

REVIEWS

*Battle in Bossenden Wood.* By P. G. Rogers. 7½×5. Pp. x+241+  
8 plates and 2 maps. Oxford University Press, 1961. 25s.

This most excellent and readable book describes the life and character of Mad Tom Courtenay whose riots in Kent in the late 1830s had repercussions far beyond the county. Sir William Courtenay, as he called himself, has from time to time attracted the attention of several members of our Society, and a year or so ago Mr. Desmond Pontin described his adventures at our week-end meeting at Kingsgate in a way which was much admired.

Mr. Rogers' book is not just another study of a rather engaging lunatic. At first reading his style appears to be almost simple, but a second reading shows how well and how skilfully he has set his characters against a background of history and both national and local events to provide very much more than his publishers call, in their blurb, a fascinating excursion. That a lunatic, half demagogue, half Messiah, could inflame and rally a not poorly paid and certainly not starving band of rustics in the Forest of Blean is a little surprising until one realizes that their education lacked even elementary guidance. It is a sad reflection that Mad Tom's actions led to a pitched battle with military forces in which he and ten other men lost their lives, and this little more than a century ago. The Report made to the Central Society of Education on the state of the Peasantry at Boughton, Herne Hill and the Ville of Dunkirk near Canterbury reveals a most unhappy state of affairs.

In the second edition which this book surely warrants, Mr. Rogers might care to note that the free pardon given to Tom by Queen Victoria is now in the Society's Library as a gift from our member, Mr. John Bridge. Tom's heart, removed at his post-mortem examination, was once in my temporary possession but its present whereabouts is unknown. In examining the records of Tom's admission and treatment at Barming Asylum some years ago, I noticed that the essential pages had been torn out of the bound books. The books had clearly not been looked at for many years, and the then Superintendent of the Asylum suggested that the damage might have had some political significance in view of the Select Committee's Report on Tom's reception and discharge.

(We should like to apologize to the Author for the lateness of this

review, due to circumstances of which he is aware, and to congratulate him on the appearance of his book in a Readers' Union edition in 1962.)

RONALD JESSUP.

*Medieval Bexley.* By F. R. H. Du Boulay.  $8\frac{1}{2} \times 5\frac{1}{2}$ . Pp. x+56.  
Published by Bexley Corporation Public Libraries, 1961. 5s.

The Professor of Medieval History in the University of London has written a remarkably interesting essay on Bexley in the Middle Ages, using as his main sources Customals and Rentals, Ministers' Accounts, Court Rolls, deeds and wills covering the period from the thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries. The action of Bexley Corporation in making this available to the public over their library counters for such a modest sum—chiefly through the interest of two successive librarians, Mr. W. Threlfall and Mr. P. E. Morris—is commendable. There is a map to illustrate the boundaries of Bexley as set out in the charter of A.D. 814 in comparison with those of the modern Borough created in 1937, and the four other illustrations are plates depicting monumental brasses in the churches of Bexley and East Wickham.

By way of introduction the author deals with the origin of the settlement at Bexley and the ninth-century charter by which it was conveyed by Cenwulf of Mercia to Wulfred, Archbishop of Canterbury, this being followed by a careful analysis of the Domesday entry. But the chief interest in the book is the light which Professor Du Boulay's researches have thrown on the economy of the manor—particularly the Archbishops' demesne—in the later Middle Ages. He shows that a fifth or more of the land was held directly by the Archbishop, as Lord of the Manor, and cultivated by his servants, until it was leased to the Shelley family in the late fourteenth century. There are interesting facts and figures about the crops grown, the labour employed and the machinery of manorial administration. Apparently the lord's demesne consisted of a number of scattered fields intermingled with those of the tenants, and not a large single tract of land as one might have imagined.

The final chapter on "Bexley Society in the Later Middle Ages" takes several representative inhabitants and through details of their respective wills brings out a useful picture of social conditions in their period.

Yet with all its obvious scholarship, the little book is in some ways disappointing. In his opening remarks the author himself expresses a fear that the difficult task of writing both accurately and readably from a mass of manuscript sources may not have been adequately fulfilled. In the opinion of this reviewer the book is seriously lacking in local colour, while the author treats his subject with a curious detachment, almost as though Bexley were a place he knew of merely by seeing it

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marked on a map. The section headed "The Village Church" may be taken to illustrate this point. The average inhabitant of Bexley who buys this booklet in his local library might reasonably expect to read something about the medieval church itself, but he will find instead only some notes on a charter granting the priest the right to send four oxen and four cows into the lord's pasture without payment; the arrangements for dividing the income of the parish between the vicar and the patrons of the living; and reference to the struggle between Aldgate Priory and the Archbishops over the right of presentation.

Professor Du Boulay's book is a notable contribution to the study of local history. Perhaps it also illustrates that the gulf between professional scholarship and the man in the street is not, in some circumstances, easy to bridge.

P.J.T.

*The Social Institution of Lancashire, 1480-1660.* By Professor W. K. Jordan. Pp. xii+128. Chetham Society, volume XI—third series, 1962.

Professor Jordan has established himself as the authority as regards the relationship of charitable bequests, 1480-1660, to the wider social and economic development of the period. In this, the sixth volume of his study to be published, he deals with a county as different in background and social aspirations from Kent as could well be imagined. Apart from the interest of Lancashire history in itself, this monograph, beautifully produced and well indexed, is of special value to readers of *Archæologia Cantiana* in the striking contrast it offers to *Social Institutions in Kent, 1480-1660*, published last year by the Kent Archæological Society.

The pattern and statistical basis of each book is similar, but the story presented differs greatly. Where Kent provided nearly 41 per cent of its charitable bequests for the relief of poverty; Lancashire devoted almost the like percentage on educational foundations. While in Kent religion attracted few bequests after the Reformation; in Lancashire interest was maintained at a relatively high level. In every way this study is a useful corrective to those more directly concerned with a "rich and mature county" by the insight it throws on the development of a relatively backward area, on the collapse of ancient privilege before mercantile interest and in the apparent desire to combat an indigenous problem of rural poverty by educational means.

Professor Jordan and the Chetham Society are to be congratulated on this worthy addition to the study of English social history.

F.H.

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*The British Journal for the History of Science*, Vol. 1, Part 1, No. 1, June, 1962. The British Society for the History of Science, Ravensmead, Keston, Kent. Price: 15s., free to members of the Society.

We extend a warm welcome to this new and valuable contribution to the history of science generally, and congratulate the British Society for the History of Science on the courage of their venture. The volume contains five papers covering such diverse matters as the work of Mendel, the work of a fourteenth-century Fellow of Merton, British and American contributions to Electrical Communications, the origins of the Royal Institution, and the debt of Greek astronomy to the Babylonians. Its value is further enhanced by notes on the Proceedings of the Society, book reviews, and a title-list of papers on the History of Science in current periodicals. The *Journal* will be published twice annually, and we shall look forward to its contribution to the history of archæology.

The Secretary of the British Society for the History of Science, Mr. F. H. C. Butler of Keston, is well known to many members of our own Society, and enquiries regarding membership of the Science Society may be made directly to him.

R. F. JESSUP.

*Prehistoric England*. By Grahame Clark. 6½ × 4½. Pp. 200 with 50 plates and many line illustrations. *Batsford, Ltd., London*, 1962. 5s.

Dr. Grahame Clark, Disney Professor of Archæology in the University of Cambridge, has now published as a paperback this excellent book which first appeared in 1940 and has long since been out of print.

The new introductory chapter, compressed though it be, is perhaps one of the best things that Professor Clark has ever written, and it is a useful and most necessary corrective to a good deal of loose writing which has appeared in several popular books during the last four years. This new edition also takes note of important archæological discoveries made since 1940, and the author has not hesitated to point out that the last twenty years have seen many revisions of opinion in the significance of cultures and particularly in the acceptance of relative and absolute dating.

When a further reprint is called for, it should not be impossible to help the rather lazy reader by numbering the figures in the text. Meanwhile the present edition is assured of a warm welcome.

R. F. JESSUP.

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