

## Professor Carl Hermann Ethé (1844-1917): also a victim of the First World War<sup>1</sup>

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Carl Hermann Ethé was a German national who was occupying the Professorship of German and Oriental Languages at the University College of Wales Aberystwyth at the start of the First World War. His fate as a result of the War is as tragic as that of a number of other German-national professors of German in other British and Irish universities at that time. However, Ethé was one victim of the circumstances of the War who was obliged to leave his university not because of the attitude of his institution's authorities or even of the Government but because of the intolerance shown by the local populus and by the local town's authority, in this case the people of Aberystwyth and Aberystwyth Town Council. The University College authorities, on the other hand, supported him as best they could and later honourably gave him an annuity, thereby acting against the views of the local Council. True, the University College, even though in straitened circumstances, was none the less not as affected by the loss of financial support from its local government authority as the Universities of Birmingham and Leeds might have been in their analogous cases,<sup>2</sup> but the differences between the University College and the Town Council on Ethé's case created considerable tensions in the small and isolated town of Aberystwyth.

Ethé's treatment is mentioned by Panayi, but his discussion covers only some of the events of October 1914 and gives a seriously misleading description of their denouement.<sup>3</sup> The original entry on Ethé's life in the hard-copy *Oxford Dictionary of*

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<sup>1</sup> This article has been excerpted and adapted from a longer comparative one by the same author entitled 'German-/Austrian-origin Professors of German in British universities during the First World War: the lessons of four case studies' that considers three other cases of German or Austrian professors in this War; the full paper is available at:

[http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/49797/1/Husbands\\_German\\_Austrian\\_origin\\_2013.pdf](http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/49797/1/Husbands_German_Austrian_origin_2013.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> For the Birmingham case, see Christopher T Husbands, 'German academics in British universities during the First World War: the case of Karl Wichmann', *German Life and Letters*, New Series, 60(4), October 2007, 493-517, and Christopher T Husbands, 'Karl Wichmann (1868-1948): a research note', *German Life and Letters*, New Series, 65(3), July 2012, 333-343. For the Leeds case, see 'German-/Austrian-origin Professors of German . . .', *passim*.

<sup>3</sup> Panikos Panayi, *The Enemy in Our Midst: Germans in Britain during the First World War* (New York: Berg 1991), 194-5. Despite purported support from two newspaper sources (one the *Manchester Guardian*), there is nothing in what is known to have happened that justifies Panayi's saying (p. 195) that 'the College authorities managed to satisfy the local council [presumably intended is the Town Council] of Ethé's innocence'. The *Manchester Guardian* merely reported Principal Roberts' account

*National Biography* also mentions the case, but its account of this particular matter is also by brevity or omission significantly misleading and unfair in its implications about the role of the University College; it simply says that ‘in October 1914 a wave of popular anger forced the college to dismiss him [Ethé]’, which is factually wrong.<sup>4</sup> However, the latest online version of this entry contains important revisions and corrections, including the removal of the unfair aspersion against the behaviour of the University College. In the existing literature, the fullest and fairest recounting of what actually happened to Ethé is that of Ellis.<sup>5</sup> Even this is far from exhaustive and what follows elaborates and extends Ellis’s account.<sup>6</sup>

Ethé was born of French origins on 18 February 1844 in Stralsund (due north of Berlin and near the Baltic coast, then in Pomerania in Prussia and now in the contemporary region of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern), the son of Franz Ethé and his wife Mathilde (née Lappe). His father worked in some branch of engineering and the family was Protestant. Before studying at university, the family was at Greifswald, close to Stralsund. Ethé joined the University of Leipzig on 23 October 1863 to study in the Faculty of Philology. Coming from Prussia to study in Saxony, he was actually then classified as a foreigner. He received his DrPhil in Oriental literature from Leipzig in 1865, studying initially theology and then theology and philology; his University file even contains official rebukes for incidents of night-time rowdiness and unseemly behaviour.<sup>7</sup> He was later awarded an honorary MA from Oxford. He was Lecturer in Oriental Languages at the University of Munich from 1867 to 1871. He was recruited by Oxford University in 1872 on the recommendation of Professor Friedrich Max Müller (1823-1900) to be an assistant librarian at the Bodleian Library to complete a catalogue of its Persian, Turkish, Hindustani and Pashto manuscripts and to compile a catalogue of its Arabic manuscripts. Also in 1872 Ethé was entrusted

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given to the Court of Governors (24 October 1914, 4) in the same terms as recounted below from the report in the *Cambrian News* of 30 October 1914.

<sup>4</sup> J T P de Bruijn, ‘Ethé, (Carl) Hermann (1844–1917)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2004).

<sup>5</sup> E L Ellis, *The University College of Wales Aberystwyth 1872-1972* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press 1972), 171-3.

<sup>6</sup> Its various sources are documents in the archive of the University College, several issues of the *Cambrian News*, and material in the file in the National Archives entitled ‘Nationality and Naturalisation: Ethe, Harriett [*sic*] Dora, Resident in Bristol, Certificate 2,786 issued 20 August 1917’ [National Archives, HO 144/1394/270704]. The bulk of this file is actually material concerning Ethé himself rather than his wife.

<sup>7</sup> See

<http://www.archiv.unileipzig.de/recherche/Dokument/Suche/0e2f0c6fcarl+hermann+eth%25E3%25A9> (accessed on 16 January 2014).

by the Secretary of State for India to catalogue its Persian manuscripts in the India Office Library, the first volume of which was published in 1903.

It was in 1875, on the recommendation of Müller, that Ethé became Professor of German and Oriental Languages at Aberystwyth and he was certainly the one scholar of truly international distinction then at the University College. Till 1894 he was also Professor of French Language and Literature there. He was polyglot in a substantial number of mid-Asian languages and offered lectures on Hebrew, Arabic, Persian, Syriac or Ethiopic, and Sanskrit, as well as teaching modern languages such as German and Italian, though one cannot but wonder about the demand among the students of Aberystwyth for learning such a language as Syriac. He was associated with Aberystwyth for nearly forty years from 1875 and, even with his Germanic style, was hugely regarded by the College authorities. He was also widely respected, and his seventieth birthday in early 1914 attracted its own celebratory article in *The Times*.<sup>8</sup> He continued to be engaged in the long-term project of further cataloguing the Persian manuscripts in the India Office.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, even after he was no longer living in Aberystwyth, he continued – though still a German national – pursuing this work for the India Office.

Already a widower aged fifty-five,<sup>10</sup> on 11 July 1899 he married the twenty-nine-year-old British-born spinster, Harriet Dora Phillips, born in Lichfield and second daughter of a fish and game dealer, Abraham Phillips (1840-1917), and his wife Emma (née Warburton, 1840-1916). The Ethé couple were in Munich on holiday when the War broke out. The University College's reaction to this was subdued. A meeting of its Council on 2 October 1914 received a report from the Finance and General Purposes Committee three days earlier which merely reported that Ethé was detained in Germany and unable to take up his duties as Professor of German and Oriental Languages. As Ethé was a German national who had never naturalized, he might have been prevented from returning but, on application made on 5 October to the Home Office by the University College Principal, Thomas Francis Roberts,<sup>11</sup> he

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<sup>8</sup> *The Times*, 13 February 1914, 9.

<sup>9</sup> The second volume of this was published in 1937, revised and completed by a later editor.

<sup>10</sup> His first wife, Anna Francisca, born in 1848/49 in Reuthen (then in Prussia and now in the contemporary region of Brandenburg just south of Cottbus), had died in Aberystwyth on 16 July 1897 – according to her death certificate of late effects of some form of syphilis. They had had at least one child, a daughter Anna Louisa Helena, who died of bronchitis in infancy aged one year nine months on 15 April 1875. Indeed, it may have been her death in Oxford that gave the place uncomfortable associations and made Ethé receptive to the offer from Aberystwyth.

<sup>11</sup> The Appendix to this article gives biographical details of all the principal University College players.

was able to return, arriving in Aberystwyth on the evening of 13 October. However, a potentially violent mob threatened his homecoming to Aberystwyth and, for his longer-term safety, he and his wife had to leave the town.

#### *Events in Aberystwyth in October 1914*

How this came about is a case study in mob violence. Ethé and his wife had escaped from Germany via The Netherlands with the assistance of the American consul in Dresden and the Dutch authorities, sailing from Vlissingen to Folkestone. There they had been allowed entry to the United Kingdom on an instruction sent by the Home Office to Folkestone on 8 October and they moved on to London, from where Ethé sent Roberts a postcard saying that on the following day he and his wife would be back in Aberystwyth on a train from London due to arrive at 17.25. Roberts had appreciated that the local mood was sensitive and, after consultation with the local Chief Constable, agreed that he, the Registrar and a representative of the students should meet the couple at Aberystwyth station and, having had no earlier method of communicating with them, warn them to be discreet in their demeanour because of anti-German sentiment in the town. However, the reception party at the station was widely observed and misinterpreted by some as one of formal welcome. On the following day, the Wednesday, Ethé had gone in the morning to work at the College, leaving his wife at their home. In the course of that morning typed flyers were distributed around the town calling for a midday meeting of the local population before the Shiloh Chapel to demand that Ethé leave town. The meeting of up to 2,000 people, reportedly predominantly working men and women,<sup>12</sup> was incited by two senior local figures, the solicitor Thomas John Samuel and especially the doctor Thomas Davies Harries,<sup>13</sup> to seek to dismiss Ethé from the University College. Under the prompting of a local commercial traveller, the crowd then moved from the town centre to Ethé's house at 3 Caradog Road, then in a suburb about a kilometre away,

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<sup>12</sup> *Cambrian News*, 16 October 1914, 5.

<sup>13</sup> These were Thomas John Samuel, JP MBE (1864-1939), a local solicitor and town councillor, and Thomas Davies Harries (1850-1938), son of a farmer and a doctor and local magistrate. Samuel, son of a bootmaker, had been a minimally successful student at Aberystwyth from 1882 to 1883, but then left without a degree to become articled to a solicitor in Aberystwyth. He was by 1914 an ex-Mayor of Aberystwyth. Although it does not explain his behaviour of this early occasion, Harries' later enthusiastic opposition to Ethé and his treatment may have been affected by the death in the War of his younger son, Eric Guy Harries, who became a Captain in the Machine Gun Section of the Royal Welsh Fusiliers and died aged twenty-two of wounds on 17 August 1915. He had been sent to the Dardanelles and was mortally wounded at Chocolate Hill, Suvia Bay, on 10 August, dying on the hospital ship *Euripides*; see *De Ruvigney's Roll of Honour, 1914-1924*, available at <http://www.ancestry.co.uk>.

and confronted his wife alone in the house. The experience must have been truly frightening for her and she handled it with commendable bravery. The mob milled in the front garden and then threw open a front window to demand Ethé. His wife appeared and, explaining that he was not in the house, argued with the crowd for some five minutes, before the intervention of two College professors, John Wilson Marshall (who commanded the local Officers' Training Corps) and Owen Thomas Jones, discouraged further overt hostility. However, the crowd then moved on to Professor George Adolphus Schott's house to threaten him; he was born in Yorkshire but had a German wife but refused to be intimidated and remained in his house. Ethé was not the only victim; Germans working in two local hotels and at a local hairdresser's shop were also forced to leave the town. That evening Ethé and his wife exiled themselves from the town (he never to return), staying overnight in Llandrindod Wells, before continuing to Reading, where they lived initially at 42 Western Elms Avenue in the household of Ethé's brother-in-law, John Warburton Phillips (1879-1960), and his wife Mary Evelyn (née Nicholls, 1875-1947) and their young son. Phillips was later a bank manager and received an MBE.

Given the options of the University College, its role here is, though difficult, largely above reproach, given all the circumstances. A public meeting on Wednesday 21 October 1914 had sent a letter to the University College protesting Ethé's non-dismissal. The College Council initially discussed and then effectively ignored this and referred to the Finance and General Purposes Committee the question of whether Ethé should be paid. There is an interesting and extensive account of this process in the Minutes of a Meeting of the University College Council that convened on the morning of 23 October 1914. This is worth reproducing in full. Among the Agenda items on Correspondence was:

- (a) *Return of Dr. Ethé.*—From Mr. T[homas] J[ohn] Samuel, Solicitor, of Aberystwyth, enclosing the following resolution “passed at a public meeting of the inhabitants of this town held last evening (21<sup>st</sup> October) in the Queen's Square”, viz.:-

“That as the College Authorities have not replied, as promised, to the deputation which waited upon the Principal last week<sup>14</sup> respecting the dismissal of the German Professor, this meeting of the inhabitants of Aberystwyth protests most strongly against having a German subject on the staff of a Welsh National College while Germany is at war with our country; and that this resolution be sent to the College Council, and Governors, for their decision and reply.

Principal Roberts explained the circumstances under which he and the Registrar [John Humphreys Davies] met Dr. Ethé on his return to Aberystwyth.

After carefully considering the matter, on the proposition of Principal Owen Prys, seconded by Dr. J[ohn] Gwenogvryn Evans,

It was RESOLVED—

- (i) That, having heard the explanation of the Principal as to the incident connected with the return of Dr. Ethé, the Council regard it as satisfactory; and as the Council is of opinion that the explanation would remove the misapprehension that exists in the mind of the public, ask the Principal to repeat the statement to the Court of Governors and to the Press.
- (ii) That the temporary arrangements made for the carrying on of the work of the Departments concerned be continued for the Session.

On the proposition of the Rev. Richard J[enkin] Rees, seconded by D[aniel] Lloyd Lewis, Esq.,

It was RESOLVED—

That the question of the payment (or not) of salary to Dr. Ethé for the present Session be referred to the Finance and General Purposes Committee.

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<sup>14</sup> This is an apparent reference to a meeting on 14 October near the College, perhaps in the open air, in which Roberts sought to buy time by explaining to the crowd that professors could not be sent away at a moment's notice and suggested that action be postponed for a week to enable the College authorities to consider the matter and that in the meantime Ethé might leave the town, pending this consideration. The crowd had apparently accepted this as an assurance; see *Cambrian News*, 16 October 1914, 5.

The Court of Governors that received Roberts' statement met on the afternoon of the same day and the full text of his statement later appeared in the local press.<sup>15</sup> Its thrust was a description of how Ethé and his wife had been met on their return to the town, particularly seeking to counter the perception that the reception group had been providing a formal welcome rather than seeking to warn Ethé of the need to be careful in view of the anti-German feeling running in the town.

The events in Aberystwyth attracted national publicity, both for and against how the town had treated its German residents. Roberts received an undated anonymous message, written with a limited level of literacy, threatening Ethé's death if he were brought back to Aberystwyth by the University College – as the writer gnomically put it (perhaps suggesting that he/she was not actually from the locality), 'his [Ethé's] life will be in danger if he has the face to come here and take our English [sic] money' and 'let a British man have it'. It is unclear quite when this was sent but it was presumably in November 1914; it attached a press cutting, undated and unsourced, saying that 'the services of three German professors have been dispensed with by the Toronto University authorities,' events that occurred in November 1914.<sup>16</sup>

*Ethé's exile in Reading and the unsuccessful attempt at naturalization*

Roberts clearly had to balance several divergent demands on his options. Still, to Ethé he was initially apparently optimistic, perhaps genuinely but more likely out of a concern for Ethé's feelings, about the latter's return to Aberystwyth. On 28 October he wrote to Ethé saying that, while he could not advise when it would be safe to return to Aberystwyth and advising Ethé to stay away for the present session [i.e., 1914-15], he 'thought that matters would right themselves in due course and he [Ethé] need have no anxiety'. Ethé replied on 7 November complaining of the enforced idleness and the 'sad exile from our beloved home'. He was working hard on proof sheets for the

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<sup>15</sup> *Cambrian News*, 30 October 1914, 3.

<sup>16</sup> The full story of what actually happened at the University of Toronto is rather more nuanced; see James G Greenlee, *Sir Robert Falconer: A Biography* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press 1988), 205-13, and Martin L Friedland, *The University of Toronto: A History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press 2002), 260-1. The three were not in fact dismissed but, as a compromise in November 1914 between University President Falconer and his supporters, who wanted to keep them, and hawks on the University Board who wanted them immediately dismissed, the three were given leave of absence on full pay to 30 June 1915, though nothing was said about what might happen thereafter. In the event, two resigned by December 1914 and went to the United States, whilst the third resigned by June 1915, moving to McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario, then a private institution.

Clarendon Press, ‘the only thing that makes life bearable for me under these cruel circumstances’.<sup>17</sup>

Attempts were made on Ethé’s behalf to secure his naturalization. Roberts approached one of the University College’s most distinguished alumni, Sir Ellis Jones Ellis-Griffith, MP for Anglesey and from 1912 to 1915 Under-Secretary of State in the Home Department, to seek his intercession. Ellis-Griffith had suggested that Roberts write to the Home Secretary Reginald McKenna, who was also MP for North Monmouthshire. This Roberts did in early November 1914. However, the College Registrar had, at Ethé’s request, already made a formal application for naturalization as early as 16 October. It is clear from Ethé’s Home Office file that there was some sympathy for his case within the Home Office but, from a later exchange of letters with Roberts, it is also apparent why naturalization was unsuccessful. The Home Office had wanted to know whether the University College was behind the request for naturalization. Roberts replied to the Home Office on 5 December 1914 that he did not object to naturalization but saying that it was then inappropriate to bring the question before the College Council. He clearly feared that he would not secure unanimous support from the College Council, saying that ‘a discussion on this point might lead to a division of opinion which is unconnected with the merits of the case’. The contingent nature of this support for Ethé’s naturalization was interpreted by the Home Office as unacceptably lukewarm. On 19 January 1915 Roberts wrote again to the Home Office repeating this position but wanting to make clear his personal support for naturalization. However, the Home Office felt that this did not move the matter much further forward and the naturalization issue then lost momentum.

Although the naturalization attempt was unsuccessful, Roberts was able to secure Ethé’s salary for 1915, a matter doubtless of some delicacy as it was clandestinely made through private contributions from four individuals at the College (including Roberts). In his letter of thanks of 25 January 1915 to Roberts, Ethé promised him to keep this issue ‘strictly private’. Ethé also then expressed his annoyance at the effects of an action by Kuno Meyer, described as ‘foolish and

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<sup>17</sup> This would have been Ethé’s *Catalogue of Oriental Manuscripts, Persian, Arabic, and Hindustani*, 250 copies of which were printed for the National Library of Wales by the Clarendon Press in 1916.

absolutely unjustifiable' and clearly detrimental to the interests of German nationals still resident in Britain.<sup>18</sup>

Ethé remained stuck in Reading. On 16 March 1915 he had written to Roberts saying that his application for a special permit to visit Clifton in Bristol, where his wife's mother and a sister were living, was refused by the Chief Constable of Bristol. Ethé was then still seeking, unsuccessfully, for naturalization and wondered whether Lord Kenyon or Sir Samuel Thomas Evans<sup>19</sup> might put in a word on his behalf. By 3 April 1915 Ethé was reporting that his wife, albeit not he, had permission to go to Clifton. However, he was clearly concerned at outstaying his welcome in his brother-in-law's house and had been offered the possibility of moving on invitation to the residence in Manchester of Charles Herford.<sup>20</sup>

As a German national, Ethé was also a candidate for repatriation to Germany, something that he greatly feared. On 1 June 1915 Ethé wrote to Roberts saying that he had just received from the Home Office a form of application for exemption from repatriation. He needed the names and addresses of British subjects willing to vouch for his character. Roberts, of course, agreed to provide this surety. On 15 May 1915 the India Office had communicated to the Home Office its view that Ethé should not be repatriated, and similar views came from the Reading police and from Ethé's academic colleagues, Edward Milner-Barry<sup>21</sup> and Herford. Thus, Ethé did avoid repatriation.

#### *Ethé's pension and resignation from the University College*

However, after Ethé's case had been out of the University College's immediate concerns for eight months, it suddenly moved inexorably to a climax. One member of the College Council, Frederick Llewellyn-Jones, a solicitor and former student who

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<sup>18</sup> Kuno Meyer (1858-1919) had been Professor of Germanic Languages at the University of Liverpool till 1911, when he transferred to the University of Berlin as Professor of Celtic Philology. He had long been associated with the cause of Irish independence and, during a lecturing visit to the United States, he gave a widely reported speech to the Clan-na-Gael Society of New York on 17 December 1914 in which he had spoken of a German intention to encourage Irish military prisoners in Germany to forgo their allegiance and to participate in an invasion of England and Ireland; see *The Times*, 24 December 1914, 10.

<sup>19</sup> These were Lloyd Tyrrell-Kenyon, 4<sup>th</sup> Baron Kenyon (1864-1927), then a Senior Deputy Chancellor of the University of Wales and Sir Samuel Thomas Evans [(1859-1918) an alumnus of Aberystwyth and formerly MP for Mid-Glamorganshire.

<sup>20</sup> Charles Harold Herford (1853-1931), Professor of English Literature at the University of Manchester.

<sup>21</sup> Edward Leopold Milner-Barry, MA (1867-1917), Professor of German and Teutonic Philology at the University College of North Wales at Bangor.

had done much to establish the Law Department, threatened to move in the Council that Ethé should be deprived of his chair. On 4 June 1915 he sent a letter to the Registrar requesting that the following notice of motion be on the agenda for the next meeting of the Council:

To call attention to the fact that the name of Dr Hermann Ethe [*sic*] a German subject still appears in the Calendar of the University College of Wales as a Professor at the College and to move a resolution that steps be taken with a view to his being deprived of his chair and all the emoluments connected therewith at the earliest possible date.

By the same post Llewellyn-Jones sent a letter to Roberts to explain why he had formulated his motion. He pointed out that Ethé had been in Britain for forty years and could have naturalized during that time. As he had not, he was a German, and thus a member of ‘a nation of savage barbarians who will stop at nothing in their attempt to crush Britain’. Llewellyn-Jones noted two recent events that had disturbed him (and, it is true, had generally greatly inflamed anti-German feeling in Britain), *viz.*, the use of poison gases in warfare (first used by the Germans on 22 April 1915 in the Battle of Ypres) and the sinking of the *Lusitania* (which occurred on 7 May 1915); he also referred to ‘the murder of innocent women and children’. Thus, to Llewellyn-Jones, ‘a “German” professor at Aberystwyth cannot be tolerated’.

Roberts replied to this on the 5<sup>th</sup>, seeking to placate Llewellyn-Jones and offering to meet him personally at any place of his convenience, but this effort at placation was not successful. On the 7<sup>th</sup> the latter responded, reinforcing his earlier position, suggesting that Dr Ethé be invited to send his resignation to the Council, and failing that he was threatening to raise the issue before the Court of Governors, which he suggested to Roberts would be a mistake since there would then be greater publicity than would be the case if the matter were dealt with by the Council. Over the next couple of days Roberts continued to seek the personal meeting with Llewellyn-Jones to ensure that ‘no mistake is made in our handling of [the matter]’. On 9 June Roberts responded elliptically to Llewellyn-Jones assuring him that the matter would be dealt with and saying, in a postscript, that in view of this assurance he trusted that he had Llewellyn-Jones’s consent to his instruction to the Registrar to hold back his notice ‘for the present’. Roberts proposed in the meantime that he would ‘take steps

with a view to an arrangement *by consent* [italics added]'. From what is known of what happened, it becomes clear what this last phrase meant.

On 14 June Roberts wrote to Colonel Dunne of the Rendel Trustees<sup>22</sup>, pointing out that Ethé's payments from the India Office and British Museum were suspended but four members of the College (including Roberts) were privately guaranteeing his £200 salary. Roberts explained that the Registrar had been in communication with Mrs Ethé suggesting to her that Ethé should resign on the understanding that the Council should pay him what he would be receiving under the pensions scheme when he attained his 75<sup>th</sup> year (which would have been in 1919), *viz.*, £150 per annum.

This was agreed through what was a surreptitious cloak-and-dagger operation to hide what was going on, particularly from the population of Aberystwyth. Roberts apparently briefed his Professor of Zoology, Herbert John Fleure, as his emissary to Ethé. On 22 July 1915 Fleure sent Roberts a personal letter from a London hotel saying that he had been in Reading that afternoon and could report that Ethé was willing to accept his pension. Fleure reported that Ethé was begging that it not be 'finally and irretrievably settled that he is never to return [to Aberystwyth] and the thought of return 'keeps him up'. Fleure reported that he wired [i.e., sent a telegram] to 'J. H.', who was John Humphreys Davies, the University College's Registrar widely known by those initials, 'Barkiss willing, but still hopes return some day'. This was apparently a pre-arranged code – 'Barkiss' being a code name for Ethé, a quixotic ruse clearly adopted to prevent some indiscreet telegram operative in Aberystwyth from getting wind of any settlement and broadcasting the fact around the town. Further to substantiate the ruse, Fleure emphasized that he had sent his telegram from London and not from Reading, where Ethé might have been known to be residing.

Ethé did thereupon resign.<sup>23</sup> At its meeting on 24 September 1915 the College Council noted that the resignation of Professor Ethé as holder of the Chair of German and Oriental Languages, together with an application for his pension, was received. On a motion by Gwenogvryn Evans and seconded by Owen Prys, his resignation was

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<sup>22</sup> Colonel Dunne was Lieutenant-Colonel Edward Marten Dunne (1864-1944), who married into the Rendel family and had been Liberal MP for Walsall from 1906 to 1910. The Rendel Trustees were named after Stuart 1<sup>st</sup> Baron Rendel (1834-1913), President of University College Wales from 1895.

<sup>23</sup> Of course, outright dismissals, or invited resignations, outside higher education must also have been common. For example, a meeting of Northampton Town Council called for the resignation of the German-born manager of the Corporation Tramways, albeit with a 'solatium' of £300. He had apparently held this job for twelve years but he had sought naturalization only after the War had started; see *The Scotsman*, 27 October 1914, 7.

accepted and the payment of his pension of £150 per annum was authorized from 1 October 1914. Gwenogvryn Evans proposed, seconded by Walter Jenkin Evans, that detailed arrangements for the payment of the pension be referred to the Finance and General Purposes Committee for consideration and report. The Council's next meeting, on 29 October 1915, received a report from the Finance and General Purposes Committee about how Ethé's pension was to be funded, £75 per annum from College funds and the balance from the purchase of an annuity by cash in hand in the Pension Fund to provide the further £75.

*The relationship of the University College and the Town Council*

The relationship between the University College and the Town Council progressively deteriorated over the course of Ethé's case. The Council was to criticize the College for awarding the annuity to him, particularly as some of the money came from College funds. The fact that the pension had been conferred with a degree of confidentiality meant that it took nearly six months before the Town Council received wind of it. *The Times* reports that at the Town Council's monthly meeting on 11 April 1916 a motion, moved by Alderman Samuel,<sup>24</sup> was carried condemning the action of the Council of the University College of Wales in 'recommending payments out of the College income to Dr. Ethe, an alien, and that a copy of this resolution be sent to the next meeting of the Governors of the College'. Professor Edward Edwards, who was also a Councillor on the Town Council, pointed out in the debate that Ethé had condemned the Kaiser in strong terms and was still engaged, at the India Office, in government work.<sup>25</sup> Samuel proposed suspension of standing orders to allow his emergency motion in view of the fact that the College Governors were due to meet at Rhayader a couple of weeks later. He even suggested that a deputation of the Town Council should wait on the College Governors and convey to them the resolution expressing its disapproval and disgust.<sup>26</sup>

When they met on 28 April 1916, the Governors, chaired by Sir Garrod Thomas, initially considered referring the Town Council's motion to the College Council but then withdrew it and left it on the table. Given that Ethé had contributed to the College's pension fund, paying him the pension was regarded as a moral duty,

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<sup>24</sup> This was the Thomas John Samuel mentioned above; the motion was seconded by Councillor Harries.

<sup>25</sup> *The Times*, 13 April 1916, 11.

<sup>26</sup> *Cambrian News*, 14 April 1916, 6.

though it is true that some of it did come directly from College funds. This egregious snub exasperated the Town Council and when in May 1916 the Registrar informed it of the expiry of the term of office to the Court of Governors of one of its nominees, Alderman Samuel proposed that no appointment be made ‘after the treatment given by the Court of Governors at Rhayader to the protest against Dr Ethé’s pension’.<sup>27</sup> This was approved in a vote of fourteen to one (the dissentient being Edward Edwards).

Llewellyn-Jones may also have been unhappy about the annuity. He had not been a frequent attender at College Council meetings but, if absent, had usually previously sent an apology for absence. However, in the three meetings after he sent his notice of motion, in June, September and October 1915, he neither attended nor sent any notice of apology.

Even after Ethé’s death in 1917, the Town Council’s hostility to him was unabated. In October 1917, suspiciously close to the end of his annual term, the town’s Mayor, a draper Caleb Morgan Williams (1853-1928), resigned from the Court of Governors and Council of the University College because the Governors had ignored the earlier protest of the Town Council about the payment of a pension to Ethé. Given that he could have readily have resigned these posts much earlier in his term of office, one wonders about his thinking, although this must have been a difficult year for him as his wife had died early in his term, in March 1917. The letter announcing the resignation was sent on 6 October 1917 and received on the 9<sup>th</sup>. The *Cambrian News* reported the letter on 12 October 1917 and the Governors received it at their next meeting.<sup>28</sup> The Registrar had sent a brief acknowledgement of regret and said that he was sure no discourtesy had been intended. Still, perhaps an indication that the Town Council later felt rather ashamed of its stance is that Ethé’s defender, Edward Edwards, became Mayor of Aberystwyth for 1919-20.

#### *Parliamentary issues about Ethé*

In the latter part of 1916, possibly orchestrated after the College’s rejection of the strictures of the Town Council, a series of parliamentary questions were asked, designed to embarrass the Government about Ethé’s continuing work for the India

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<sup>27</sup> *Cambrian News*, 12 May 1916, 3.

<sup>28</sup> *Cambrian News*, 26 October 1917, 6.

Office. The first came from William Joynson-Hicks<sup>29</sup> on 18 May 1916. Davies, the College Registrar, actually wrote to the Home Office on 26 July 1916 asking whether the Home Office could support Ethé's having a pension in view of this parliamentary question. The Home Office replied saying that it saw no reason to repudiate an entitlement but beyond that did not want to intervene. In October and November 1916 Sir Henry Dalziel<sup>30</sup> also asked a series of further parliamentary questions – whether Ethé was being employed on work for the Government,<sup>31</sup> why was Ethé not naturalized, when was his last visit to Germany, had the Home Office influenced his return to this country? In the course of the replies to questions raised by Dalziel and others on 2 November 1916, it emerged that Ethé had received no payment for his work since about 1901 (when his first volume of India Office documents was finished), that the documents to be catalogued were being sent to him at his residence, and thus that he did not attend the India Office itself. That Ethé had worked for fifteen years without further payment clearly puzzled at least one Member of Parliament, to whom it was explained by the Government spokesman that Ethé continued to do the work because he was interested in it.<sup>32</sup>

Several professional colleagues rallied to Ethé's defence. For example, his friend and former colleague, Charles Herford, wrote a letter to the *Manchester Guardian* arguing for Ethé's 'anti-Prussianism', claiming that hostility to his views by the German Imperial Ministry of Education had frustrated attempts to lure him back to a chair at a German university, and pointing out the preposterousness of the charge that his India Office work might be treasonably used for sending information to Berlin.<sup>33</sup> On 10 November 1916 Milner-Barry also wrote a letter of support for Ethé to the Inspector of Aliens at the Home Office, claiming that the agitation was merely a result of the Town Council's failure to get the pension stopped.

### *Ethé's final year and death*

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<sup>29</sup> William Joynson-Hicks (1865-1932), then Unionist MP for Brentford from 1911 to 1918, a lawyer who had a controversial political career, culminating as a repressive Home Secretary from 1924 to 1929.

<sup>30</sup> James Henry Dalziel (1868-1935), Liberal MP for Kirkcaldy Burghs from 1892 to 1921 who was Chair of the Committee in Charge of German Prisoners of War from 1914 to 1918; he became 1<sup>st</sup> Baron Dalziel of Kirkcaldy in 1921.

<sup>31</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, 26 October 1916, 4.

<sup>32</sup> *The Times*, 3 November 1916, 9; *Manchester Guardian*, 3 November 1916, 7. For a more whimsical and tongue-in-cheek account of the same event in the *Manchester Guardian*, see 3 November 1916, 5.

<sup>33</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, 6 November 1916, 10.

In the spring of 1916 Ethé and his wife had managed, with the consent of the local Chief Constable, to move to an apartment at 29 Royal York Crescent in Clifton that had been found for them on a three-year lease by his brother-in-law, Robert Bruce Wilson (1873-1951), who had married Margaret, Harriet's younger sister (b. 1873), in 1900 and was living nearby. Ethé even managed to have some of his books and effects transferred from Aberystwyth. There was initially some further concern that he might be forced to move from Bristol because it was a prohibited area but, after a plea to the Home Office, this threat passed.

Just a year later, on 7 June 1917, Ethé died at his home of a neck cancer and on 11 June he was buried in Canford Cemetery in Bristol. The University College's reaction to this was more than simply sympathetic. At its meeting on 29 June 1917 Roberts reported to the College Council Ethé's death and said that the Senate had drawn up a resolution of condolence and forwarded it to Mrs Ethé. The Council then resolved 'that the Council associated itself with the Senate in the great loss that the College *has* [emphasis added] sustained through the death of Prof. Ethé and its deep sympathy with Mrs. Ethé in her sorrow and bereavement'.

Immediately after his death, Ethé's widow applied for re-admission to British citizenship from the German citizenship that she had lost by being married to Ethé. Her brother-in-law, Robert Wilson, wrote to the Home Office on 13 June 1917 asking whether she could take steps to become renaturalized and, if so, how she should proceed. She was clearly entitled and duly filed an application. Supported by character references from the Chief Constables of Bristol and Cardiganshire and by John Humphreys Davies, this re-admission was granted at Bristol on 20 August 1917. When she wanted to reclaim her British nationality, her application for re-admission was a requirement of the British Nationality and Status of Aliens Act 1914, which became operative from 1 January 1915. This necessity for the British widow of a deceased foreign national having to re-apply for her British nationality was in Part III of the Act. Ethé's widow's re-admission was doubtless one of those said by the Home Secretary, Sir George Cave, in a Commons debate on 17 December 1917 to have been his only naturalizations, these all being of widows of German and Austrian husbands.<sup>34</sup> Her Home Office file noted that the notification with her distinctive name

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<sup>34</sup> Panayi, *op. cit.*, 64.

when it appeared in the *London Gazette* might excite adverse comment but she was none the less fully entitled to be re-admitted to citizenship.<sup>35</sup>

It is always wrong to say that the victim brought his/her troubles on himself/herself by the failure of some deed that might have spared him/her from victimhood. However, Ethé's problems with the people of Aberystwyth in October 1914 might have been more negotiable if he had sought more to identify with his local community. Despite his obvious facility in languages and despite his long residence in a strongly Welsh-speaking part of Wales, he never troubled to learn Welsh, allegedly believing – according to Ellis<sup>36</sup> – that the only Welsh word one needed to know was *cwrw* [beer].

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<sup>35</sup> She lived on, without remarrying, as Ethé's widow for more than a further thirty years, later living near her birth town of Lichfield and dying in Tamworth Hospital on 27 September 1947 from secondary shock following an accident falling downstairs.

<sup>36</sup> Ellis, *op. cit.*, 171.

*Appendix: principal University College players*

Davies, John Humphreys (1871-1926), MA; Registrar, 1905-19, Principal, 1919-26, Member of the University College Council

Edwards, Edward (1865-1933), MA; Professor of History, Member of Aberystwyth Town Council in 1916, Mayor of Aberystwyth, 1919-1920

Evans, John Gwenogvryn/Gwenogfryn (1852-1930), MA, DLitt; Oxford-based palaeontologist, Member of the University College Council

Evans, Walter Jenkin (1856-1927), MA; Principal of Presbyterian College, Carmarthen, Member of the University College Council

Fleure, Herbert John (1877-1969); Professor of Zoology and Lecturer in Geography, Member of the Finance and General Purposes Committee

Jones, Owen Thomas, MA, DSc (1878-1967); Professor of Geology

Lewis, Daniel Lloyd (1854/5?-1935); Farmer and Bank Manager, Member of the University College Council from 23 October 1914

Llewellyn-Jones, Frederick (1866-1941), BA, LLB; Solicitor and His Majesty's Coroner for Flintshire, Member of University College Council; later Liberal MP for Flintshire, 1929-35

Marshall, John Wilson (1857-1923), MA; Professor of Greek and Vice-Principal of University College

Prys, Revd Owen (1857-1934), MA, DD; Principal of Aberystwyth Theological College, 1891-1927, and Professor of the Philosophy of Religion and Dogma, Member of the University College Council

Rees, Revd Richard Jenkin (1868-1963), MA; Non-Conformist Minister, Member of the University College Council

Roberts, Thomas Francis (1860-1919), MA, LLD; Principal, 1891-1919, Member of the University College Council

Schott, George Adolphus (1868-1937), BA, DSc; Professor of Applied Mathematics

Thomas, [Sir] Abraham Garrod (1853-1931); MP for South Monmouthshire, 1917-18, and Chair of the Governors of the University College