



Jack Plumley
1910-1999

"Jack Martin Plumley was a large man with a powerful voice and a warm hearth, who succeeded in the astonishing feat of combining a love of the parish ministry with leadership in the study of the language and archaeology of ancient Christian Egypt" wrote the British "Times" of Professor Plumley, who died on July 2, 1999. It is a succinct summing up of a long and active life of the Reverend Professor, whose ties with the Polish scholarly community were those of special friendship and archaeological cooperation.

Jack Martin Plumley was born at Peverell, near Plymouth, on September 2, 1910, and spent his youth in London. He read Theology at St. John's College, Durham, where he also studied Hebrew and Syriac. Ordained a priest (Church of England) in 1934, he continued to develop his interest in Egyptology, and especially the Coptic language, at the inspiration of eminent Egyptologist Jdroslav Cerny. The outcome of these studies

was the excellent "Introductory Coptic Grammar", which he published in 1948. In 1955, he was offered the Chair of Egyptology at Cambridge and held it until his retirement. Liked and respected by members of the Coptic Church hierarchy in Egypt, he was also held in great affection by his students, from Britain and abroad, and a regular stream came from Egypt and Sudan to work with him. One of his important scholarly venues was the work on Biblical texts; indeed, until 1987 he served as Chairman of the British Committee of the International Critical Greek New Testament Project. During the time of the Nubian Safeguarding Campaign, he was invited by the British Exploration Society to carry out excavations in one of the most important sites in Nubia, the fortress city of Qasr Ibrim. He directed fieldwork there for seven seasons, in 1963-1978. There followed a stream of publications of the rich archaeological material from the excavations, including "The Scrolls of Bishop Timotheos"; two documents from medieval Nubia (1975) and, with Gerald M. Browne (Old Nubian Texts from Qasr Ibrim" in 1987), as well as numerous articles dealing with Christian inscriptions of all kinds.

Plumley visited Poland repeatedly. He was one of the founders of the International Society of Nubian Studies, established in Warsaw in 1972, and took over the post of President of the Society after the death of its first President, Professor Kazimierz Michałowski, with whom he had had a close friendship. In 1982, he was elected Patron of the Society in recognition of his accomplishments in the field of ancient and medieval Nubian studies. It was in this field that our contacts were particularly lively and, under an agreement with Warsaw University' Center of Archaeology, Polish scholars of Christian Nubia repeatedly had the opportunity and pleasure to participate in the work of the Egypt Exploration Society expedition to Qasr Ibrim, finding Professor Plumley to be a man of immense knowledge, yet modest, straightforward, tactful and possessing a great sense of humor. His death is a great loss to the entire Egyptological community, including Polish scholars, for whom the Professors house at Cambridge was always open and who could always count on his help and advise in matters not only of a scholarly nature. He will remain in our minds a paradigm of a reliable scholar, an excellent organizer of fieldwork, a righteous and good-hearted man.

Stefan Jakobielski