

## Obituary

### ALAN BELL (1942-2018)

Alan Bell who died in April 2018 was for twelve years, 1981-1993, Librarian at Rhodes House Library, Oxford. This was the midpoint of a distinguished career, following time as an Assistant Registrar to the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts, and as an Assistant Keeper at the National Library of Scotland. His final post (1993 -2002) was as Librarian of The London Library where he played a key role in the development of the collections, adoption of appropriate library technology and building projects. He was a regular reviewer for the *Times Literary Supplement*, an editor or editorial advisor on several prestigious projects -including the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography and The Complete Works of Evelyn Waugh and wrote an acclaimed biography of the nineteenth century writer, wit and cleric, Sydney Smith. His retirement was spent in Edinburgh.

Alan never really regarded himself as an Africanist, but during his time at Rhodes House, he was knowledgeable about his collections and a source of sound advice, and responsible for some important acquisitions, most notably the papers of Roy Welensky and the archives of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel.

He took his part in the counsels of Scolma and is remembered with respect, a degree of awe and affection by his contemporaries on the Scolma committee. Sheila Allcock, librarian of Queen Elizabeth House and Chair of Scolma, 1999-2004 recalls:

There was quite an overlap of interests in the International Development Centre (QEH) and Rhodes House Libraries, particularly in Africa. One of the first visits I made was to RH. I always remember being taken down to the basement stacks there and seeing the bound volumes of newspapers high on the shelves. I was amazed when Alan started climbing up them to retrieve a particular volume - no library steps at all! I suspect that current Health and Safety wouldn't allow that, and I was quite worried at the time.

*Terry Barringer*