

# Introduction

This collection of essays was intended as a tribute to Terence Mitchell on his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday but, sadly, he died in London on Easter Sunday, 21 April 2019, one month short of the landmark birthday. This book will therefore be a memorial volume.

Terence Mitchell was born on 17 June 1929, the elder son of the landscape artist Arthur Croft Mitchell (1872-1956) and his wife Evelyn Violet, née Ware. During part of World War II he was evacuated to the United States and attended Holderness School in New Hampshire. On returning to the United Kingdom he continued his education at Bradfield College in Berkshire. His military service was spent as a craftsman in the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers (REME). Following this he went up to St Catharine's College, Cambridge, where he read Archaeology and Anthropology. At Cambridge he was a contemporary of Jeffrey Orchard and Eric Uphill, with whom he remained friends for the rest of his life. His teacher in the history and archaeology of the Ancient Near East was Margaret Munn-Rankin (1913-81). After Cambridge he became a schoolmaster for several years at St Catherine's School in Almondsbury near Bristol (1954-56), and from 1956-57 he studied at Tyndale House in Cambridge. From 1958-59 he was 'the European representative of the Australian Institute of Archaeology'.

In 1959 he joined the Department of Western Asiatic Antiquities at the British Museum at an exciting time when the department was rapidly expanding under the dynamic leadership of Richard D. Barnett. The

cuneiformist at this time was Donald Wiseman, soon to be replaced by Edmond Sollberger who succeeded Barnett as Keeper in 1974. Terence was appointed Deputy Keeper at this time. He became Acting Keeper 1983-85, and Keeper 1985-89.

Amongst his principal academic contributions were chapters on Israel and Judah in the revised edition of the *Cambridge Ancient History*, but the work for which he is best known is *The Bible in the British Museum*, a semi-popular book that was first published in 1988 and has been reprinted many times. He has earned the gratitude of the scholarly community by editing for publication no less than three of Sir Leonard Woolley's magisterial final reports on the Ur excavations, volumes 7 (Old Babylonian period), 8 (Kassite and Assyrian periods), and 9 (Neo-Babylonian and Persian periods).

At various times during his life he was a Trustee of the Palestine Exploration Fund, of the British Institute at Amman for Archaeology and History, the London Diocesan fund, and the London Diocesan Board of Finance.

In retirement he divided his time between his house in Mallord Street, Chelsea, and a country house known as Madeira in Wadhurst, Sussex, made occasional visits to the Athenaeum Club, and continued to work on a regular basis in the British Museum as an unpaid special assistant.

He had strongly-held Christian beliefs of an Evangelical nature, but these did not impact on his museological career. He had a particular interest in the Book of Daniel but, regrettably, the commentary that he had been working on for many years was unfinished at the time of his death.

John Curtis