

Tuesday, 13 November 2012



STATEMENT

THE DEATH OF MRS VALERIE ELIOT, LONDON LIBRARY VICE-PRESIDENT

The President, trustees, members and staff of The London Library heard with great sadness of the death of Mrs Valerie Eliot last Friday, 9 November 2012.

Mrs Eliot had been a Vice-President of the Library since 2009, and through Old Possum's Practical Trust was one of the Library's most generous benefactors, providing funds for the purchase and redevelopment of our newest wing, T.S. Eliot House.

Mrs Eliot was present at the building's naming on 11 June 2008, where actress Fiona Shaw read T.S. Eliot's moving poem for Valerie, 'A Dedication to My Wife.'

The Library's President, Sir Tom Stoppard, said: "Valerie brought unprecedented and long-awaited happiness to her husband, to whom she was passionately devoted. During the long decades of her widowhood, she was equally devoted to her custodianship of his remarkable work. Her passing severs a vital link with our literary past. The London Library will continue to preserve the memories of both T.S. and Valerie Eliot, whose generosity, advocacy and leadership are part of the fabric of this great institution."

T.S. Eliot was President of The London Library from 1952 to his death in 1965.

On assuming the office of President, he delivered an address at the Library's Annual General Meeting in which he declared that 'if this library disappeared, it would be a disaster to the world of letters, and would leave a vacancy that no other form of library could fill.'

A portrait of Mrs Valerie Eliot by Emma Sargeant hangs in The London Library, adjacent to the entrance to T.S. Eliot House.

The Library extends its condolences to Mrs Eliot's family, to the staff and trustees of Old Possum's Practical Trust, and to who all who knew and worked with Mrs Eliot.

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NOTES FOR EDITORS

About The London Library

The London Library, St James's Square, was founded in 1841 and is the world's largest independent lending library. Its broad and eclectic collection covers a vast number of subjects across the humanities, with books dating from the 16th Century to the latest print and digital resources. It has over one million volumes, stored on 15 miles of open-access shelves which may be freely browsed with over 97% available for loan.

With over 7000 current members, the Library has provided an invaluable resource to writers, researchers and avid readers for over 160 years. Past and present members include Charles Darwin, George Eliot, Virginia Woolf, T.S. Eliot, Bruce Chatwin, Sebastian Faulks, Jeremy Paxman and current president Sir Tom Stoppard. Membership of The London Library is open to all.

The Library is a registered charity and receives no government or statutory funding and is funded entirely by members' subscriptions, donations and bequests. In summer 2010 the Library completed the second phase of its historic refurbishment designed by Haworth Tompkins Architects.

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