

APPRECIATIONS

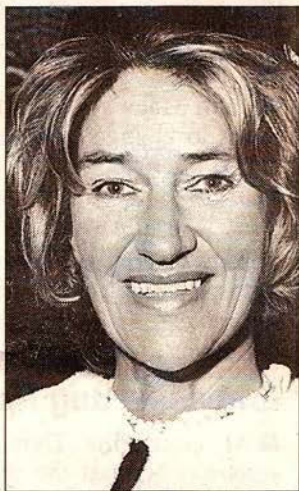
Baroness Ewart-Biggs

YOUR obituary (October 10) of Baroness Ewart-Biggs did justice to her achievements as a public figure and to her personal courage, but it did not, perhaps, convey the charisma, verve and humour which made her an enduring inspiration.

The unique nature of the Ewart-Biggs Prize, which she founded, to encourage peace and understanding between the peoples of Britain and Ireland, should also be stressed. Over fifteen years, it has recognised the contributions of journalists (Robert Kee, Mary Holland, David McKittrick and the staff of *Fortnight* magazine); historians (F. S. L. Lyons, John Bowman, Oliver MacDonagh and A. T. Q. Stewart); playwrights (Brian Friel, Stewart Parker, Frank McGuinness); and commentators like Dervla Murphy, Hubert Butler and Father Michael MacGreil, as well as publishers (Blackstaff Press).

It could have become a pat on the back for the great and good of Irish culture, but Jane Ewart-Biggs's instinct was always against the "safe" course; the names of the winners provide a challenging profile of Irish cultural life since 1976, and the prize will continue as her memorial as well as her first husband's.

In recent years, she also founded a Community Prize,



for social work spanning the two communities in Northern Ireland. She loved visiting Ireland and kept closely in touch with affairs there: sometimes she was greeted with initial suspicion or diffidence, but all reservations melted when faced with the depth of her commitment and the force of her character. Her broadcast on Irish television after her husband's assassination was a beacon at a dark time for Ireland as well as for herself and her young family.

The playwright Frank McGuinness expressed it memorably when receiving the prize in 1986: "It made me proud that she was English — that I was Irish — and that we were both human."

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