Africa Bibliography, Research and Documentation (2024), **3**, 93–96
doi:10.1017/abd.2024.10

OBITUARY

Obituary: Tom Lodge (1951–2023)

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Tom Graham Lodge, Emeritus Professor of Peace and Conflict Studies at the University of Limerick and a leading authority on South African politics and history, died suddenly in November 2023 at the age of seventy-two. Described by a York academic and friend (who first met Lodge in his early days at York) as 'one of the most impressive people that I have had the good fortune to have known',[1] Lodge was a distinguished political scientist and contemporary political historian. A skilled and prolific writer, with a mastery of detail and archival and oral research, he leaves a great legacy of scholarship. He was the author of many essential texts on South African history and politics. These include his *Black Politics in South Africa since 1945* (1983), a copy of which Nelson Mandela read in Pollsmoor Prison, recounting in 1985 that he had 'rushed through a library copy of [Lodge's] book and formed the distinct impression that the facts are well researched and the account fairly objective',[2] and other notable volumes such as *Mandela: a critical life* (2006), *Sharpeville: an Apartheid massacre and its consequences* (2011), and most recently *Red Road to Freedom: a history of the South African Communist Party, 1921–2021* (2022).

Lodge was born in Manchester, England. His father worked for the British Council. The family moved to Nigeria with his father's work when Lodge was young and he later lived in North Borneo (now Malaysia) before being sent to boarding school in Hampshire in the 1960s. After he left school he spent a year working as a community service volunteer in Bradford, supporting those who had recently arrived in the UK. In 1971 he began his long association with the University of York, reading English and History for his bachelor's degree (and where he was to be taught briefly by the literary critic F. R. Leavis), before joining York's recently established and multidisciplinary Centre for Southern African Studies for his BPhil, 1974–75 (Fairweather 2022). From 1975–77 he was a Leverhulme Research Fellow at the Centre and worked on its documentation project – which had launched in 1974 – to collect and preserve mainly UK archives pertaining to southern Africa. He catalogued material for and compiled *A Guide to the Southern African Archives in the University of York* (1979) and for a year was a research assistant to Jonty Driver (Driver 1980: xiv), who was at that time engaged in writing his biography of anti-apartheid activist

[1] Personal correspondence from Dr Allen Warren to the author, 13 November 2023.
[2] Letter from Mandela to John Dugard, 4 March 1985 (Lodge 2012: 495).

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https://doi.org/10.1017/abd.2024.10 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Patrick Duncan, Duncan's archive forming part of the Southern African collections at York (Borthwick Institute for Archives 1926–67 *Patrick Duncan Archive*).

It was as a research assistant, in 1976, that Lodge made his first trip to South Africa and Soweto (Fairweather 2022). He observed first-hand the mounting tensions that were to erupt only days later in the Soweto Uprising of June 1976. He started his doctoral studies (part-time) on the Pan-Africanist Congress the same year (Lodge 1984), continuing these when he moved to the University of the Witwatersrand in 1978 to take up the post of assistant lecturer in the Department of Political Studies. He settled and married in South Africa, and was to spend twenty-five years at Wits University (1978–88, 1991–2005). Alongside his prodigious output in terms of research publications, teaching and supervisory workloads, contributions to research and professional networks and to university administration, from 1982 and into the 1990s Lodge was also an expert witness for defence lawyers in some twenty-two political trials brought under security legislation. Having faced death threats and intimidation in the wake of this work, in 1988 he took the opportunity to relocate to New York (Lodge 2023). For three years he was Programme Director there for the Social Science Research Council, an international non-profit organization dedicated to advancing research in the social sciences and distributing funds for area studies. Not ready to leave academia completely, however, while in the US he also taught for a semester at Columbia University, New York, and in 1991 returned to Wits as an Associate Professor in his former department. He came back to South Africa amidst the gradual dismantling and disintegration of the Apartheid regime. For South Africa's first democratic elections in April 1994, Lodge joined a team of university researchers to analyse opinion poll data for the ANC's election strategists. He proceeded to contribute his time and expertise to election analysis and monitoring and voter education both in and outside South Africa for years to come. He was closely involved in the development and work of the Electoral Institute of South Africa (now the Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa). In 1999 he spent a year as their Director of Research and, with EISA, authored and published a range of handbooks and reports on electoral laws and elections in South Africa, Tanzania, Namibia, Zimbabwe and elsewhere. A member of EISA's editorial board and, from 2010, of its Board of Directors, EISA's warm tribute pays homage to Lodge's significant contribution to the global election community, remarking on his immeasurable 'compassion and understanding of the challenges that emerging democracies face, and how best they can be responded to' (EISA 2023).

In 2005 Lodge left Wits, where he had completed his last two years as the Acting Head of the School of Social Sciences, and moved to Ireland. Until his retirement in 2021 he was Professor of Peace and Conflict Studies at the University of Limerick, having also served as Dean of Limerick's Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, 2011–13. In May 2019 Lodge was admitted to the Royal Irish Academy in recognition of his distinguished contributions to scholarship and research (Royal Irish Academy 2019). He had by this time published over 120 journal articles and book chapters, along with his significant volumes on politics, protest and democracy in South Africa that were soon to be joined by his landmark study of the history of the South African Communist Party.

The use and role of the archive abounds and resounds in Lodge's close and thorough research and writing. Documentary collections and collecting helped him to

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evidence and give voice to those who were underrepresented or silenced in the annals of state and official archives. He was able equally to identify, navigate and address archival silences in his deft synthesis and assiduous collection of sources and oral testimony (Lodge 2022: 2–9, 589–92).[3] He acknowledged on several occasions the important influence of the Wits school of social history on his historiographical approach:

> . . . as with other members of the Wits History Workshop, I shared a preoccupation with the effort to document and record the historical experience and recollections of 'ordinary people', to write, so to speak, 'history from below'. In my case, this preoccupation resonated with my earlier training as an historian in Britain . . . (Lodge 2012: 497)

It had been the exiled South African activist and poet Dennis Brutus who had the original idea to establish a collection of primary sources on southern Africa at York to preserve papers that might otherwise be lost. Brutus was also its first donor, starting the collection with some of his own literary and political papers (Borthwick Institute for Archives 1954–72 *Dennis Brutus Archive*; see also Lodge 1979: 5). Most of the collections that developed at York's Centre for Southern African Studies came from UK-based individuals and organizations, and Lodge worked to provide descriptions for many of the collections (Lodge 1979: 12–14). This included his own research interviews, conducted in Britain and South Africa in 1975–76, on southern African politics and aspects of Patrick Duncan's life, which he deposited with the archive. Having worked in his formative York years on the small archives and established a collection of material there, in 2021, while making preparations for semi-retirement and a move to the Dordogne in southern France, Lodge was in touch with the Borthwick Institute for Archives in York, which houses the records he had worked on as a student, about donating a collection of South African papers and research materials he had built up over his career.[4] The archive related chiefly to political events inside South Africa between 1978 and 1990, charting the period in which a massive internal political movement emerged to oppose Apartheid. Archiving the documentary traces of activism and political organizing, Lodge's archive includes records and propaganda material from the United Democratic Front and its affiliates, ANC material, press cuttings dealing with the 'armed struggle', runs of the so-called 'alternative newspapers' from the 1980s (including the *Weekly Mail* and the community-based newspaper *Grassroots*, which was published in Cape Town from 1980), articles from the student press, and Lodge's later research on all the major elections between 1994 and 2004.

On retirement to France, Lodge continued to travel and research, returning to South Africa and undertaking a planned work on Walter Sisulu. He visited the UK and York in April 2023, reconnecting with old friends and his recently-arrived archive. It

[3] As well as being seen most recently in his long-standing research for his *Red Road to Freedom* (2022), it is also reflected in Lodge's own archive and in the interview materials made during research undertaken for the Duncan biography (Driver 1980) and conducted in Britain and South Africa, 1975–76 (Borthwick Institute for Archives 1975–76 *Tape recordings on South African politics. Tom Lodge Archive*).

[4] Personal correspondence with the author, 24 September 2021.

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was with characteristic generosity that he volunteered his time to work through the archived papers to provide helpful notes and context to support their future use and cataloguing. More than simply finding them a home, he was keen to share and further expand the research potential of the materials he had carefully amassed through his various projects and collecting. The archive will now be preserved as further resource, alongside his considerable scholarly outputs, for current and future researchers, and will continue to speak to and foster the scholarship and insights that suffuse and mark his own distinguished and enduring contributions to the academic fields of study he traversed so adroitly.

He is survived by his wife Carla (née Grootenboer) and their two sons (Lodge 2023).

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Cite this article: Fonge, C. (2024). 'Obituary: Tom Lodge (1951–2023)'. *Africa Bibliography, Research and Documentation* **3**, 93–96. https://doi.org/10.1017/abd.2024.10

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