

In Memoriam Patrick, Lord Cormack (1939-2024)

The Tennyson Society pays tribute to Patrick, Lord Cormack who sadly crossed the bar last February, after only about a year of service as the Society's President. He had been a member of the Society since its inception in 1960, after the historical dinner, addressed by John Betjeman, which he attended, commemorating the 150th anniversary of Alfred Tennyson's birth, in the White Hart, Lincoln, in 1959. He was an unfailing supporter of the Society's work and admirer of Tennyson's poetry. He was present to the most important events and historical moments of the Tennyson Society; the photograph we chose to remember him, for example, it is one I took at the opening the new Lincoln's home of the Tennyson Research Centre in the Lincolnshire Archives on 14th July 2014. He warmly accepted to guide us into a new phase as the President in June 2023.

We will deeply miss his dedicated, constant, and active contribution as a Tennysonian advocate and long-standing member who valued the arts and heritage of the county in which he was born, Lincolnshire. He worked tirelessly to protect it regionally and nationally: in 1974, he founded the all-party heritage group Heritage in Danger, which he chaired for 35 years; he was among the first advocates of a national lottery fund for the arts'; and he promoted a Bill consenting historic churches to receive state grants.

Patrick Thomas, Lord Cormack was born in Grimsby and educated at St. James's Choir School and Havelock School. He read English and History at Hull University and worked as history teacher before becoming an MP in 1970. Nationally, he is mostly remembered a long-serving Conservative MP, who served for 40 years in the House of Commons, with roles including shadow deputy leader for the House, and nearly 14 as a life peer in the House of Lords. He became a Freeman of the City of London in 1980, was knighted in February 1995, and made an Honorary Freeman of the City of Lincoln in March 2022.

In *The Guardian*, the Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby shared his memories of Lord Cormack as "a vivid character whose decades of public service were driven by his Christian service". Similar memories were shared by the Bishop of Lincoln, the Rt Revd Stephen Conway, at the funeral service in Lincoln Cathedral on 25th March 2024, who remembered how "his passion, energy, imagination and deep determination were fuelled by a profound Christian faith". His tribute evoked a portrait of Cormack that we also share as an "unstinting supporter", whose ability to connect people and get things done we will strive to emulate.

It is the Tennysonian Lord Cormack that the Tennyson Society wants to remember most. He loved attending the Society's Service of Commemoration of the poet's birth in either Somersby or Bag Enderby because they were in the landscape Tennyson evoked in his poetry. As Lord Lamont of Lerwick also recalled in his tribute at the funeral service, if invited as a guest of Patrick and Mary Cormack in Lincoln, you were treated to a tour of Tennyson's county, the places where he grew up and practiced his craft forging a life-long poetic conversation with the natural world. Cormack, like Tennyson, had unwavering faith in the value of poetry as a means of understanding the world in which we live and contribute to. His originating and vital contribution to the Tennyson Society will be forever remembered.

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