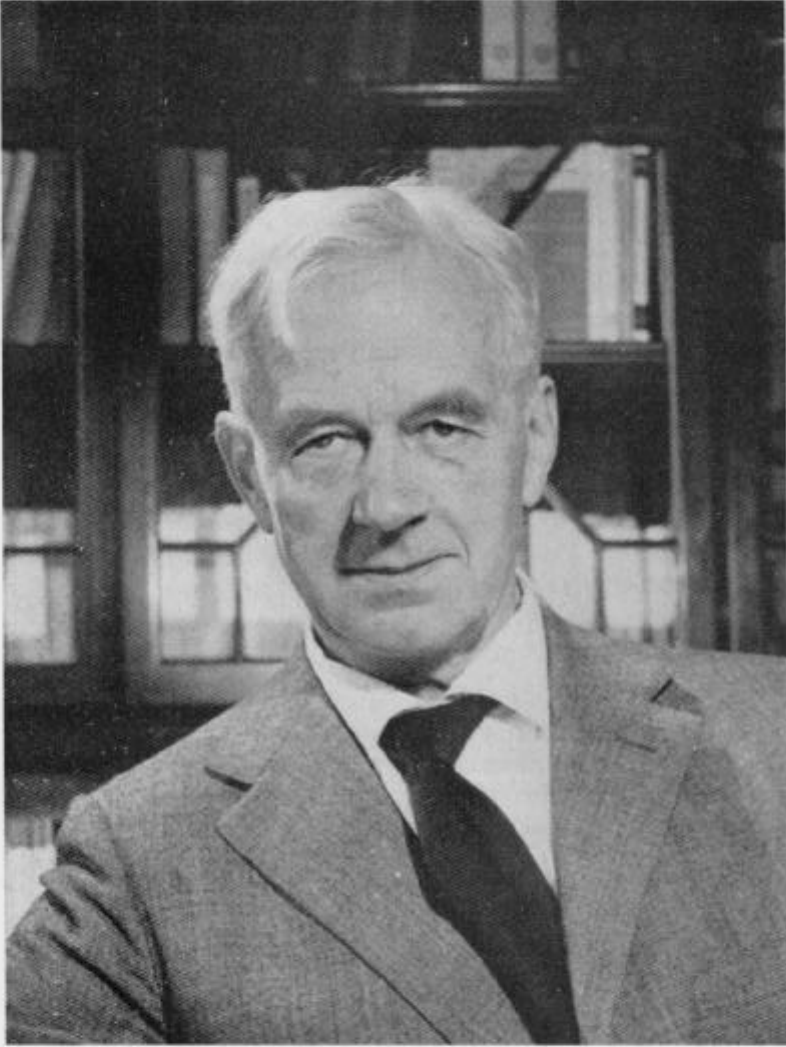


PLATE XXXIV



THEODORE WADE-GERY, M.C.

THEODORE WADE-GERY

1888-1972

HENRY THEODORE WADE-GERY was born on 2 April 1888, at Campton Grange near Shefford, the youngest of eight children in a family long established in Bedfordshire. His grandfather had held a family living and his father was intended for the Church, but instead qualified as a solicitor, though he never practised; and it was long hoped that Theodore himself would take orders. The bringing-up of the children fell mainly to his mother, Mary Elizabeth Midgley of a Lancashire cotton family, a woman of strong mind and religious conviction. After a move into Bedford, they migrated later during Theodore's schooldays to a house near Bridgwater in Somerset, returning to the country life which was always a delight to him.

At the age of twelve he obtained a scholarship to Winchester, where in the manner of those days he remained seven years, among a very lively company. Closest were Arnold Toynbee who arrived a year later, J. D. Denniston who was to be his colleague at Oxford, R. M. Y. Gleadowe who was to spend most of his life teaching art at Winchester; and there were many others. He impressed his contemporaries most with the speed with which he mastered a text or a subject; his teachers noted some procrastination and, more surprisingly, urged him to read more English in his own time. That cannot be quite right, for he was always a voracious reader, his mind crammed with poetry; they distrusted rather what he read and were a little anxious of affectation, but there was no doubt of his mastery of the Greek and Latin classics. At Oxford, with a scholarship to New College, that mastery carried him to a first in Classical Moderations, but impatience with philosophy reduced the brilliance of his first in Greats. Many of the company were the same as at school, but there were additions, notably E. H. W. Meyerstein at Magdalen. His appetite for English poetry of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is remembered, and for Rimbaud.

On leaving Oxford in 1911 he entered the Home Civil Service, and was given a post in the Admiralty. That meant too much mere copying of letters, and with all his abilities this was not his natural sphere, but he was happy in sharing a flat with Gleadowe, and canoe trips up the river were a consolation.

In 1912 Nowell Smith, who had taught him at school and was now headmaster of Sherborne School, offered him a post there in Classics and Modern Languages, preparation for the latter involving six months in Grenoble for his French. Then in 1914, at the instance of G. L. Cheesman, he put in for a fellowship at Wadham, and was elected.

The war then intervened. Of his experiences with the infantry in France and Belgium he did not speak, either during the leaves which he often spent with the Toynbees in London, or later. He had enlisted first with the Oxford and Bucks Light Infantry, then transferred to the 19th Lancashire Fusiliers, who were engaged in heavy fighting in 1915; after an interval in which he held the post of town-major of Bouzincourt, there was heavy fighting again in 1918. There is testimony in general to his gallantry, and the award of the Military Cross, but little detail. He threw himself into his role as officer with a thoroughness which in hindsight seems surprising, taking pride in his success in technical courses; photographs of him in uniform and with a moustache are barely recognizable to those who did not know him at this time.

With peace and the return to Wadham his main life's work begins. The Fellows were then a small body, which made for intimacy, and full of life and talk. Maurice Bowra, elected in 1922 with Wade-Gery's warm support, was academically his nearest ally; and a Common Room which included with him Lord David Cecil and Humphry House was not poor in conversation. That was an atmosphere in which Wade-Gery could feel at ease and let flow the many-coloured fountain of his talk. It was not confined to history or literature: there was hardly any topic on which he was not ready to theorize at short notice, sometimes with provocative irresponsibility or even mischievously, but the stimulus to thought and feeling was not a frivolous matter, nor the fascination which is so hard to set down in print.

In 1922 he published a small volume of verse, *Terpsichore and other Poems*. They give a glimpse of his feelings about the war: Ypres in the calm of early morning; leave in the Thames valley bringing to his mind the more loathsome aspects of trench warfare; lament for those who did not come back. In spite of evident feeling and some felicities, they leave the impression that he was right to devote his talents to other ends, but the poet within him—not just the critic of poetry—was an essential element in his work, lifting his prose from the pedestrian level,

enlivening his sympathy for the people whom he studied. There is more body to the translation of Pindar's *Pythian Odes*, done jointly with Bowra and published in 1928 by the Nonesuch Press in a style which today's austerity could not match. They broke with rhyme and traditional metre to produce a result which is not indeed exactly Pindar, but is admirably calculated to stir the reader's curiosity about the poet who could inspire such a translation. The sensitive introduction, much concerned with Pindar's religion and with his attitude to the society in which he lived, conveys in small compass an impression which does not come through so clearly in Bowra's later and more massive work on Pindar. To the end of his life Wade-Gery continued to translate Greek verse as occasion arose, and some of these versions appear in his writings.

It was also in 1922 that he made his first trip to Greece, with Toynbee, and their circuit of the Peloponnese has left traces in the chapters on the Dorians which he wrote soon after for the second and third volumes of the *Cambridge Ancient History*. Archaeology of necessity looms large here, not that archaeology which is a branch of the history of art—and Wade-Gery's eye for visual beauty matched his ear for the beauty of words—but that which is based on the classification of objects not all of high artistic quality. This he mastered, as it stood in 1924 and 1925: the chapters are dated now, for nothing changes so rapidly as Greek prehistory, but some of the insights are still valid, and all of the method. In vol. iii he went on into the archaic period for which there is usable literary evidence, however slender and full of gaps, and here he brought life and colour into topics which for some time had seen little of either. In these chapters the high style of his writing begins to show, and an audacity in quotation which never left him: many historians have tried to find words to describe the qualities of the Spartan aristocracy, but not all would have had recourse to Petronius for an apt and neat formula.

In 1927 he took a sabbatical term and made a second visit to Greece by an unusual route, starting from the North Cape and coming down through Poland and the Balkans. In Athens he joined up with Vivian Whitfield, whom he had earlier met at the house of Stephen Ward at Wokingham when she was a lecturer at Reading University. Their engagement followed quickly, and they were married in 1928. That was a happy union of two remarkable and individual persons, both dedicated to Greek studies (Vivian, an archaeologist, had been a student at

the British School at Athens in 1924–5) and both highly argumentative; their very disagreements, which they seemed to enjoy, were part of the charm of the house they occupied at Appleton in Berkshire from 1932 to 1937, and thereafter in Oxford in the Woodstock Road. It was an unusual and delightful household, and specially illuminating for its younger visitors.

During these years Wade-Gery turned to the technical study of Greek inscriptions, with a characteristically alert eye for the physical facts of a stone, the widths of chisel employed, or the style of individual stonemasons. The fruits of this began to appear in periodical articles from 1930 onwards, and a first meeting in the Epigraphical Museum at Athens with B. D. Meritt led to a steadfast friendship and to fruitful collaboration. Some important contributions are now so integral a part of the study of Athenian history that there is some danger of forgetting that it was Wade-Gery who first determined that the two decrees of Kallias were passed on the same day, or by reinterpretation of another text bequeathed to us the problem of the 'missing tribute list'. Nor did he stop with Greek texts: Professor George Cameron now in 1973 (*Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, xxxii. 51) pays tribute to his deduction, from the Elamite captions to the figures on Darius' Behistun monument, that the Elamite text was the first to be inscribed, a discovery which Cameron had often urged him to publish himself.

In 1931 Alan Blakeway, long an admirer of his work, was elected to a fellowship at Corpus Christi, adding an explosive element to an already combustible situation. In the preceding generation Greek studies, especially the study of Greek history, had somehow lost their sparkle, the aftermath perhaps of a period when the rest of the learned world had been swamped by a great wave of creative German scholarship. A rather humdrum positivism held sway; poetry held less delight, the characters of Greek history were somewhat nerveless puppets. The most recent impulse at Oxford came from G. B. Grundy's personal exploration of the terrain of Greek battlefields, and much talent was spent in the doubtful exercises of reconstructing Marathon or Salamis. Into all this Wade-Gery, with his inspiring combination of poetic insight and exact scholarship, let in light and warmth; Bowra, though his writing never conveyed quite the same excitement, knew which conventions needed to be overturned and performed the demolition with a sure hand; the rigorous scholarship of Denniston illuminated the detail of the language without obscuring the quality of what had been

written in it. Blakeway's special task was to break up the suspicion with which archaeological evidence was then often regarded; in retrospect it is odd to think that reputable scholars could boast of their exclusive devotion to the written word at a time when the great work of Sir John Beazley was getting under way, and Sir John Myres was pressing the claims of another sort of archaeology, but so it was, and Blakeway laid about him robustly. The general enemy was stuffiness, and this team was well qualified to let in air. It helped that they were not too solemn about it: there was no false reverence and plenty of laughter.

In this atmosphere Wade-Gery began that series of major articles on Greek, especially Athenian, history on which his individual reputation must mainly rest. He found the book a constricting form, and the main reason was probably an obstinate perfectionism which prevented him from proceeding to the next problem before he had found a satisfying solution to the last one. No wide-ranging book could be written on this fastidious principle, and the papers he left are full of beginnings, not of middles or ends. It was different when he wrote an article on a problem of his own choosing, where he could present his solution and not feel compelled to traverse other ground. That did not restrict his scope, for he had a fine instinct for the way in which his treatment of an individual question could illuminate a whole epoch. An important strand in his interpretation was his intuitive understanding of the ways and values of an aristocracy, examined without prejudice but looked at with sympathy; that applies not only to his early Greek studies but also to aristocratic elements in later times, down to Alexander whom he thought of as the overthrow of all that he most valued in Greek society. At the same time the technical factors were given full weight; he did not dream in isolation but was an assiduous frequenter of libraries. The main series of these articles runs roughly from 1931 to 1951, and many of the best were reprinted in his *Essays in Greek History* (1958), but much had perforce to be left out of that volume, especially the epigraphic studies.

This collection gives some notion of his power as a lecturer and teacher, but a faint notion; indeed, surviving examples of the texts from which he lectured insufficiently convey the power and freshness of those courses which did so much in the years between the wars to renew and revive the study of Greek history in Oxford. He was something of an actor in his treatment of an

audience—as when he would suddenly look up from his text and bring out what he had next to say as if it had occurred to him only at that moment—but like a good actor he achieved what he intended, the reverse of that deadening effect which even a competent lecture can have when unimaginatively read. With individual pupils his sympathies were wide, if not quite universal; when things went well the pupil became his partner in exploration, wherever that might lead, but he kept a firm hand too on the strictly tutorial business of seeing that his pupil should write what he meant in an orderly way. It was a powerful stimulus for those who could respond, though menacing for the slipshod or superficial.

If he could not write his own book, he could contribute an immense amount to a joint enterprise. His alliance with Meritt was cemented in 1935–6, the year which the latter spent at Oxford, when much was planned. A project for a corpus of Athenian decrees came, after long delays, to nothing; but the first volume of the *Athenian Tribute Lists*, with M. F. McGregor as third collaborator, appeared in 1939 after they had spent the year together at the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton, for Wade-Gery the first of many visits. After the war it was found necessary to revise certain of the texts presented in vol. i, hence a slimmer vol. ii (1949); interpretation followed in vol. iii (1950), indexes in vol. iv (1953), both massive. As a comprehensive study of a body of difficult texts this will remain fundamental; whatever alterations may be made in detail, the main work will not need to be done again. Vol. iii presents, among much else, an equally comprehensive study of the financial and administrative aspects of the fifth-century empire of Athens. It is uneven in that the later years are not treated in the same detail as the opening and middle phases, and it may be thought that their theory, like other comprehensive theories, rides roughshod over some serious difficulties. That does not detract from the stature of a monumental work, which leaves its critics with the daunting feeling that any alternative which they try to put up must be no less all-embracing.

Meanwhile much had happened, and not the least important for Wade-Gery was the influx of Jewish scholars expelled from Germany, many of whom found permanent or temporary homes in Oxford. Among them came Felix Jacoby, with all his cargo of learning and in the full flow of his enormous and well-organized activity; he and Wade-Gery each recognized the other's qualities, some shared and some complementary, and

the warm humanity of Frau Jacoby strengthened the friendship. Paul Jacobsthal's comprehensive grasp of archaeological detail and his rich imagination made him an ally no less valued. With Eduard Fraenkel relations were less close, greatly though they respected one another; there was a warmer link with Victor Ehrenberg, but he could not remain in Oxford. These newcomers were of great importance when another war drew many of Wade-Gery's English colleagues away; with their help discussion could go on. Meanwhile, in 1939, he had succeeded Sir John Myres as Wykeham Professor, which meant a move from Wadham back to his undergraduate home in New College. He took a keen interest in the affairs of the College, and he had always valued his links with both Wykehamist foundations, but for Wadham he retained a deeper affection.

This second war brought, as it did to all, many difficulties and anxieties, but his writing continued: papers on the Peace of Kallias, the Spartan Rhetra, Kritias and Herodes, belong to these years. Thereafter his lecturing gifts were needed for another period of post-war reconstruction; and the *Athenian Tribute Lists* needed further attention and another session in Princeton in 1947-8. In 1949 he gave the J. H. Gray lectures in Cambridge, which issued as *The Poet of the Iliad* in 1952. The core of this unusual book is a literary judgement about the 'creative poet' (the title of the third lecture), his material and his innovations in the treatment of it, his particular concern with the character of Achilles; on this, and on the further supposition that the *Iliad* might have been written by a poet named Homer whose descendants survived into the Classical period, he hung a varied collection of scholarly hypotheses. In a world where so many Homeric scholars seemed inhibited by a fear that their feet might leave the ground, this was in a sense provocative, and he added offence by trailing some pet heresies, as that the recitals of Homer at the Panathenaia had been organized by Pericles and not in the sixth century. The unfashionable approach robbed his book of some of its impact, but his bright vision of Homer deserves to live; and at a more mundane level he put into the lectures, and still more into the notes which he added for publication, much that might otherwise not have found its way into print, for instance important arguments about genealogy and chronology.

When he retired from the Professorship in 1953 he was elected to a Research Fellowship at Merton. He reciprocated the warmth of his welcome at this his third College, where it was

only regretted that he spent two of the five years of his tenure in Princeton. He greatly appreciated the honour given to him by the American Philological Association for his work on the third volume of the *Athenian Tribute Lists* in 1955; and by the German Archaeological Institute which made him a Corresponding Member in the same year. His work in collaboration with Meritt continued, but it took him some time to recover from an attack of shingles on his return from America in 1961. An epigraphic theory which called in question the accepted dates of many Attic inscriptions of the fifth century stimulated him, with Meritt, to two articles in reply; characteristically, Wade-Gery did not straightforwardly refute the new theory—it was left to another scholar later to provide the relevant statistics—but went off into fresh speculations about the matters with which these inscriptions were concerned. His last published work was a contribution to a volume in honour of Victor Ehrenberg in 1966. Towards the end he was increasingly weak; in the last few months his health seemed to improve a little, but the end came suddenly with a heart attack on 2 January 1972.

No simple formula will sum up his work or his influence. The essential was the freshness and clarity of his insight; the labour he put into tracking down the previous literature and checking detail did not confuse his aim or blur his vision. His mind was prodigiously well stored, retaining the argument of an article he had read long ago or of a conversation of last year; and that led him to some unexpected combinations. There is room for regret that he did not publish more of the rich store he had accumulated, but his writing did not flow with the same ease as his talk, and the effect would have been very different if it had. The distinction of his style matched a high distinction of mind and spirit, which left its impression not only on colleagues and pupils in his own profession, but on scholars in other disciplines who came into contact with him. He founded no school and laid down no new method. His influence spread through his integrity and the warmth of his friendship, and the number is very great, among his contemporaries and his successors, of those who would acknowledge that influence as the most important they encountered in their lives.

A. ANDREWES

I am most grateful to Mrs. Wade-Gery for her help in composing this memoir; to Professor A. J. Toynbee and Lord David Cecil for conversation, especially about the years before I knew Wade-Gery personally; and to Sir Basil Blackwell for permission to reproduce the frontispiece from Essays in Greek History.