

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Last Member of Bloomsbury Group honored for WWII Service

London, England (December 3, 2007) — This morning, Anne Olivier Popham Bell was honored for her service during World War II as a member of the Monuments, Fine Arts, and Archives



L to R: Robert M. Edsel, Anne Olivier Bell, Ambassador Robert H. Tuttle

section (“MFAA”), at a ceremony at Winfield House. Ambassador Robert H. Tuttle, his wife Maria, and Robert M. Edsel, President of the Monuments Men Foundation for the Preservation of Art, presided over the event at which Mrs. Bell was presented with a flag of the United States which had flown over the United States Capitol in her honor, as well as a gold leaf copy of the Congressional resolution that was passed on June 6, 2007, which recognized the heroic efforts of the “Monuments Men” as they were more commonly known.

The “Monuments Men” were a group of 345 men and women from thirteen nations who together worked to protect monuments and other cultural treasures from the destruction of World War II. In the last year of the war they tracked, located and ultimately returned more than five million artistic and cultural treasures stolen by Hitler and the Nazis. The resolutions were inspired by Mr. Edsel, who founded the Monuments Men Foundation earlier this year to preserve the legacy of the unprecedented work of the Monuments Men by raising public awareness of the importance of protecting and safeguarding civilization’s most important artistic and cultural treasures from armed conflict. Mr. Edsel’s exhaustively researched book, *Rescuing Da Vinci*, reveals and recounts the exploits of these unsung heroes.

On this important occasion, Mr. Edsel said: “The men and women of thirteen nations who collectively comprised the “Monuments Men” set the standard for the protection of cultural treasures during armed conflict. After the war they spent years locating and returning millions of works of art and other items to the countries from which these treasures had been stolen. England contributed greatly to the Monuments Men with such prominent figures as Sir Charles Leonard Woolley, Lt. Colonel Geoffrey Webb, and Major Ronald Balfour. Anne Olivier Popham Bell played an important role in the post-war work of the Monuments Men. Although we hope our ongoing research efforts identify other living Monuments Men, today we know of only twelve, including Mrs. Bell. It is an honor to formally bestow upon her the recognition of the United States for her important wartime service.”

Ambassador Tuttle stated: “My wife Maria and I are keen lovers of art and cannot conceive of a world bereft of so many famous artworks. It is due to the hard work and bravery of the men and women of the Monuments, Fine Arts and Archives program, some of whom paid the ultimate price and died in the process, that so many treasures were safely returned to their rightful places at the end of World War II for future generations to enjoy. I am delighted to honor Mrs. Bell today, and through her the entire work of the MFAA.”

Anne Olivier Popham Bell, a Civilian Officer Grade 2, was well prepared for work with the MFAA, as she studied art history at the Courtauld Institute from 1934 to 1937. Her father, A.E. ‘Hugh’ Popham was a distinguished authority on Italian drawings, and Keeper of the Department

of Prints and Drawings at the British Museum, which collection was transferred for safety to Wales in advance of the German Blitzkrieg on London. Anne Popham's 'war work' began in 1941 when she joined the Ministry of Information as a research assistant, first in the Photographs and then in the Publications Divisions, largely concerned with the production of informative booklets on the British war effort published by His Majesty's Stationary Office. In 1945 she transferred to the MFAA Branch of the Control Commission for Germany, and from October was stationed at Bünde in Westphalia, the Divisional Headquarters where she acted as coordinator to the work of the Branch's officers on the ground. Her detailed diaries of her daily activities are preserved in the Imperial War Museum in London.

Following her return home from Germany in 1947, Popham joined the Art Department of the Arts Council of Great Britain, where she was engaged in the preparation of major exhibitions in London and the provinces, and in editing their authoritative catalogues. In 1952 she married Quentin Bell, who was to become Professor of History and Theory of Art at both Leeds and Sussex Universities. He was the son of Clive and Vanessa Bell (the artist), central figures in the 'Bloomsbury Group', of which Vanessa's sister, Virginia Woolf, was a participant. After raising three children, Anne worked closely with her husband on the research for his acclaimed 1972 biography of his aunt Virginia Woolf, and thereafter undertook the editing of her complete Diary (5 volumes), for which she was appointed FRLS and given two Honorary Doctorates.

Mrs. Bell stated during today's ceremony, "I am very touched that Americans have seen fit to commend the Monuments, Fine Arts and Archives with this honor, and to extend the recognition to the British contingents. I am very grateful."

Following those remarks, Mrs. Tuttle presented Mrs. Bell with a beautiful flower arrangement from the Winfield House garden and stated "thank you for what you have done to preserve our past for our future."

Attendees at the ceremony included Mrs. Bell's children Virginia Nicholson, Cressida Bell and Julian Bell. Also present were Dr. Charles Saumarez-Smith, the Secretary and Chief Executive of the Royal Academy of Arts; Colin McKenzie, the Director of the Charleston Trust; and Stephen Walton, an Archivist in the Department of Documents at the Imperial War Museum, which houses Mrs. Bell's wartime diaries.

Anne Olivier Bell currently lives in Sussex close to Charleston, the Bell family home now restored and open to the public by the Charleston Trust, of which she is senior Trustee. She is the only known MFAA survivor in England, as well as being a close link with the Bloomsbury Group.

For more information about the Monuments Men, please visit www.monumentsmenfoundation.org.

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