

OBITUARY

WILLIAM GEORGE URRY, M.A., Ph.D., F.S.A., F.R.Hist.S.

With the death of Dr William George Urry in 1980 the Kent Archaeological Society lost a most distinguished member of unrivalled scholarly reputation. He joined the Society in 1938 and served as a member of Council from 1946 until 1973, when he was unanimously elected a Vice-President. "Bill" as he was known to his intimate friends was born in Canterbury where he received his education at Payne Smith School and Kent College. His devotion to the history of his native city commenced in early boyhood. In later life when in reminiscent mood, who would remind his life long friend — now his obituarist alas! — of the times as boys they argued at length various aspects of their city's history.

Before the last war he read a general degree in Latin, French and Anglo-Saxon at Birbeck College, London. He was also proud to be a citizen of Canterbury by birth as also a Man of Kent, and to have served in the war in the Buffs, in his opinion the regiment *par excellence*. In 1946, his unique knowledge of the city's history ensured his appointment as Archivist at the Cathedral Chapter Library. During his period of office the bomb damaged library was rebuilt, and he was responsible for the sorting and rehousing of the priceless collection of ancient manuscripts and books. Later, when the city archives were deposited in the Chapter Library, the City Council appointed him to the newly created post of City Archivist. While at the library he took the History Honours Degree which resulted in the publication in 1967 of his major *opus* entitled *Canterbury under the Angevin Kings*. He lectured frequently both in England and abroad, especially in the United States of America. He wrote numerous articles which have appeared in learned journals both in this country and abroad. To privately converse with him or to listen to his lectures were memorable occasions. His enthusiasm for his subject was infectious, and he could be relied upon to introduce to his audience the human details of the history of Canterbury, some serious, some hilarious, some scandalous.

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In 1969 he moved to Oxford as Reader in Medieval Palaeography and Professorial Fellow of St. Edmund Hall. Canterbury is particularly fortunate to have produced three Williams who have contributed much to the study of the history of the city, namely, Gostling, Somner and Urry. Hence it was most appropriate to choose William Urry to edit the reprinted version of William Somner's *History of Canterbury* published in 1977. William Urry has left two completed books in manuscript, one on the family of Christopher Marlowe for whom he had great respect, and the other on Thomas Becket whom for some reason he heartily detested.

During the last twenty years of his life he bore cheerfully and with great fortitude several major crises in his health. His ashes now lie in the cloister garth of Canterbury Cathedral not very far from the library where he worked so happily and diligently for twenty-three years. He is sadly missed by his many colleagues and friends.

FRANK JENKINS