

Franklin Samuel Stych.  
Notes. July 15, 2018

Sam Stych was born on 15 July 1916, when, as he liked to say, three emperors were still on their thrones. His father died in the First World War during the pregnancy, so Sam was a posthumous baby raised by his mother and his mother's family.

After secondary school he worked briefly as a bookie's runner then joined the Birmingham Public Library staff in 1933. Despite being very near-sighted he helped win the Second World War by serving in Royal Army Ordnance Corps stores, first in north Africa and then in Italy. Naples had a big impact on the youth from Birmingham. He liked army life in which everything was provided and in later life he enjoyed being a guest in friends' homes. He would have remained in the army, but feeling obliged to look after his mother he resumed work at the Birmingham Public Library until he moved to Sheffield's new Postgraduate School of Librarianship, now the Department of Information Studies, in 1964.

Newly appointed at Sheffield he applied for two small grants. A well-intentioned request for funding to develop teaching materials was turned down but a frivolous request for travel support to visit friends in Italy, ostensibly to do research, was approved. Learning from this, he registered for a PhD in Italian researching the short stories of Nicolao Granucci (1521-1603), which justified repeated grant support for visits to Italy until, just three months before retirement, he submitted his dissertation which concluded that all of Granucci's stories were plagiarized.

He could take early retirement in 1977 because both his years at public library and his war service qualified as service credit. After years of scheming to transfer his money to Italy without the knowledge of the Department of Inland Revenue, this problem was solved by Britain joining the European Union, a move he bitterly opposed. He bought dark, damp quarters in part of a fifteenth century former ducal palace in Bagni di Lucca, Tuscany.

Sam held extremely conservative opinions and greatly enjoyed using his encyclopaedic knowledge of past customs to act the role of a reactionary old fogy, which acquaintances would find entertaining for a while. He was particularly interested in orders of honour and the lingering claims of pretenders to lost thrones. For service to the culture of Tuscany he was made a Knight, and later a Commander, of the Order of Saint Joseph, still maintained by the Hapsburg Archduke of Tuscany. Attending the Order's annual mass on St Joseph's day was a highlight of his year. He was also made Baron of Potamou by the pretendant Despot of Epirus, but seems not to have used this title or visited his barony. Having been made a Member of the Order of

the British Empire, he returned his insignia in outraged protest when the same honour was conferred on the Beatles in 1965.

As befits a wartime posthumous baby, his last publication, a manuscript found among his papers after he died, appears posthumously in 2020, an essay on the absence of themes of war in Boccaccio's *Decameron*.

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