1996.

T. G. H. JAMES

Fellow of the Academy

Note. I am especially indebted to Elizabeth Edwards for reading the draft of this memoir, checking details of her husband's life and career against his autobiography, and making many felicitous suggestions for the improvement of my text. I am further grateful to the Rt. Revd. and Rt. Hon. the Lord Coggan, PC, and Sir Irvine Goulding, contemporaries of Eiddon Edwards at Merchant Taylors' School, for providing information on his early years. J. E. Thompson, Lieutenant-Commander RN (retired) made contact at just the right moment to tell the story of the retrieval of the Diocletian Gate on Philae Island. He has kindly allowed me to include part of it in the memoir.

The autobiography completed by Edwards shortly before his death has not been used directly for this memoir. Its publication should take place in the near future.

Pyramid Studies and Other Essays, published in Edwards's honour by the Egypt Exploration Society in 1988, contains a bibliography (by Anthony Leahy) of his publications up to 1986.