

## *Roger Fairclough*

*1933–2009*

Roger was the much-loved and respected head of the Map Department of Cambridge University Library from 1958 to 1997, and a founder member of the Charles Close Society, to which he was a good and steadfast friend. He was a substantial figure: large in intellect, profoundly deep in knowledge, broad in interests, great in his love of his family and friends, and of ample physical proportions. Thirty years ago, he and I were the British delegates to the AACR working party in Ottawa; his now legendary incisiveness more than once cut through the miasma of irrelevant detail and brought the discussions back to the point, and helped to keep the focus on the matters in hand. Breakfasts in the hotel during that week were memorable and followed the invariable formula – Roger would eye his plate of waffles and maple syrup and reflect, with great sadness, that his doctor had told him that he really ought to lose weight. I would suggest, as gently as was humanly possible, that the doctor was possibly right. At which point Roger would become very serious and agree wholeheartedly that I, too, was quite right, before deciding (having given the pros and cons of the matter his customary considered thought) that a second helping would probably do no harm. He would often reflect with great amusement on these breakfasts in the following years, saying that he really should have followed the doctor's orders.

Roger was born in 1933 and, after attending Morecambe Grammar School, read geography at Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge. Following National Service, he studied librarianship 'on the job' at Glasgow University Library, joining Cambridge University Library in 1958. In the same year he was promoted to assistant under-librarian and became head of the Map Department, taking over on Mr Howard Mallett's retirement, on 1 October. His abilities were clearly recognised by the university, for in 1992 he was appointed senior under-librarian in charge of the Accessions Division, a post he held in tandem with that of Head of the Map Department.

Acquiring material was one of the tasks at which Roger excelled. My husband Donald always used to say that whenever he visited the Map Room in Cambridge, particularly in the 1970s, Roger would be at his desk, meticulously going through booksellers' catalogues and lists, his keen eye picking out all manner of items which were not sought out by, for example, the British Museum/Library. The result is a collection rich in cartographic gems and minutiae of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries which is perhaps unparalleled by the larger institutions.

It must be a matter for some small regret that Roger did not make any substantial contribution to the written record on the history of cartography, or on its curatorial aspects. What he did write was always worth reading. His account of his life working with maps, which appeared under the title 'Cartographic retrospect' in *Cartographiti* (No. 52, December 1997; 26-31), should be sought out by anyone interested in maps for it illustrates above all just how much the study of maps and their acquisition had changed over the previous forty years. It also gives a wonderfully personal view of the merits of some of the leading personalities in the world of maps.

Roger was greatly supportive of the Charles Close Society and when it became clear that I could no longer house the Charles Close Society Archive (my stable where it was kept was not only bursting at the seams, the environmental conditions were, to say the least, substandard), he readily agreed to take over the custodianship and provide a home under the CUL roof. It would be hard to overestimate the relief I felt at this arrangement which absolved me of the burden of caring for the material and, now that the university has

assumed full responsibility for the Archive, the Society must be grateful, in turn, for Roger's prescience, once more, in acquiring a collection which will be invaluable in years to come and, at the same time, relieving CCS of a truly awesome potential burden of storage and conservation.

When Roger moved from Cambridge in 2001 with his wife, Eleanor, to Inverness, he immediately immersed himself in local life, playing a leading role, for example, in the Inverness Field Club. I last saw him when I went to Inverness four years ago to lecture on William Roy; it was evident that Roger was not in good health, but he and Eleanor were wonderful hosts, putting me up for the night and providing such good company. I shall always remember him with great affection for his strong friendship, sound common sense, and devotion to maps.

*Yolande Hodson*