

## Professor Roy Bridges

Members of the Hakluyt Society who knew Professor Roy Bridges and the many more who knew his work will be deeply saddened to learn of his death in Newmachar, Aberdeenshire, on 1 August 2020.

Roy was a leading member of the Hakluyt Society, which he joined in 1962. In 1964 he was appointed to the University of Aberdeen, where he became Professor of History, having previously taught at Makerere University in Uganda. His research and writing were mainly concerned with East Africa in the nineteenth century. He became a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society and of the Royal Historical Society.

Roy developed a great affection for the Hakluyt Society, where he had many friends and to whose work he made many important contributions. His commitment to the Society never faded. He served several terms on Council and was President for all of six years, from 2004 to 2010. He gave two of the Annual Lectures, in 1977 and 1993, and edited or co-edited three volumes in our main series (one in the Second Series, two in the Third).

The first volume, co-edited with Paul Hair in 1996 as *Compassing the Vaste Globe of the Earth*, was a set of essays marking the 150th anniversary of the Society's foundation and including Roy's own account of the founder, William Desborough Cooley. The *Four Travel Journals* volume appeared in 2007 and included Roy's edition of 'A Dangerous and Toilsome Journey', the account by the freed slave Jacob Wainwright of the transportation of David Livingstone's body to the coast. Roy's *magnum opus* in his work for the Society, was published in 2018: *A Walk Across Africa. J. A. Grant's Account of the Nile Expedition of 1860-1863*. This major achievement is probably best approached through the three posts Roy wrote for the Hakluyt Society Blog to introduce the work.

<https://hakluytsociety.wordpress.com/2018/05/03/introducing-the-hakluyt-society-edition-of-grants-walk-across-africa/>

<https://hakluytsociety.wordpress.com/2018/05/11/a-walk-across-africa-the-nile-source-problem/>

<https://hakluytsociety.wordpress.com/2018/05/21/grant-the-nile-expedition-and-colonisation/>

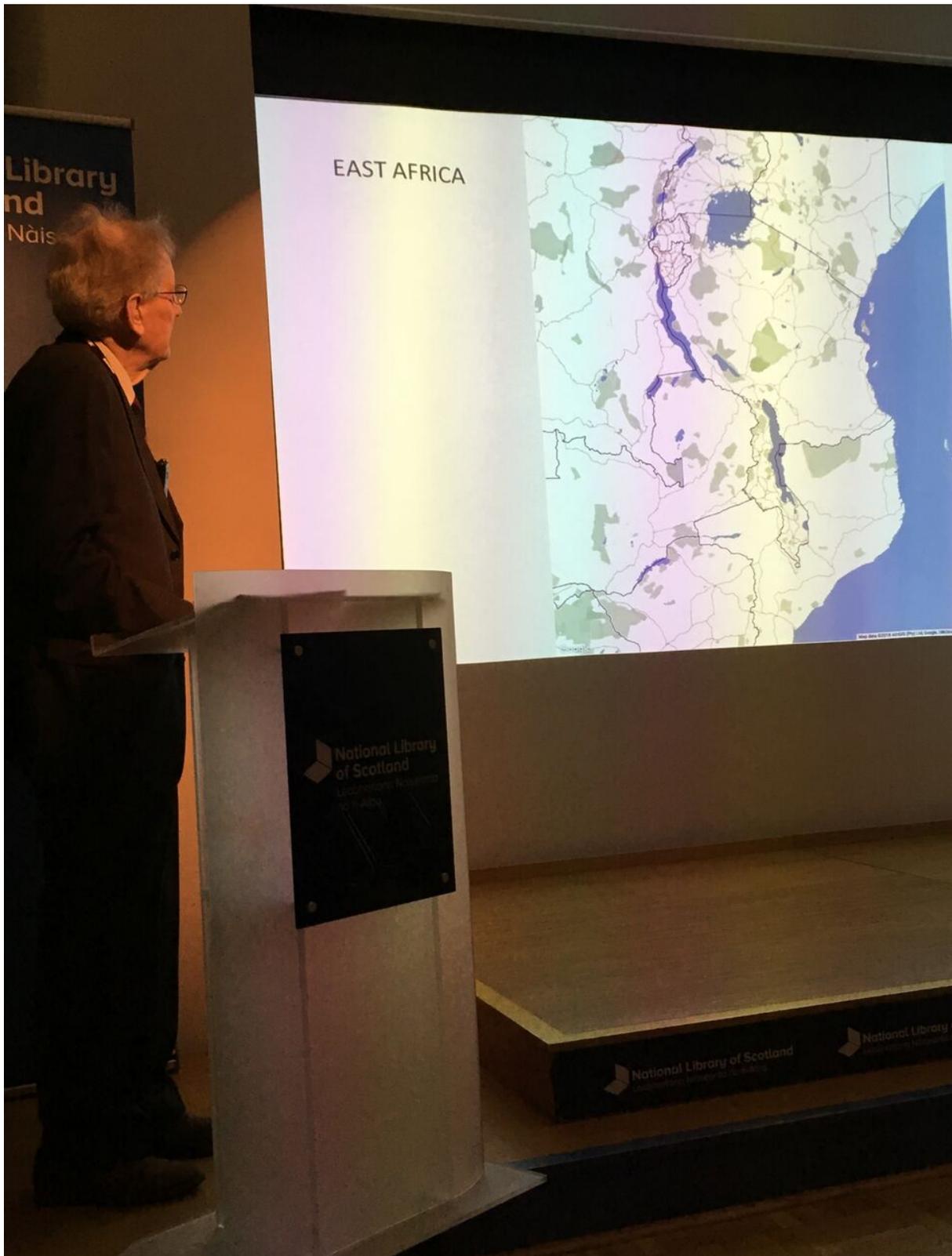
It was important for Roy that he was able to conclude in the third post that, 'Grant was certainly not a colonialist explorer but a distinguished and worthy traveller.' Through the record of that journey, both James Grant and Roy Bridges have made available to us all a rich, insightful and historically located account of East Africa in the 1860s.

We also have ready access to Roy's view of the history and character of the Hakluyt Society, through a published version in the Society's online *Journal* of a talk he gave at the Guildhall Library in 2014:

[https://www.hakluyt.com/downloadable\\_files/Journal/Bridges\\_Guildhall%20talk.pdf](https://www.hakluyt.com/downloadable_files/Journal/Bridges_Guildhall%20talk.pdf)

The conclusion contains a personal *credo*: 'I believe travellers' texts can tell us a great deal about the way our now globalised world has emerged and that by promoting their study the Hakluyt Society can in a modest way promote understanding.' Roy's friends will recognise the man in that note of modesty but his wider readership also will agree with a momentary flamboyance elsewhere in his talk, where Grant's *Walk* is called 'a priceless and wonderful source of information.'

Jim Bennett  
3 August 2020



Roy Bridges speaking at the launch of *A Walk Across Africa* at the National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh, in 2018.