



Kenneth Blackwell visited the Russell Foundation in Nottingham to view its archives. His interest in Richard III led us to The Trip to Jerusalem pub, in the caves beneath Nottingham Castle. King Richard spent his last night at the Castle before he was killed at the Battle of Bosworth Field in 1485.

“Lord Russell’s Busy Year”

Kenneth Blackwell

The author is Honorary Russell Archivist at McMaster University, Canada. During half a century and more, he has collected, recorded and disseminated Russell’s vast output during a long life. Russell: The Journal of Bertrand Russell Studies, which Dr Blackwell founded in 1971 and edited for five decades, testifies to his central and distinguished engagement in nurturing worldwide interest in Russell’s life and works. For the first time, Dr Blackwell relates his own encounters with Bertrand Russell during an eventful year in the mid-1960s.

1966 was a momentous year of decision-making for Bertrand Russell. No doubt the fact that he was in his mid-90s was a pressing reason. He made major decisions: to organise and finance the International War Crimes Tribunal on the American war in Vietnam; to revise, extend and publish his *Autobiography*; to replace his lawyer of 30 years and accountant of more than fifteen; to rewrite his will, which he did three times; to engage a separate literary agent for the first time in decades, whom he promptly replaced; to sell his archives and library; and to incorporate the Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation. All this was in addition to his normal activities of seeing a broad swathe of people, being interviewed in a range of media, and publishing articles, statements and letters. I learned about the major concerns only gradually, and only some of them come under the rubric of putting one’s affairs in order. Ironically, to correct the impression of inactivity conveyed in an interview the previous year, he had published a reply that was given the title “Lord Russell’s Busy Year”.¹

That was also an adventurous year for me, visiting libraries in several countries in bibliographical pursuit of Bertrand Russell’s lost publications and keeping track of new ones. There were journalistic rumours that Russell had become senile, yet much was being published in his name. I had been reading his books and current articles for three years, since the publication of *Unarmed Victory*,² which narrated his intervention during the frightening Cuban Missile Crisis in the autumn of 1962; and I wondered, with my inexperience of the old, how anyone could still, at age 90, write a

book.³ Besides, I revereded his great writings of previous decades and, from his shorter autobiographical writings, had grown interested in his life. The International War Crimes Tribunal had been announced in early July 1966, and I knew of the plans. Ralph Schoenman was already back from a visit to North Vietnam. I did not know of Russell's recent trip to London—he had been there in June to open the conference of the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign⁴—but while on a research trip in New York I had glimpsed, on the day's front page of the *Daily Telegraph*, a photo of him tearing up his Labour Party card. That was during his previous trip to London.⁵ I did not know of his statement of 20 July 1966 suggesting that Soviet MiGs assist in the defence of Hanoi. (When I learned of it, I thought it dangerous.⁶) Travelling from Dublin to London with the intention of returning home to Canada, I stopped in Porthmadog and found a bed and breakfast in Penrhyneddraeth. On 15 August I telephoned Plas Penrhyn to see if I might meet Lord Russell. A young male secretary checked and found that I could. At Plas Penrhyn I was taken into the sitting room, and Russell, holding some Peace Foundation correspondence, rose to greet me. I had my moment and left.⁷

As I walked down the long lane, the secretary called after me: "Are you the one we wrote to in British Columbia?" Russell's letter was an inquiry about the whereabouts of further Russell papers. He had been given my address by Lester E. Denonn, Russell's bibliographer in the Schilpp volume.⁸ Michael Lester, the secretary (and researcher for Mark Lane's *Rush to Judgment*), asked me to return for tea that day. The two and half hours went by in a flash. Russell was witty and much warmer than the impersonal, strictly rationalist persona of his published writings. Edith Russell suggested I show him my bibliographical slips. I pointed out one, and he commented: "It's good to have had one in against the Nazis." He picked up a handful and said, "Well, I am impressed, but I don't think it's worth it." I was not persuaded. I asked him what he thought of de Gaulle visiting the USSR, as he was doing at the time. Russell said: "I don't know. What do you think?" (These four sentences remain my most important takeaways.) He told me he didn't want to write another book. That shocked me. So was the realization a few months later that Volume III of the *Autobiography* had been composed, which I then read for his new literary agent.⁹ Earlier in the year Russell had reversed his decision not to publish the autobiography until he was dead. It had been revised several times since it was dictated in 1931 as "My First Fifty Years", and a very high advance was obtained in summer 1966 for American publication. It was at this time Russell twice replaced his literary agent.¹⁰

Soon Chris Farley, Russell's principal secretary, offered me a job sorting Russell's papers in his basement. Russell had decided to sell his archives and library. He wrote to several possible sources at the time. My employment lasted three weeks. I made lists but mainly read and read. Michael Lester had already been typing lists of papers, and I added to the lists. I read the first volumes of the *Autobiography* before they were published and had not yet been subjected to precautionary libel cuts. I had had no idea of Russell's emotional life. It was about five decades later that I learned that he was still invoking his ethical thinking and language of "A Free Man's Worship". He did so in May of 1966, in a kind letter to an Australian on the death of her husband and the fate of their Jewish families under the Nazis.¹¹ That letter existed as a typed carbon in his archives. What did not exist in his archives was any copy of the handwritten letter composed on 18 August, while I was in the basement, in which he said: "In great sorrow, nobly borne, there is a wisdom not otherwise obtainable, a comradeship in the load of universal sorrow, a gain in the power of giving help to others in great grief." This letter the family donated to McMaster in 2014.¹² Reading the autobiography made this sort of writing not unexpected, but it was still a surprise at that late date in his life, when almost all his writing concerned war.

A few days later I met one of the granddaughters, who was 18. I said the usual sort of thing, "You're one of Lord Russell's granddaughters, aren't you?" Her reply was: "I'm Lucy." I did not know for years that she was in a difficult relationship with her grandparents. According to Monk, she was on her own, "effectively disown[ed]".¹³ He implies that she was not welcome at Plas Penrhyn that summer; on the contrary, there she was. He implies that Russell ceased supporting her financially, but he knew, from Russell's last will, that her higher education was provided for.¹⁴ Then Ralph Schoenman showed up. The first thing he said to me was, "Who hired you?" Later a meeting took place with Schoenman, Ken Coates (who was not yet a director of the BRPF), Farley, Russell, and perhaps Edith Russell. The subject may have been the Tribunal, the incorporation of the BRPF, which was accomplished on 10 November 1966 (with Schoenman and Farley as the only directors), the preparation and sale of the archives and library, or other topics; from below stairs I could only hear that people were speaking. One day a van delivered case after case of Red Hackle De Luxe Scotch Whisky. Another day—when my three weeks were over—an armoured car arrived. The Russell Archives were loaded into it. Russell, in his red slippers, emerged to see it off. Barry Feinberg, who would be in charge of the Russell Archives in London, followed with me as his

passenger.¹⁵ In London I was a guest for a while in the BRPF flat at 22 Argyll Mansions in King's Road, Chelsea.

In London the archives were unloaded into the annex at 25 Newman St., W1, where Felton and Partners had their accounting offices. Anton Felton, C.A., (later M.Phil., Oxford), had become Russell's accountant as well as his new literary agent. The agency was called Continuum 1 Ltd. (Russell joked that this name was "a contradiction in terms and that you need a logician on your staff!"¹⁶) Len Deighton was another client. I was on staff as Bibliographical Consultant, but after a few weeks my services were no longer required—perhaps I read too much or sorted too slowly. I was still permitted to research in the papers. Russell persuaded Sir Stanley Unwin to accept me as his bibliographer over a competitor, Harry Ruja, but we soon joined forces.¹⁷ Russell also gave me a letter of introduction to gain access to libraries. When I went at that time to Trinity College, Cambridge, and was examining documents in the Wren Library, two elderly scholars approached. One was C.D. Broad, whose dissertation Russell had judged in 1911,¹⁸ and the other Lord Adrian, the physiologist, who had been Master of Trinity. They wanted to know how Russell was, and I gladly told them he was active and well. Russell and his colleagues must have realized that bibliographical research was resulting in the discovery of lost writings, and that these could be put to use in publishing ventures. One such project was already planned by Schoenman, namely the political writings of the 1950s and 60s, but the project was not carried out.

Meanwhile the business of rewriting Russell's will went ahead. In June 1966, for a reason that must have been urgent, he twice made a new and very simple will. Except for signatures, one is entirely in Edith Russell's hand on a blank will form. Both are witnessed by Russell Stetler and his then wife, Susan, who had just arrived in the UK from the US so that Russ could join the BRPF. No executor is specified in the first June will. In the second, Farley is named executor. Everything is left to Edith; if she predeceased Russell, then his estate would go to the Atlantic Peace Foundation. That month Russell replaced Louis P. Tylor, his lawyer since the death of Crompton Llewelyn Davies in 1935. Blanche Lucas of Theodore Goddard and Co. became Russell's new lawyer. She had acted as a lawyer for Schoenman since 1961. Russell's final will (which is a public document) is dated 18 November 1966, to which was added a codicil later that year providing for his older son, John Conrad, who became the 4th Earl; he was then Viscount Amberley. Schoenman had in the meantime ceased to act as Russell's secretary and had become Secretary-General of the International War Crimes Tribunal (IWCT),

speaking often on its behalf but still, it seems, representing Russell's views. The codicil would be followed by a second codicil to Russell's will, dated 9 July 1969, removing Schoenman as an executor and trustee, and shortly afterwards by his removal from the BRPF board of directors. Monk asserts that the summer of 1966 was when "Schoenman exerted his *most* powerful influence on Russell's life, both public and private."¹⁹ This is debatable. Russell asserted, in repudiating Schoenman in November 1969, that he had not "been my secretary for some three and a half years."²⁰ That Schoenman had a significant role in Russell's major decisions, in at least the first half of 1966, is plain. Even if the idea for the Tribunal can't be documented as Schoenman's, it bears the unmistakable mark of his energy.

Russell's accountant had been H.E. Madams of Percy Popkin & Co. for a decade, and Popkin himself for years before that. From at least 1963 Russell had been concerned about estate duties on his copyrights and possibly other possessions (his archives come to mind), and he had requested a plan from Tylor. With the large financial needs of the Tribunal in prospect—trips to collect evidence of war crimes in Vietnam were expensive—and in view of Russell's age, it was necessary to plan in the most tax-effective way. Felton and Partners took over from Popkin. Ronald Clark tells us that "a few years earlier [Russell] had met Lloyd Chandler, a rich Canadian who had supported his peace activities. Chandler was an acquaintance of Anton Felton, an able accountant and literary administrator who was now introduced to Russell by Ralph Schoenman";²¹ but there is more to this complex story.²² The correspondence indicates that Russell successfully donated his Archives and the *Autobiography* to the Peace Foundation.

Much preparatory work was done for the Tribunal sessions that summer. Following a private first session starting on 13 November in London, at which Russell spoke briefly, to judge by the tapes,²³ on 16 November he formally announced the IWCT at a press conference in Caxton Hall. Chris Farley suggested I attend it. Why? I had no role, but it would allow me to gain insight into the reporting of a public event involving Russell. The room was packed, and there were five film or tv cameras. So far as I knew, everyone else was a journalist.

The atmosphere grew tense as we awaited the beginning of the press conference set for 11 am. The minutes passed. At 11: 20 it was announced that Lord Russell was now leaving home and would arrive in ten minutes. I witnessed him picking his way through the equipment cables on the floor and greeting journalists he recognized. Other Tribunal members were with him at the front of the room. Russell stood up and read a long statement

beginning “Ladies and gentlemen, I very much welcome the substantial progress which has been made during the first session....”²⁴ He looked about with an eagle eye as the French translation was read. I took notes of unkind comments behind me, especially when Russell departed without taking questions. Next day and next week I clipped the varying reports of the event.

The BRPF offices at 3 and 4 Shavers Place, Piccadilly, were open to the public, where one could go to pick up the latest mimeographed statements and articles published in Russell’s name and Schoenman’s. The office was administered by the omnicompetent secretary, Pamela Wood. It was an exciting time to be working on Russell, even though I was not in his political department but was soon to be rehired for preparing the Archives for sale.²⁵ Next year he was in the news almost every day.

It’s only since the Archives were opened and various accruals were made that I came to appreciate the extent of Russell’s activities during 1966. He showed no sign of worry over his major decisions. However, financing the IWCT must have been a worry. Incorporating the BRPF was evidence that Russell wished to provide for the future of his international mission. By the end of the year, *War Crimes in Vietnam* was in the press for January 1967 publication, the first volume of the *Autobiography*, following serialization in *The Observer*, had been typeset for publication in March (although with substandard proofreading and indexing of this now classic work of literature), the Tribunal was set to meet in May, the Archives were being catalogued in great detail, the Peace Foundation had been incorporated, Russell’s future taxation was being handled with great skill, and his will had been redrawn with provision for the financial survival of the Foundation. Hardly less busy, 1967 was to see publication of the two books, the public sessions of the Tribunal, and advance publicity for the availability for sale of the Russell Archives and the first offer for them. And in 1968 came the sale and opening of the Archives, and the birth of Russell Studies. This would be another story.²⁶

Notes

1. *Sunday Telegraph*, 10 Oct. 1965, p. 5. The letter corrects an interview by R. Barry O’Brien, *ibid.*, 19 Sept. 1965, pp. 1, 26.

2. London: Allen and Unwin; Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1963.

3. I was in my early 20s. The Russell Archives show that he composed the greater part of *Unarmed Victory*.

4. His “Address to the First National Conference” was published in *Vietnam Solidarity*

Bulletin 1, no. 4 (July 1966): [2]–5, and reprinted as Chapter 11 of *War Crimes in Vietnam* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1967). Schoenman's lengthy report on his trip to North Vietnam is an appendix.

5. "The Labour Party's Foreign Policy", speech to Youth Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, 14 Oct. 1965. Published by the BRPF as a pamphlet.
6. "Press Statement", 20 July 1966; see another, 15 August 1966. Both, not published widely, are in Russell Archives 2 at McMaster University. The USSR response was reported in "Soviet Forces Ready to Aid Hanoi", *The Times*, 18 Aug. 1966, p. 7. See also Russell's letter of 12 August to Ho Chi Minh, *The Selected Letters of Bertrand Russell: the Public Years, 1914–1970*, ed. Nicholas Griffin with the assistance of Alison Roberts Miculan (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), pp. 590–1, where Russell tries to persuade Ho to accept Soviet military help. Russell considered that restricting the theatre of war was outweighed by the danger of appeasing the aggressive United States.
7. My moment was diarized in enormous detail that afternoon.
8. *The Philosophy of Bertrand Russell*, 4th ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), vol. 2.
9. The first draft, of which I was given a copy, has Russell's "Delete" down the margin of several pages. They were not deleted.
10. For decades Sir Stanley Unwin had acted as Russell's literary agent. He was suddenly replaced on 28 June 1966 by Deborah Rogers. Within a month she had been replaced by Anton Felton. See Caroline Moorehead, *Bertrand Russell: a Life* (London: Sinclair Stevenson, 1992), pp. 536–7; Ray Monk, *Bertrand Russell, 1921–70: the Ghost of Madness* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2000), pp. 496–7.
11. To Elizabeth Hervic, 9 May 1966, RA2, box 10.66, document 125983.
12. RA3 Recent Acq. 1,703. See Joëlle Hervic's memoir in the file.
13. Monk, *The Ghost of Madness*, pp. 495–6, 497.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 470.
15. Feinberg had earlier visited Plas Penrhyn to assess the size and scope of the Archives (*Time to Tell: an Activist's Story* [Johannesburg: Real African Publishers, 2011], p. 68).
16. Farley to Felton, 7 Oct. 1966, RA3, Recent Acq. 1,343, box 5.64, file 22, McMaster. Search for this and other letters in <https://bracers.mcmaster.ca>.
17. Blackwell and Ruja, *A Bibliography of Bertrand Russell*, 3 vols. (London and New York: Routledge, 1994). I have an expanded, second edition underway in the Bertrand Russell Research Centre, McMaster University.
18. Russell to Lady Ottoline Morrell, postmarked 20 Sept. 1911, RA3 Rec. Acq. 69; original in Morrell papers, Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin.
19. *The Ghost of Madness*, p. 496. Monk draws a contrast between what happened in fact and the impression conveyed in the "Private Memorandum concerning Ralph

Schoenman”, written three and a half years later than mid-1966. Its text is appended in Ronald W. Clark, *The Life of Bertrand Russell* (London: Jonathan Cape and Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1975).

20. Statement of 9 December 1969; excerpted in *The Times*, 10 Dec. 1969, p. 3. Less specific on the timing is “Russell Disavows American Ex-Aide”, *New York Times*, *ibid.*

21. Clark, p. 618.

22. Lloyd T. Chandler was a successful uranium prospector in Ontario and an excellent photographer. His charming photos of the Russells are in the Russell Archives. Len Deighton provides a different account:

“Lloyd’s uranium windfall persuaded him to donate money to Bertrand Russell’s ‘Ban the Bomb’ movement and the two men became friends. During a visit to Russell at his home in Wales, Lloyd was told how worried he was about a letter he’d written in the nineteen thirties promising his autobiography to a publisher. Now he was writing his autobiography: must he take their first offer? Who would advise him? Lloyd said Len Deighton would know the answer. What made him say this I have no idea!

“... Who could resist an invitation to visit the world’s most famous philosopher? My wife and I spent a couple of delightful days with Bertrand Russell and even my slight grasp of copyright law enabled me to set his mind at rest about the letters. He had other problems: his papers, and archives covering his long life, were scattered in various grand houses and private libraries in Britain and he would like to have the material collected, sorted and made into a catalog.

“I suggested that he should meet my friend Ray Hawkey and my accountant Anton Felton. It worked out well. There were about 100,000 items and a limited edition catalog was published in an edition of 300. Anton Felton became Russell’s Executor.”

(<https://www.deightondossier.net/Author/Interviews/>)

23. His remarks are transcribed. See Blackwell and Carl Spadoni, *The Second Archives of Bertrand Russell* (Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 1992), p. 176.

24. “Speech by Bertrand Russell to Press Conference Called by International War Crimes Tribunal November 16th, 1966”. Mimeographed, 4 pp. (RA2 *220).

25. We produced a large catalogue, *The Archives of Bertrand Russell*, edited by Barry Feinberg (London: Continuum 1 Ltd., 1967), which earned Russell’s praise. For those who worked on it, it was a chance to learn editing, indexing and the ideal of historical accuracy in print. One who did was Ronald Kasrils, who went on to become Deputy Minister of Defence in Nelson Mandela’s government and then Minister of Intelligence Sources for South Africa.

26. I wish to thank John G. Slater and Tony Simpson for advice on a draft of this article.