

OBITUARY

COLONEL RALPH CRISPIAN MARSHALL ARNOLD

The death of Ralph Arnold on 23rd September, 1970, has broken a unique family connection with the Society, a connection which has existed since George Mathews Arnold was elected a member of Council at the Society's foundation in 1858.

He was born at Meopham in 1906 and, after Loretto and Trinity College, Oxford, joined in 1929 the Royal Institute of International Affairs. Seven years later, he entered Constable's where his acumen, his flair for recognizing manuscripts of promise and his plain common sense led to a brilliant success as a publisher. His wartime career at home and abroad was full and distinguished, and it was probably his service in the East which caused a slow paralysis of his legs, eventually resulting in loss of movement in his later years.

As a writer of light fiction Ralph Arnold had humour and taste, a sense of narrative and a gift for entertainment. Whether he was writing a comedy, a detective novel or a book of adventure, his touch was sure and workmanlike.

His work as a local historian of Kent began in 1947 with *The Hundred of Hoo*; it was followed in 1949 by *A Yeoman of Kent* based on his own village of Cobham, in 1961 by *The Whiston Affair*, a delightful account of the scandalous happenings in Rochester which had inspired Trollope to write *The Warden*, and in 1963 by *Orange Street and Brick-hole Lane*, an autobiography. As a literary historian, Arnold also looked far beyond his native county. In *The Unhappy Countess*, 1957, he told part of the family history of the Bowes Lyons, in *Northern Lights*, 1959, of the Derwentwater family, and in 1967 his *Social History of England, 55 B.C. to 1215 A.D.* was a clever and accomplished study in which history in its true human sense was paramount. His informed anonymous leading articles on the inside pages of *The Times*—we remember especially 'Luck of a Village' and 'Chairborne Excursions' describing Cobham village and the North Downs—gave pleasure to friend and stranger alike, much to his quiet joy.

From his wheel-chair and with the sustained comfort of his wife and a most happy marriage, Ralph Arnold worked almost until the end. He was a man of remarkable courage, great spirit and without complaint. The Society saw him rarely indeed, but it honours his memory.

RONALD JESSUP