

A Short History of the Gibb Memorial Trust and its Trustees

A Century of Oriental Scholarship

Edited by Charles Melville



A Short History of the Gibb
Memorial Trust and its Trustees

Gibb Memorial Trust

The Gibb Memorial Trust was founded in 1902 to commemorate E. J. W. Gibb, scholar of Turkish (1857–1901), through publishing books arising from academic research into the history, literature, philosophy and religion of the Turks, Persians and Arabs.

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A Short History of the Gibb Memorial Trust and its Trustees

A Century of Oriental Scholarship

*Essays in Honour of Robin Bligh, Secretary to
the Trust (1974–2020)*

Edited by Charles Melville

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Contents

Note on Transliteration and Abbreviations Used	vii
Introduction	1
<i>Charles Melville</i>	
1. E. J. W. Gibb	21
<i>Christine Woodhead</i>	
2. E. G. Browne	31
<i>Robert Gleave</i>	
3. Guy Le Strange	38
<i>Hugh Kennedy</i>	
4. H. F. Amedroz	46
<i>Andrew Marsham</i>	
5. A. G. Ellis	50
<i>Charles Melville</i>	
6. R. A. Nicholson	55
<i>Alan Williams</i>	
7. Sir Edward Denison Ross	68
<i>A. C. S. Peacock</i>	
8. Sir Charles James Lyall	76
<i>James E. Montgomery</i>	
9. C. A. Storey	85
<i>Charles Melville</i>	
10. Sir Hamilton A. R. Gibb	90
<i>Hugh Kennedy</i>	

11. Reuben Levy <i>Charles Melville</i>	97
12. A. J. Arberry <i>Charles Melville</i>	107
13. A. F. L. Beeston <i>Carole Hillenbrand</i>	117
14. Bernard Lewis <i>Carole Hillenbrand</i>	123
15. Ann K. S. Lambton <i>Carole Hillenbrand</i>	129
16. Geoffrey L. Lewis <i>Christine Woodhead</i>	137
17. J. D. Pearson <i>Charles Melville</i>	146
18. M. C. Lyons <i>Carole Hillenbrand</i>	151
19. R. B. Serjeant <i>Andrew Marsham</i>	158
20. R. C. Zaehner <i>Alan Williams</i>	170
21. J. A. Boyle <i>Charles Melville</i>	180
22. J. Derek Latham <i>Carole Hillenbrand</i>	185
23. A. H. Morton <i>Charles Melville</i>	190
24. G. Rex Smith <i>Interview by Robert Gleave</i>	199
Appendix A: Gibb Memorial Trustees	207
Appendix B: Publications of the Gibb Memorial Trust	210
Index	217

Note on Transliteration and Abbreviations Used

TRANSLITERATION

An effort has been made to keep transliteration of Arabic, Persian and Turkish names, terms and titles to a minimum in the text, unless an exact citation of the original is retained. The same is the case with the GMS book titles listed in Appendix B. More correct bibliographical details are restricted to the endnotes to each essay.

ABBREVIATIONS

<i>BSO(A)S</i>	<i>Bulletin of the School of Oriental (and African) Studies</i>
<i>EI</i>	<i>Encyclopaedia of Islam</i>
<i>EIr</i>	<i>Encyclopaedia Iranica</i>
GMS	Gibb Memorial Series
<i>JRAS</i>	<i>Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society</i>
<i>JSS</i>	<i>Journal of Semitic Studies</i>
NS	New Series
<i>ODNB</i>	<i>Oxford Dictionary of National Biography</i>
OS	Old Series

Introduction

Charles Melville

This volume is conceived and offered as a tribute to Robin Bligh, in recognition of his long and dedicated service to the Gibb Memorial Trust, spanning a remarkable forty-six years from 1974 until his retirement in 2020, and in gratitude for the calm and efficient way in which he guided and managed the work of the Trust and husbanded its resources.

Robin is well aware of the aims and efforts of the Gibb Memorial Trust, to promote and publish research in the core areas of Middle East studies (or, as it was generally known, Oriental studies), and of the largely human obstacles to their achievement – indeed no doubt often to the point of ennui; the advent of emails and the internet has had little impact on the speed of correspondence, decision-making or on the intervals between a volume being proposed and its final publication. When Robin was appointed Clerk to the Trust in 1974 upon the retirement of Mr W. L. Dominy, the Trustees in attendance were Robin Zaehner (in the Chair), Freddie Beeston, J. A. Boyle, Ann K. S. Lambton, Jim Pearson, Bob Serjeant and Geoffrey Lewis, with apologies from Bernard Lewis and Malcolm Lyons. Robin Zaehner died before the next meeting, while Bernard Lewis, who had just moved to Princeton, never attended another meeting – but most of the others would become quite familiar figures over the next few years, not to mention other Trustees appointed subsequently. But how much did Robin, with his background as an accountant and struggling to impose order and efficiency on their dealings, actually know about them all and their academic achievements? With meetings only once

a year and often little contact in between, the annual gatherings over lunch and a relatively short agenda may have revealed little more than the Trustees' interests, sociability and general demeanour.

Rather than a history of the Gibb Memorial Trust, of which Robin himself is such a significant part, we therefore thought it might be more interesting to our dedicatee to present a series of portraits of former Trustees, written by current ones.¹ The Trustees were among the foremost scholars of their day, and while they remained a rather small number – seldom more than five or six attending meetings at any one time – and often serving for decades, their dealings and correspondence reveal their extensive networks of colleagues, not only in Britain but also throughout Europe and the Middle East. Their activities and the publications they sponsored provide one window onto the development of the field of the now wrongly discredited term, Oriental studies, from its infancy (even if not quite its birth) at the start of the twentieth century.²

This, then, is about the individuals who carried on the work of the Trust, but not necessarily as the main focus of their activities; some were naturally more dedicated to its work than others, whereas some seem to have made only a small contribution to its achievements. Beyond this brief introduction, it is not a history of the Trust itself – a subject that still awaits serious treatment and that, indeed, would best be recovered from the papers and correspondence of the Trustees themselves. The Trust has only a rather meagre archive of Minute Books (which include reports of the financial transactions in the early years, its investments and dividends) and separate accounts from the 1950s and 1960s and – typically – a full set since Robin took over. He prefaces his Accounts for 1974 with the following words:

I have for the first time produced the attached set of accounts for the year to 31st December 1974 for the use of the Trustees. These will also satisfy the requirements of the Inland Revenue and the Charity Commission. In order that the opening figures in these accounts can be reconciled with the financial report for 1973 prepared by Mr Dominy, my predecessor, they contain a mixture of accounting policies, as described in Note 1. The two main changes are that investments are shown at their market valuation and income and expenditure accrued for the period before 31st December 1974 but not paid by that date have been incorporated.

This speaks clearly enough of the new era that dawned with Robin's period as Clerk and we hope that these portraits will bring back memories of many of the characters whom Robin came to know through their annual meetings and pleasant lunches in various Oxbridge colleges and elsewhere over nearly half a century.

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE 'MEMORIAL'

On the premature death of the Ottomanist E. J. W. Gibb in 1901, his mother Jane (née Gilmour) established a Trust by an indenture dated 20 November 1902, to be called the 'Elias John Wilkinson Gibb Memorial', for the promotion and advancement of the study of the language, literature and history of the Turks (Eastern and Western), the Arabs and the Persians. Among the aims of the Trust were the procurement of manuscripts in any of these languages; the translation and editing, the printing or reproduction in facsimile, the dissemination and distribution by gift or sale of such books and manuscripts; the making of grants to students for travelling or otherwise for the purpose of investigating these languages, anyone receiving £50 or more to be called a 'Gibb Scholar'; the appointment of lecturers on the study of the Turkish language, literature or history – to be called a 'Gibb Lecturer'; and any other appropriate purpose to promote the study of these languages, 'but not in any case by monumental or other inscriptions'. The initial executors were named as E. G. Browne, G. Le Strange, H. F. Amedroz, A. G. Ellis, R. A. Nicholson and E. D. Ross, of whom Browne, Amedroz, Ellis and Nicholson were made responsible for the management of the investments.

Jane Gibb died on 26 November 1904, and it was only a year later, on 4 October 1905, that the affairs of her estate were finalised in favour of the Trust. Meanwhile, the Trustees had made a further indenture, dated 10 August 1905, to nominate E. J. W. Gibb's widow, Ida Wilmot Eyre Gibb, as a Trustee;³ she later remarried and took the name Ogilvy-Gregory, finally resigning as a Trustee in 1929.

EARLY YEARS TO WORLD WAR I

The Trustees wasted no time setting about their task, and the first meeting was held on Tuesday, 9 December 1902, at 14 Suffolk Street, Pall Mall – the offices of the first Clerk to the Trust, Julius Bertram (see Figure 1). The meetings continued to be held in London

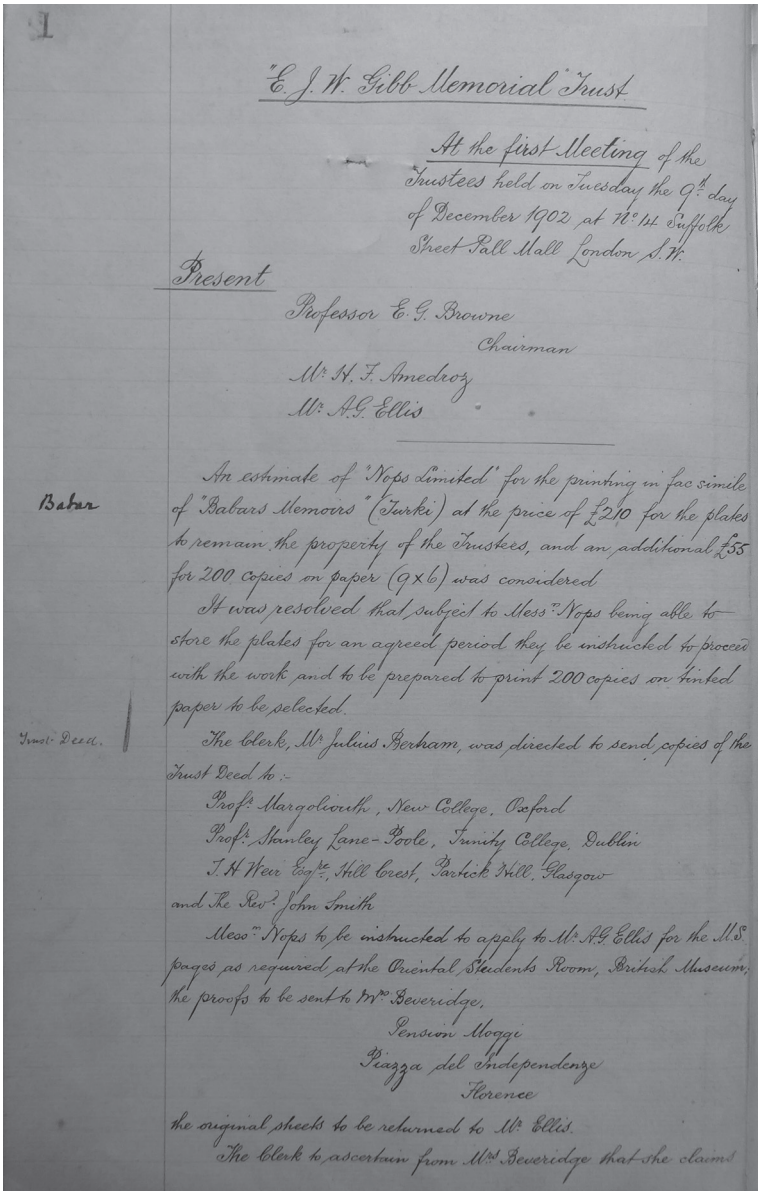


Figure 1 Minutes of the first meeting of the Trust, 9 December 1902. Gibb Memorial Minute Book, p. 1; minutes of the second meeting of the Trust, 20 July 1903. Gibb Memorial Minute Book, p. 2.

no remuneration for her share of the work.

Edward G. Browne (Chairman)

At a Meeting of the Trustees
held on Monday the 20th day of
July 1903 at No 14 Suffolk Street
Pall Mall London W. 1.

present

Professor E. G. Browne
Chairman

• Mr G. Le Strange
Mr A. F. Combridge
Mr E. Pearson Ross and
Mr A. G. Ellis

Bazar

The Minutes of the last meeting were read and confirmed.
The Clerk reported that in pursuance of the resolution
passed at the last meeting of the Trustees Messrs. Nos. 10
London had been instructed to proceed with the printing of
"Bazar Memoirs" (Turki) as per their estimate and that
they had been paid £150 on account of work done.

The Clerk also reported that a letter had been received from
Mr. Beveridge claiming no remuneration for her share of the
work which letter was read.

Trust Deed

The Clerk also reported that he had sent Copies of the
Trust Deed to Professor Margoliouth, Professor Stanley Lane-
Poole, Mr A. W. E. A. and the Rev. John Smith, and
that acknowledgments had been received from Professor
Margoliouth and Mr. W. A. Ellis which were read.

Securities

The Clerk reported that the whole of the Securities relative to
the Trust had been deposited with the Bankers The London and
Westminster Bank (Westminster Branch) and that the
balance of the Bank in favor of the Trustees on this day was
£144. 1. 0

until 1913, when Bertram was dismissed and E. G. Browne proposed that the Trust's funds be transferred to the Cambridge branch of the bank and future meetings be held there also.⁴

The first meeting was attended by Browne, Amedroz and Ellis, and the academic business was dominated by the publication of the intended first volume in the series, the facsimile of the *Babur-nama* by Mrs Annette S. Beveridge, the correspondence with whom became increasingly acerbic before the volume was eventually published in 1905. Part of the argument concerned the text, which the Trustees asserted was not intended to be a critical edition, but a facsimile, and that no attempt should be made to restore lacunae or obscured passages. While agreeing to provide Mrs Beveridge with a magnifying glass @ 50/- there was argument over the form of the index, and especially her preface, and it was 'the view of the Trustees that they are at liberty under the terms of your original letter of acceptance [. . .] to publish the facsimile text and indices which you have delivered to them [. . .] without further delay or consent from you'. In the end, G. Le Strange's tactful handling of the situation and proposed alterations to the preface brought the 'conclusion of the difficulty'. These dealings, which delayed the appearance of the first volume of the series,⁵ make the 'hands-on' approach and active engagement of the Trustees in the Gibb Memorial publications abundantly clear from the start.

Many of the earliest publications that make up the Old Series (vols I–XXV), all in preparation by the outbreak of World War I,⁶ were already mooted and mentioned in these first meetings, which happened regularly, three or four times a year. Routine business then, as now, included monitoring the accounts and investment decisions, reviewing suggestions for publications and later for reprints, negotiating with printers and publishers, and also determining who should be presented with free copies of the books. The question of the 'presentation list' was a continuing issue for years, regularly reviewed, contended and updated before apparently being abandoned in 1982.

E. G. Browne chaired all the meetings, which were attended chiefly by Guy Le Strange, Henry Amedroz, A. G. Ellis and R. A. Nicholson, with only extremely rare appearances by Denison Ross. Apart from the discussion about publications, some notable decisions can be mentioned: first, each Trustee was made responsible for seeing specific books accepted for publication through the press,

a rule agreed in 1905 and further elaborated to the point that the Trustee in question had full authority over expenses, responsibility for all details of the contents and the title pages, and even setting the price of the volume under his supervision (a point reaffirmed in 1909). In 1911, Trustees were told to communicate directly with each other rather than through the Clerk – to save money – and this soon became a point of contention. In 1912, the recommendation was made that the annual meeting should take place on the last Saturday in May – not actually followed until 1926 (after the death of Browne) but maintained regularly from then onwards.

The most dramatic episode in these early years was the action taken by Amedroz against the other Trustees (specifically, Browne, Le Strange, Ellis and Nicholson). Amedroz seems to have become increasingly at odds with his fellows, often objecting to decisions made and finding his own proposals unsupported. Tensions started to appear (reading between the lines of carefully phrased Minutes) around 1909, when Amedroz complained about the slow progress on the publication of the *Kitab al-ansab* of Sam‘ani, for which Ellis was the responsible Trustee. The following year he objected to the proposal that Trustees should continue to be responsible for their volumes after publication, also to the withdrawing of the current list of recipients, as well as not being supported in his suggestion (on the face of it, a sensible one) that there should only be one consolidated index to the edition of Juvaini’s *Tarikh-i Jahan-gusha* – none of which at that time had actually been published; it finally appeared over an extended period, necessitating a separate index to each volume. A similar proposal in 1912 regarding the indices for Ibn Miskawayh was also not supported.

At the meeting on 1 March 1913, it emerged that the Clerk had ‘repeatedly written unnecessary letters under instructions from Mr Amedroz to the other Trustees and the majority held that Mr Bertram no longer acted with perfect impartiality as Clerk but was unduly influenced by Mr Amedroz’; hence, it was resolved (Amedroz naturally entering a formal protest) to replace him, with W. L. Raynes being proposed by Browne and seconded by Le Strange to succeed him. Amedroz also denied Le Strange’s comments on the careless corrections to the proofs of volume 5 of Ibn Miskawayh (for which he was the Trustee responsible). Amedroz was absent from the

next meeting, at which a letter from him was read, and the Trustees resolved that the ‘omission complained of’ was an oversight and that ‘he having with the other Trustees recognised generally the principle of “Trustee in charge” it was unreasonable to make the demand he did and impossible to comply with it’. It is not entirely clear what volume was involved, but further correspondence with Amedroz and his complaint to the Charity Commissioners was discussed at the same meeting, and it was stated that he himself had ignored the previous resolution and that ‘one of the works mentioned [. . .] was only accepted conditionally’. This or a similar disagreement seems to have surrounded A. G. Ellis’s dealings with Professor Charles C. Torrey’s manuscript of Ibn ‘Abd al-Hakam’s *Futuh Misr* (Conquest of Egypt).⁷ The Clerk was instructed, as solicitor to the Trust, to seek counsel’s opinion ‘in the event of Mr Amedroz taking proceedings against Mr Ellis personally’, in which case the Trustees agreed to indemnify Ellis so far as was legally possible. Subsequent meetings saw the escalation of hostilities; it emerged that the Brokers of the Trust had, unknown to the Clerk, ‘accepted instructions from Mr Amedroz alone to sell an allotment of Rights to 9 shares in the Buenos Ayres Great Southern Railway’, an action that was unanimously repudiated. Amedroz’s deliberate abstention from meetings and refusal to sign cheques necessitated new measures being adopted and the resolution being communicated to him that, if he failed to sign cheques in accordance with his duty as a Trustee, the ‘necessary steps will be taken to appoint a new Trustee in his place’. Amedroz ultimately took the Trustees to court, his legal background perhaps giving him undue confidence of satisfaction.⁸ On 14 January 1915, his claim was dismissed with costs by Mr Justice Neville in the High Court (see Figure 2), and Amedroz’s name was removed as a bank signatory. His death in March 1916 was nevertheless courteously recorded – along with the request that his executors return books held by Amedroz that belonged to the Memorial.

THE CAMBRIDGE YEARS

The other casualty of this debacle, as mentioned earlier, was Julius Bertram the Clerk, who was replaced by Mr William Luard Raynes (1868–1961) of Eaden, Spearing and Raynes, an ancient firm

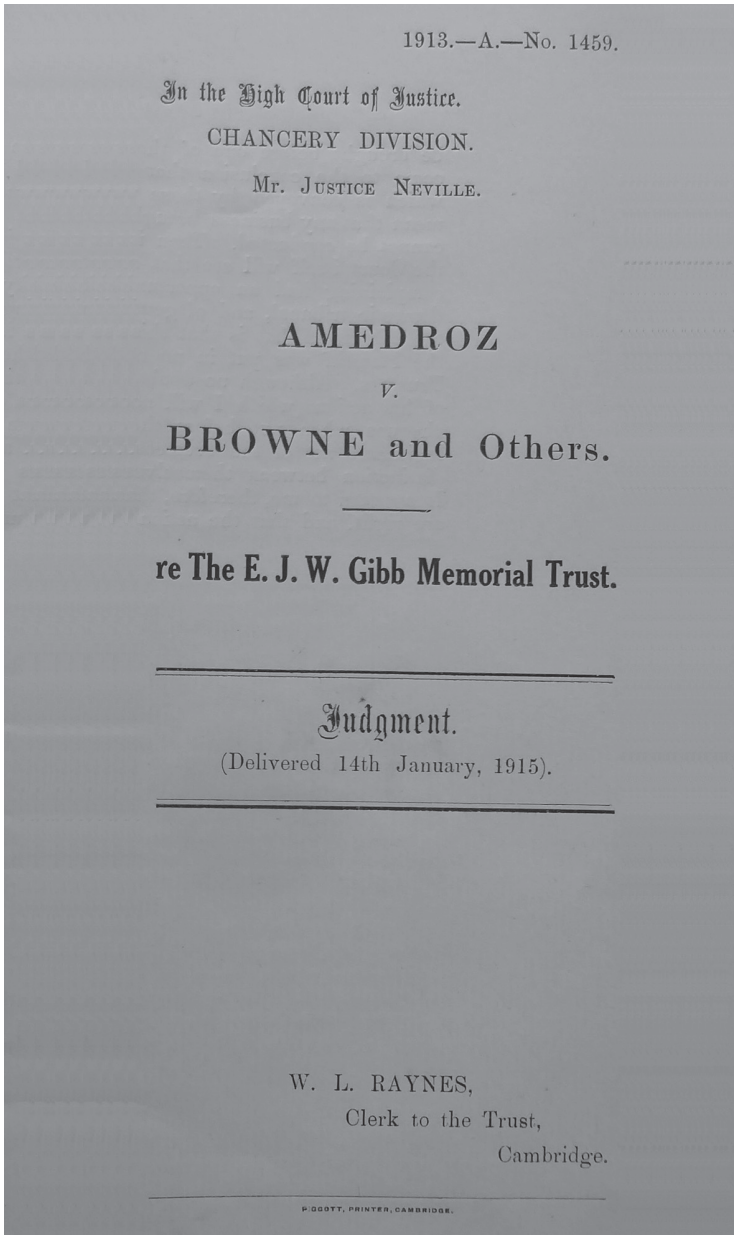


Figure 2 Judgment of Mr Justice Neville in the case of H. F. Amedroz against the Gibb Memorial Trustees, 14 January 1915.

1913.—A.—No. 1459.

In the High Court of Justice.

CHANCERY DIVISION.

MR. JUSTICE NEVILLE.

Between HENRY FREDERICK AMEDROZ - Plaintiff

and

EDWARD GRANVILLE BROWNE

GUY LE STRANGE

ALEXANDER GEORGE ELLIS and

REYNOLD ALLEYNE NICHOLSON - Defendants.

re The E. J. W. Gibb Memorial Trust.

Judgment

(Delivered 14th January, 1915).

MR. JUSTICE NEVILLE: I was invited at the opening of this case to express an opinion as to some duties and obligations of the Trustees of this Memorial, but it seems to me that I cannot usefully do so, because, except on the specific matters I have to deal with here, I cannot in any way affect the Memorial, not having all the members of the body of Trustees before me.

I think, however, I might say that it should be always borne in mind by those who have to deal with matters of this kind that where you have a body of Trustees the authority of an individual Trustee is nil. The power which is given to the Trustees is given to them collectively; in certain cases, only to be exercised jointly; in other cases, such as this, to be exercised by the majority. But outside the act of the majority a Trustee has no more power than if he were not a member of the body at all, and he cannot act separately in the administration of the powers of the Trust. If one of the Trustees is in possession of property or documents belonging to the Memorial which have been entrusted to him by the authority of the body of Trustees, he is responsible to them, and to them alone, for the safe custody of the property or documents, and he has no power or right to hand such property or documents to any

member of any other body, or have anything to do with it except under the direction of the body of Trustees of which he is a member. He has certain rights in the way of information as to what the proceedings of the Trustees are. With regard to any documents which are the property of the Trustees, in my opinion he has a right to inspection, but not a right to sole possession, even for a moment, of any one of them. With regard to the documents which come into existence in the exercise of the business, if I may so call it, of the Memorial (that is, in the way of editing or publishing such works as are referred to in the deed of the Memorial) I think that there is not of necessity any right on the part of the Trustees to inspect those documents, whether they come into existence by the operation of the Trustee to whom certain duties have been delegated, or by the operations of a stranger. With regard to matters of that kind it is impossible to lay down any general rule of direction. Each case must depend upon its own circumstances.

What I have to do in the present case is to make up my mind upon certain questions of fact, and the conclusion I have come to after hearing the evidence is that first of all the Defendants did not exclude the Plaintiff from taking part in the affairs of the Memorial, and, secondly, that they did not refuse or neglect to afford the Plaintiff any information to which he was entitled.

There is one other matter I have to consider, but only on a question of costs, because I think it is not material from any other point of view now. A question has arisen whether a resolution set out in paragraph 14 of the Statement of Claim passed at a meeting of the Trustees is valid or invalid. That depends upon whether it was necessary to give notice under the Rules which have been put in operation by the Trustees, and which govern their proceedings. Here, of course, I cannot bind the Memorial in any way by what I say, but I have to decide it as between the parties before me in order that I may determine this question of costs, because it is an issue which has been distinctly raised in the Pleadings, and the Defendants have asserted that this is a resolution which is validly passed. It all turns upon the meaning of the latter part of Rule 2 with regard to notices of meetings sent to the Trustees. "All such notices," says the Rule, "shall contain such particulars of the business to be transacted at the meeting to which they relate as may have been received by the Clerk when issuing the notices." It is quite clear that if you take those words literally it does not involve the necessity of giving notice of the business which is to

be brought before one of these meetings. On the whole I have come to the conclusion that I must adopt the specific meaning which is conveyed by those words, and I cannot extend them to mean that any business brought forward without notice being given cannot be conducted. Then it is said that this is a case in which the Court itself will see that notice was given, and that the person complaining had an opportunity of bringing his case before the domestic tribunal, and of getting a verdict in his favour. I think the answer to that is that this is not a penal question at all; that the Plaintiff was put in no other or worse position than the other Trustees. Although no doubt the Rule was passed in consequence of his action (which I will not comment upon) in refusing to sign cheques when put before them, still I think it was a perfectly legitimate act of the Trustees, and an act in which they made no distinction between themselves and the Trustee who complains. It appears to me, therefore, that in this respect also the Defendants are right, and that the action must be dismissed with costs.

of Cambridge solicitors. Raynes had been an undergraduate at Pembroke – Browne's college. From July 1913 to November 1923 the Trustees met at 15 Sidney Street, Cambridge, and then at the firm's new offices at 90 Regent Street until 1954 (with an interruption during the war years). Browne remained the mainstay of the 'Memorial' until his death in 1926, even lending the Trust £1000, which was repaid with interest in 1918. He was succeeded as Chairman by R. A. Nicholson, who was also Browne's successor as Sir Thomas Adams's Professor of Arabic at Cambridge. C. A. Storey and H. A. R. (later Sir Hamilton) Gibb were approved as new Trustees, and in 1933 they were joined by Reuben Levy. In 1936, Raynes recommended his son, E. G. Raynes, to succeed him as Clerk, although he remained in assistance as Joint Clerk for several years thereafter, with E. G. Raynes taking over around 1950.

At the onset of World War II, Ellis's illness and Sir Denison Ross's death in Turkey led to further recruitment of Trustees, both A. J. Arberry and A. F. L. Beeston being first co-opted in 1940 'till the end of the present war' and afterwards confirmed in 1946.

C. A. Storey (1888–1968), who succeeded Nicholson as Sir Thomas Adams's Professor in 1933, resigned after the meeting in 1946, but the Memorial continued to support the publication of his magnum opus, *Persian Literature: A Bio-Bibliographical Survey*, a topic that runs through the business of the Trust throughout the 1950s and beyond. Storey's papers contain interesting information that fleshes out the record of the problems faced by the Trust during the war years, when all business was conducted by (unminuted) correspondence, especially regarding the printed stocks which had to be moved when the storage space provided in Luton by Dow and Lester – the Trust's binders – was requisitioned for the war effort.⁹ Storey, who remained in Cambridge during the war, supervised the transfer of the stocks to Scudamore's boat house in Mill Lane for safe-keeping.¹⁰

Once meetings resumed, on 12 January 1946, Reuben Levy took over as Chairman and continued until 1955, when he recommended Arthur Arberry to succeed him, which he did the following year. This period saw another change, with E. G. Raynes retiring as Clerk and W. L. Dominy taking over, along with the change of Chairman. From 1955 to 1960 the Trustees held their

annual meetings in Sussex House, Hobson Street, and continued thereafter when it was Cambridge's turn to host: after 1961 the meetings rotated between Oxford, Cambridge and London, along with the rotation of the chairmanship of the Trust, reflecting the distinguished membership of Professors A. K. S. Lambton, Bernard Lewis and J. D. Pearson from London, as well as Geoffrey Lewis and Robin Zaehner from Oxford, apart from those already mentioned.

Much of the practical business dealt with at this time involved rationalising stocks and improving accounting methods. Although Luzac & Co. were the Trust's publishers and distributors, many different printers had been used, especially E. J. Brill in Leiden (or Leyden), the Cambridge University Press and W. Heffer & Sons; printed sheets of different volumes – themselves assembled over quite a lengthy production process – were spread in various places and generally unbound until required. In 1949 these dispersed stores were collected, sheets bound up into volumes, and loose sections that could not be used to make up sets were destroyed. It was also wisely decided that from then onwards all new publications should be folded and sewn on printing, by Dow and Lester. This does not seem to have been carried out at once, for the problem persisted. Yet, the Trustees accepted and immediately followed the recommendations of the Clerks that there should be a separate cash account and that capital and income accounts should be separated, like the investment records also.

Satisfactory arrangements for the storage and distribution of the Gibb publications continued to be elusive, and each new move created the possibility of further lack of clarity. This was the situation that Robin Bligh inherited when he took over as Clerk.

A NEW ERA

In 1974, W. L. Dominy retired, and the Trustees appointed P. R. Bligh of E. E. Spicer and E. C. Pegler, chartered accountants (ultimately subsumed into what is now Deloitte & Touche) as the new Clerk, ushering in a long period of 'continuity and change' – to echo the title of one of Professor Lambton's publications on medieval Persian history. In purely logistical terms, this meant the end of meetings being held in Sussex House. The rotation of chairmanship –

by place, not person, at the outset – had already seen meetings being held at SOAS in London and various locations in Oxford – the Oriental Institute, St Antony's, All Souls and St Giles House. After 1974, this persisted with a more or less steady alternation between Oxford and Cambridge colleges – St Antony's and St John's in Oxford, and Trinity Hall and Pembroke in Cambridge, with one or two rare exceptions. If nothing else, this led to some excellent lunches and a relaxed atmosphere for post-prandial discussion.

The continuity applied to the continuing work of the Trustees, annually reviewing the accounts, the progress of publications and assessing new proposals, while maintaining a proper performance of their responsibilities. In this they were ably served by the professionalism of their new Clerk, who immediately added action points to the Minutes of the meetings and took charge of the funds, gradually concentrating them into a few well-managed investment trusts. Robin also pursued with dogged determination the matching of the records of print runs and sales with the information provided by the distributors of the actual level of warehouse stocks; initial searches revealed substantial quantities of missing books, which in 1977 were written off. The introduction of an annual report on stocks and stock movement merely highlighted an ongoing problem and dissatisfaction first with Luzacs, then with Aris & Philips and La Haule Books (Warminster and Guernsey), and latterly with Oxbow – by 2013, Gibb's records indicated stocks of some 20,000 books, whereas Oxbow's reports showed only 7,000, excluding those in the USA; the dual arrangements undoubtedly contributed to the lack of clarity. In 2009, following an inspection of the store in Oxford, over 7,500 volumes, either damaged or surplus to any hope of sale, were removed and disposed of.

Change was witnessed partly in the inevitable necessary responses to changing times. Far fewer texts were published in the handsome, distinctive black-cased, gold-lettered format of the classic period – many of which, however, were kept in print, especially E. J. W. Gibb's *History of Ottoman Poetry* and R. A. Nicholson's edition, translation and commentary of Jalal al-Din Rumi's *Masnavi*, buoyant sales of which have kept the Trust afloat. In compensation, after some protracted deliberations about the strategy and format of the publications, more attention was paid to monographs and