

CHRISTOPHER BLUNT

REFLECTIONS FROM A DAUGHTER-IN-LAW

JULIA M. BLUNT

Mr President and members

For those of you who do not know me, Christopher was my beloved father-in-law – I am privileged to be amongst you all this evening and to reminisce about the man I knew and loved.

We, as a family are so very grateful to share with you this special evening. Christopher was very private about the scholarship of his work in your field. You have brought to life vividly his vision and painstaking attention to detail in his quest for the truth.

Christopher was born a hundred years ago...I cannot believe this - life flies by with a blink of an eye! His father was a vicar in Ham Common, Richmond – a very erudite, learned man. We have in the family papers his writings about his travels to the Middle East.

Christopher's father was then appointed to the Embassy Church in Paris. It was there that Christopher learnt his fluent French, which remained with him until the day that he died. Christopher absorbed and loved the way of life in France, the beauty of the architecture and art, the inspirational life of his friends, the restaurants, walking through the Parc Monceau - all these memories remained with him for the rest of his life. When French friends of ours came to stay at Ramsbury Hill when Christopher was old (but NEVER IN SPIRIT), he spoke the language as if he had always lived in France. Fluent with an impeccable accent – not only could he converse but he was also able to discuss literature and understand their subtle humour. Our friends thought that he was exceptional – as indeed, he was.

Later he went to Marlborough College. It was there that his interest in numismatics was kindled. He bought his first coins when still at school.

His business career was in merchant banking – he worked extremely hard and was the traditional banker of the old fashioned school. His second name was integrity.

In 1930 he married Elisabeth Bazley. They both kept the letters they wrote to each other – these are very touching and heart warming. They had two daughters and one son.

Christopher's banking career was interrupted by the War. He joined the Army and served for much of the war at SHAEF headquarters, liaising with the American Army planning the D-Day landings. He never spoke to the family of these years of his life.

After the War, he resumed his successful merchant banking career until he retired at the age of 60 – to pursue his real passion; collecting and studying Anglo-Saxon coins.

Most of you will know of his achievements in this field – the writing and researching of many books and articles. His membership of the British Academy and his work and interest in your Numismatic Society. You all added so much joy to his life and I know that he treasured your expertise and friendship.

Before Simon and I married, I used to send Christmas cards to PUP and Mrs Blunt. PUP stood for “pin up papa”. When Simon and I announced our engagement I had the sweetest letter from Christopher, finishing with the words “now, I am really and truly your Papa”. This was typical of this exceptional man.

I am sure that many of you have stayed at Ramsbury, where Simon and I now live. Christopher’s library is still there although the bulk of his coin books have found other homes.

Coins were Christopher’s passion and he spent many productive hours researching Anglo-Saxon coins and writing his papers and books.

As I am sure you all know, it was Christopher’s wish that his coin collection, which he had started when he was a boy at Marlborough College, should go to the Fitzwilliam Museum. Mark, you have been wonderful in carrying the mantle trust that Christopher gave to you caring for his collection and archive.

Another great friend I feel that I must mention is Ian Stewartby who worked tirelessly in organising Christopher’s collection of coins and books after his death. As a family we are very grateful to him.

Stewart Lyon also worked closely with Christopher in the writing of books.

I well remember when I first went to stay at Ramsbury Hill a dance was being given by a cousin of Simon’s. I was 16 and extremely shy (not helped by the fact that I shared a bedroom with an entrancing, sophisticated Russian Princess). At dinner I sat next to Christopher. We talked of many things and if ever he saw that I was floundering he said “of course you know”; of course he knew I did not! This was typical of his kindness.

Many of the Blunts are here today. His son, Simon, my husband; his younger daughter Judith, and her daughter Sophie; our son Christopher (who was named after Christopher); Karl Morrison, who flew from the States to be with us this evening. Karl is also a numismatist and met the family through his interest in coins and, after a whirlwind romance, married Christopher’s eldest daughter, Anne.

Christopher adored his family and grandchildren and had great fun introducing them to the delights of literature and, another passion of his (which is shared by Simon and our Christopher), good wine.

I am sure that many of you will remember having numerous “*petits verres*” with him – of either dry sherry or his favourite, white port. These “*petits verres*” were extremely large! Yesterday, Simon, Karl and I drank some white port at Ramsbury remembering Christopher.

Christopher worked very hard for the village of Ramsbury and when he died his doctor said to me, “Julia, you must realise that this great man was adored by the village” – a tribute indeed.

May I close by thanking you all again for including us in this auspicious evening and leave you remembering that tall, great man with the gentle smile, the perfect and generous host – a man with a dry, acute sense of fun with an outstanding analytical mind, a man who always brought out the best in everyone and encouraged them to excel.

A man who enriched the world of all of us who were fortunate enough to know him. I was very blest to have him as my pin up Papa!