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NORRIS J. LACY

Geoffrey Ashe is among our most eminent Arthurian scholars. That status has been recognized in many ways and places. Most notable were his inclusion in the Queen's New Year's list of Honours and his recent investiture at Buckingham Palace. The honour was an MBE, Member [of the Most Excellent Order] of the British Empire. The MBE states 'Historian: For Services to Heritage.'

Many Arthurian scholars and students first became acquainted with Geoffrey through his *King Arthur's Avalon* and *The Quest for Arthur's Britain*, the latter of which, in 1968, offered to many of us our first real information, apart from journalistic reports, on the Cadbury/Camelot project. Further, some of us who are no longer young had the privilege of hearing and meeting him at the Cardiff Arthurian Congress (1969), when he offered a masterly presentation of the Cadbury excavations and a lucid and balanced assessment of the likely implications of that project. Since that time his contributions to Arthurian history, archaeology, and literature have continued unabated. What most Arthurians may not know is that he wrote widely on subjects other than Arthur: he published books on Gandhi, the voyage of St. Brendan, Israel, labyrinths and mazes, and others, including a novel titled *The Finger and the Moon*.

In 1984 Gary Kuris, Vice-President of Garland Publishing, invited me to edit an Arthurian encyclopedia; I replied that I could do so only with several associate editors. Fortunately, the four whom I invited all accepted the challenge, and Geoffrey Ashe took on history, archaeology, and some chronicles. The material he delivered was punctual, thorough and knowledgeable in content, and clear and polished in style.

Once *The Arthurian Encyclopedia* was published, Gary Kuris invited me to undertake a volume that would become *The Arthurian Handbook*. For this volume, Garland preferred that I work alone or with a single co-author rather than the larger number needed for the earlier volume. I agreed conditionally, the condition being that Geoffrey would join me as co-author. I was again fortunate that he accepted and that, as before, he provided impeccable material that required little or no editing.

Geoffrey has been an ideal collaborator, with an impressive command of his subjects—and of a good part of my own as well, for he saved me from a number of errors and infelicities.

In the interest of full disclosure, it must be said that he has had detractors. Generally, they are scholars who have reservations concerning his identification of the ‘Arthur figure’ with Riothamus. In addition, there are a few, unfortunately, who question the scholarly credentials of anyone who does not hold a permanent academic position. Still others doubtless criticize Ashe as a popularizer, to which I would offer two responses. First, his publication of a major scholarly article in *Speculum*, followed by his book *The Discovery of King Arthur*, answers some such reservations. Second, I concur that he *has* often been a popularizer, but in the best sense of the word. Given the breadth of interest in the Arthurian legend, there is good reason to write books that, while useful to scholars, also provide the general reading public with information that is knowledgeable and reliable, thus constituting a corrective to some of the very odd theories that regularly circulate about Arthur.

Geoffrey is now 90 years old and can look back to decades of distinguished writing and speaking, and no less to his personal friendships with many who will be reading these words. Personally, I am grateful to him for his books and his collaborations with me, and I am honored to count myself among his friends.



MBE GEOFFREY ASHE AND HM QUEEN ELIZABETH II AT THE INVESTITURE CEREMONY