

George Wing (1921-1998)

GEORGE WING, who died on 27 November 1998, in Calgary, was the first Calgary-based editor of *ARIEL*, a position which he held from 1973 to 1977. He was a distinguished scholar of Victorian Literature and is probably best known for his books *Thomas Hardy* (1963) and *Charles Dickens* (1969).

His academic accomplishments will almost certainly be known to readers of *ARIEL*. Less well known, perhaps, is the story of how he got into academic life in the first place, for his immediate post-university years were actually spent with the British Council in Persia, the experiences of which were later to be the inspiration of his award-winning novel *Coppernob* (Riverside, 1995) and teaching English in a school in West Africa. As a teacher in a fee-paying high school, in what was then the Gold Coast, George apparently met a couple of other British expatriates in a pub. These were new appointees at the recently-established local university. He discovered that their teaching duties were far less onerous than his, and when he asked how he too could aspire to such a job he was told that university-teaching required a PhD or a book. "I was buggered if I was going back to university," George told me, "so I went to the library and wrote a book."

George Wing was born at Teesville, Yorkshire, on 17 May 1921. After the local primary school, he attended Stockton Secondary School and then read English at Durham University. Like so many of his generation, he saw his studies interrupted by World War II, during which he served with the Green Howards in North Africa and Italy, rising to the rank of captain. I had been a friend of his for many years before I learned—and not from George but from his wife Joan—that he had in fact been awarded the mili-

tary cross for a daring rescue of a comrade from a burning truck, an act of bravery recorded in the official history of the regiment. His reaction, when I accused him of “being a bloody war-hero,” was vintage George. Officers were given a liberal supply of grog, he claimed, and he was drunk at the time. No-one would ever believe this, but the story demonstrates the self-effacing humour and complete lack of pretension and self-importance that all his friends loved in George.

After his stint with the British Council and six years in the school in the Gold Coast, George was offered a lectureship in English at the newly-established Royal Technical College in Nairobi. This subsequently became part of the new University of East Africa (now the University of Kenya), at which institution George eventually became Professor of English and Dean of Arts and Science. He and his family spent many happy years in Nairobi. In 1968, he accepted a position at the University of Calgary, where he was Professor, Department of English, and Vice-Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Science.

Much loved and admired by his colleagues and students, George is sadly missed. He is survived by his wife, Joan, his two daughters, Marjorie and Daphne, and two grandchildren.

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