



Robin Lenman, died on 11 April 2022, aged 76.

Robin Lenman, a Postmaster in Modern History and a friend from our undergraduate days, who went on to become a much-loved lecturer in History at Warwick University and a great authority on Germany politics and culture, died in hospital in Cornwall after a series of heart problems in April 2022. He is survived by his wife, Anita Ballin, his daughter by his first marriage, Sophie Wallace, her husband Gordon, and their three children.

As an undergraduate, Robin was widely regarded as the brightest historian of our year and was the only one of us to achieve a straight First in Finals. He was a handsome young man, with his distinctive fair hair and blue eyes, and came to Merton from St Edward's School in Oxford with well-developed interests, particularly in French and German culture. He and his younger brother Jamie had been brought up by their mother and grandmother and Robin's sense of responsibility towards others and his kindness and sensitivity undoubtedly sprang from that upbringing. He was unfailingly courteous and good-humoured and a delightful conversationalist. But he was also quite a private person, who was happier pursuing his own interests than taking part in sports or social gatherings. Even as an undergraduate he had his own distinctive sense of style. With his favourite black corduroy jacket and his Merton scarf, he was a familiar figure in Magpie Lane or Merton Street on his way to the libraries. He was also well known for his loyalty to the fountain pen and his preference for purple ink for correspondence and for essays.

During his undergraduate days, Robin developed a keen interest in Germany between the wars and after taking his degree he moved to St Antony's College, where he undertook pre-doctoral research on Julius Streicher, a leading Nazi anti-Jewish propagandist in Nuremberg, and wrote his doctorate on censorship and society in Munich before the First World War. In 1971, he was appointed Lecturer in German History at Warwick University, where he worked for the following 30 years. According to one of his students, his lectures were 'full of humour and wry observation' and his 'open, friendly and polite manner' made him someone students felt they could go to for help and advice. He was also something of a pioneer at Warwick, and a teacher of the faculty, in his use of technical resources and visual material, which in those days was rare but has now become the norm in historical research.

After some years, the focus of Robin's interest moved from inter-war politics to German artists and the art market in the late 19th century. This resulted in a book, *Artists and Society in Germany 1850–1914* (1997), which was well received in Germany as well as in the UK. Indeed, a series of his essays on related themes had been translated into German and published in Germany a few years earlier. His colleague Jim Obelkevich describes the book as 'admirably researched, enviably well-written, refreshingly free of trendy academic jargon ... a model of its kind'.

Robin's colleagues at Warwick have shared their very positive memories of him on the department website. They speak of the esteem in which he was held, his 'over-subscribed modules on German history', his 'unflagging good nature and unflappability', his 'admirable conviviality' and 'almost puckish sense of fun'. But they also point out that he was 'something of an outlier' in a 'strongly Marxist-oriented department, still in the shadow of its heady days under the influence of E P Thompson'. As his colleague Chris Read has written: 'In a left-leaning world, he was a traditional, pure liberal of the old school ... In the best sense, Robin was an old-school don. He was first and foremost a passionate scholar, wrapped up in ideas and arguments and had wide interests which took him in many directions.'

In the final phase of his time at Warwick, Robin turned to his love of photography, offering an MA course in its history and beginning work on an ambitious commission from Oxford University Press. This resulted after some years of intense editorial and writing activity in the publication of the magnificent *Oxford Companion to the Photograph* (2005), a 750-page volume which testifies to Robin's extraordinary knowledge of the medium and his ability to bring together the work of so many advisory editors and over 140 contributors in such a remarkably clear and concise way. It was a gargantuan task which took some toll on his health and required him to take on additional help. But it has been widely acclaimed as one of the best books ever produced on the history of photography.

Robin took early retirement in 2004 and he and Anita set up home in Penzance, close to their beloved Isles of Scilly where they holidayed every year. In Penzance, he became an inspiration to many in his local photographic society, which has established a Robin Lenman Prize in his memory.

David Page (1963)