

## OBITUARY

### JOHN JOSEPH BAGLEY, MA FRHist.S 1908–1989

John Joseph Bagley died on 18th January 1989. The funeral address was preached by a former pupil to a big congregation at the church in Southport where he and his wife, Bess, worshipped and accepted responsibility with quiet dignity and Christian humility.

Humility, gentle good humour and an ability to give practical help endeared him to family, friends and neighbours, to former pupils, students, colleagues, local societies and all who read his articles and books. He helped thousands through his lectures, broadcasts and his work on history committees in Lancashire and Cheshire.

In 1947 I became his young assistant at Up Holland Grammar School. By 1947 he had graduated at Liverpool University, taught for seven years at Rochdale Grammar School, gained his Master's degree, done a complicated stint in the Royal Air Force (as an early radar boffin, sent to Normandy soon after D-Day, left behind with his generators near Waterloo where he took men round the battlefield – “not my period”, he said –, writing *Margaret of Anjou*<sup>1</sup> in the appropriate area if not in ideal circumstances, being sent back to England to teach mathematics by day and holding adult classes for Nottingham University in his spare time). In 1947 *Margaret of Anjou* was at the galley stage, and I learned to proof read, to use parish registers and account books for research and to study Lancashire history and use it to illustrate national events of the past, all part of our main concern, the preparation of young people for universities and the professional bodies.

Joe became a full time member of the then Extra-Mural Department of Liverpool University in 1951, teaching large or small classes in places all over Lancashire, often remote. His enthusiasm and detailed knowledge with a flair for the dramatic made a lasting impression. (It was in a St Helens operatic society from his place in the back row of the chorus that he found his ‘leading lady’.) The enthusiasm, the detailed knowledge and love for his native county show in his books, and his last book, published in 1985 to celebrate the quincentenary of the earldom of Derby, is no exception.<sup>2</sup> The launching of that book, and the Society's presentation to him in 1983 of Volume 132 of *Transactions, Seventeenth-Century Lancashire*, must be two of the Society's proudest occasions.

Joe richly deserved such accolades, yet our real debt is far more for his encouragement of local studies and the recognition that a more academic and nationally responsible form was required. As a school master and an adult lecturer he illustrated with materials culled from local archives, always insisting that a general background knowledge was essential for a proper understanding of the particular detail, that careful and honest

research should be constantly undertaken, and that the results of the research should be cogently and bravely presented: his final paper to the Society in March 1987, when he was almost eighty, showed these beliefs as he posed his speculations that Shakespeare could have spent the 'missing years' here in south-west Lancashire. *Historical Interpretation: Sources of English History* (1965 and 1971) was written to help students.

In Volume 132 the Appreciation of Jenny Kermode, now our President, detailed his many interests, publications and his editorial work. He was the sole editor of the Society for many years, was the first editor to be also President in 1964, and he continued as joint editor until 1967, a total of seventeen years. He was a member of Council for over forty years, and a vice-president for the last twenty four years. Members of Council miss his quiet and always positive suggestions based on long and dedicated service to the Society. At meetings we shall remember his careful questions, his erudite and often witty contributions, and his apt votes of thanks. He was the respected officer, in later years the elder statesman and, above all, the trusted friend.

#### NOTES

- 1 J.J. Bagley, *Margaret of Anjou, Queen of England* (Herbert Jenkins; London, 1948).
- 2 J.J. Bagley, *The Earls of Derby 1485-1985* (Sidgwick & Jackson; London, 1985).