



DR DAVID ALLEN

DR DAVID ALLEN,
EDITOR OF *PROCEEDINGS*,
1979-2004

THE AUTUMN NEWSLETTER for 2004 carried a short tribute (to which some of his unkind colleagues referred as his obituary) to our patient, meticulous and long-serving editor. Something less ephemeral in the journal he edited for a quarter of a century is certainly appropriate and care must be taken to emphasise that he is very much alive; indeed he has recently celebrated a significant birthday. David was born at Newtown, in Montgomeryshire (as he still insists on calling the county) in April 1945, a wartime infant by the skin of his teeth. With an appropriate sense of history his cot was custom-built of timbers from a captured German warship that ended its days at Cardiff. After Newtown Grammar School (where he founded the Anti-Gym League) he read History at the University of Wales, Aberystwyth, and was awarded College prizes for History and Welsh History. The year 1966 was a good one for David as he graduated with First class honours and met Marion (a Bridgend girl) through the College Historical Society. They were engaged after her finals in 1968 and married in March 1970. Meanwhile, David had been awarded a Major State Studentship for three years' research on the political career of the Duke of Monmouth. His most fruitful discoveries were made in the British Library among the then little-known twenty-three volumes of papers of Charles, 2nd earl of Middleton, Secretary of State 1684–88. They deal at length with the activities of the English republican exiles in the United Provinces (the Dutch Netherlands) in the 1680s. Although David's thesis was delivered characteristically promptly, his doctorate was delayed until 1971, the viva having fallen to a particularly dilatory professor to arrange.

University teaching posts were difficult to come by in 1969, and on leaving Aberystwyth that autumn he was appointed Assistant Archivist in the Essex Record Office under the late Kenneth Newton, County Archivist, whose great kindness and consideration for all his staff he remembers with much gratitude and affection. He was encouraged to participate in the large-scale and varied publication programme of the Essex Record Office by preparing an edition of the earliest surviving order book of Essex Quarter Sessions for the Commonwealth period. This appeared in 1974 following his move to the then Ipswich and East Suffolk Record Office in November 1972: Marion had left the office the previous month after three years as an assistant archivist.

It was in 1979 that David took over from Vic Gray as Honorary Editor of our *Proceedings*. He needed little guidance from his predecessor, quickly establishing his own high standards for our principal annual publication. Countless authors have been grateful for his excellent work and almost all of them cheerfully accepted his entirely constructive suggestions for clarification and improvement. Always systematic, with an annual routine for deadlines, copy and proof dates, and the final issue, David ensured that members had a splendid new part by Christmas and an index after each complete volume.

The change from groups of plates at the end of parts to in-text illustrations was the great step forward in 1989, and in 1993 he introduced pictorial covers on card of a new colour for each volume, thus helping us to keep some order on our shelves. He has himself contributed some excellent pieces on topics ranging from the musical to the manorial. The skill with which he worked out how Ipswich obtained its water over the centuries was an important contribution to the topography of the town.

In 1990 the Ipswich Record Office moved from County Hall in St Helen's Street to Gatacre Road at the other end of town, so that his daily stride to work was lengthened. When he now wants to swim at Fore Street Baths at lunchtime, it is more than twice as far. On his way he does not scan the street-scape before him very broadly and he must be hailed loudly if one wishes to attract his attention. In winter he wears a 'Smike' hat, but a purposeful and thoughtful countenance all the year round.

When in 1999 he was elected one of our Vice-Presidents to mark his long and devoted service, everyone was grateful that he was prepared to serve out his quarter-century as Editor. The year after his widely acclaimed *Catalogue* of the Ipswich Borough Archives, 1255–1835, appeared to mark the 800th anniversary of the Borough's first charter from King John, he was elected a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of London. He richly deserved both these honours. He is a masterly archive cataloguer and thank goodness the opportunity arose for him to tackle the chaos that was Ipswich. His catalogues of the Iveagh and Saumarez collections are among other triumphs. Just as thorough when the material is run-of-the-mill, his delight when something unusually exciting appears is infectious.

David's reports to council and to AGMs, never extempore, were always couched in exemplary English, and his last was no exception. He reminded us of his preference for the typewriter, even the quill pen, but has quickly recognised the advantage of receiving articles on disc, and if you e-mail him at Gatacre Road you will receive a prompt reply; moreover it is all his own work.

Some offices are easy to hold for 25 years; editorship is not one of them for it demands much hard, detailed application. David shouldered all this generously and cheerfully, and we have been enormously fortunate to enjoy his long tenure – which county editor has served longer? At the 2004 AGM he was presented with a pre-Victorian watercolour of Aldeburgh beach with boats pulled ashore and fishermen and women at work. He deserves a long and honourable retirement and we know that he plans to continue to write for the *Proceedings*; in fact his Colonel Tomline article appears in this issue. He will also give his successor, Professor Colin Richmond, every assistance in his early days. This first part of volume 41 is dedicated to David. JMB