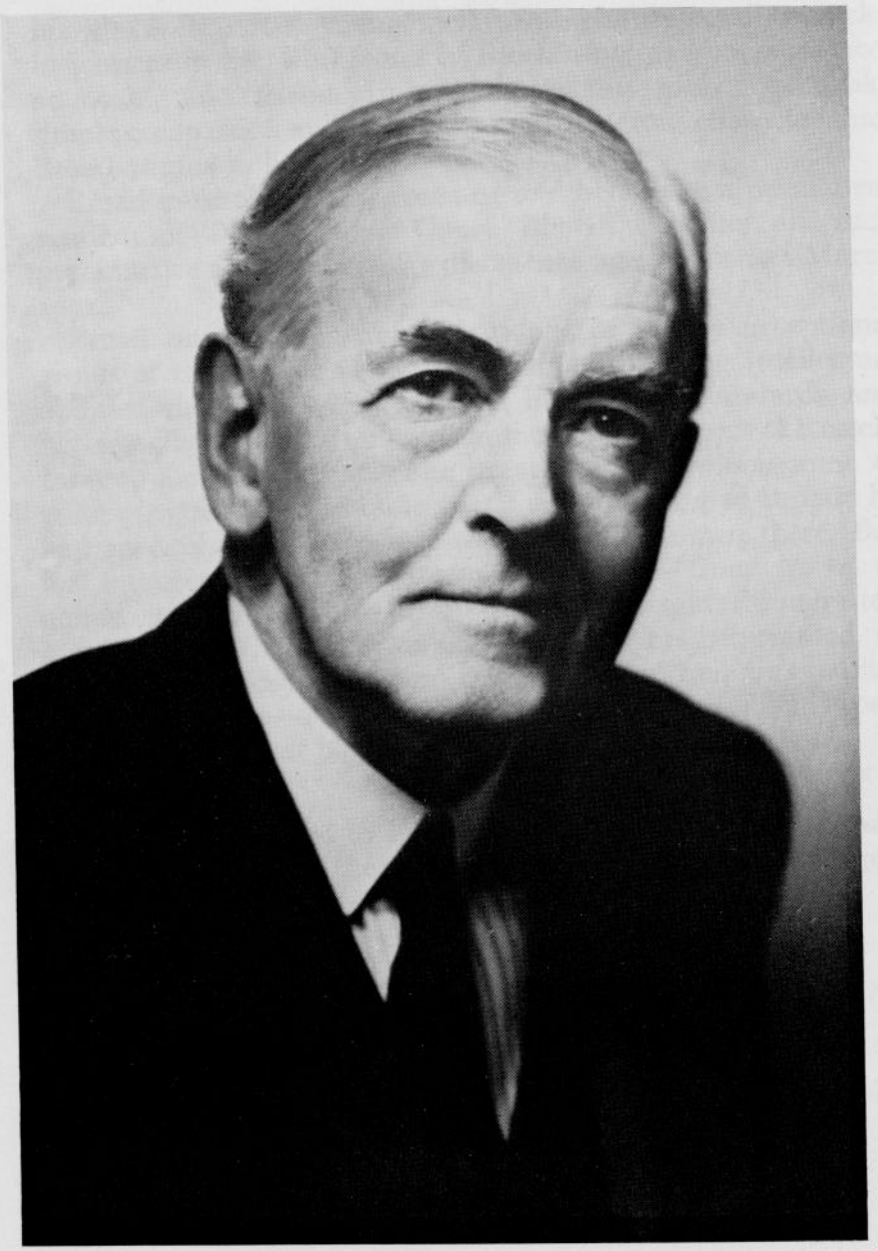

SIR CHARLES CLAY, C.B.

CHARLES CLAY[1]

1885–1978

Prologue

IN 1964 Sir Charles Clay entitled a brief memoir of his life 'Some reminiscences of an amateur' and he quoted from the *Oxford English Dictionary* the definition

'One who cultivates anything as a pastime, as distinguished from one who prosecutes it professionally', though it adds 'sometimes used disparagingly' as the equivalent of 'a dabbler or superficial student or worker'. It is with this meaning in mind that I have compiled these notes; and it is with this meaning without the addition that I think of such amateurs as Frederick Seebohm, Colonel Parker, William Brown, Lewis Loyd and my father.[2]

Sir Charles Clay was indeed an amateur in all the good senses of the word; he was a man of many interests, in antiquities of every kind, in genealogy and heraldry and armorial china, in medieval history and palaeography, in the history of art, and in English literature: in everything he touched he was an expert; in all he took enthusiastic pleasure. But he was a dabbler in none. He was above all one of the most distinguished editors of medieval charters this country has produced, one of the few whose name will live with Roger Dodsworth and Thomas Madox. It is to this that he primarily owed his place in the British Academy; and if the *Early Yorkshire Charters*, volumes iv–xii, are the work of an amateur, then the word professional, in any purely academic sense, is redundant. Yet his insistence on the word was sincere and right, and it is this—as well as the story of his family, a remarkable essay in social history in itself, and the charm and richness of his personality—which lend colour and interest to any attempt to sketch his life.

'I was born on 30 July 1885 at Rastrick House in a village of that name within easy distance of Huddersfield and Halifax . . . within the bounds of the ancient parish of Halifax and . . . a member of the extensive manor of Wakefield.'[3] He was the younger of two sons. His father came of a line of Yorkshire

[1] For acknowledgements, sources, and abbreviations, see Note at the end of this memoir. [2] 1964, p. 1. [3] 1956, p. 1.

of considerable talent; and her mother was a member of the Huguenot family of Perigal whose home in France before the Revocation had been in Dieppe.'[1] It was a remarkable alliance, for the Perigals in earlier days had been as distinguished as clockmakers as the Pilleaus as silversmiths. Nearer to our immediate purpose, the young Charles Clay found in his great-uncle Frederick Perigal and his uncle Colonel Harry Pilleau a devotion to heraldry and genealogy only second to that of J. W. Clay, his father.

In 1893 he was sent to St. George's Ascot, of whose teaching and influence he retained a good impression; more than that, 'one of the pleasant advantages of the school was the possession of about four horses and a key to the private rides round Virginia Water. This gave me a love of riding which later stood me in good stead with the Rockwood harriers at home and at Oxford and in the yeomanry in the 1914 war. After a spell on the classical side I was put to modern subjects with a special emphasis on mathematics. The mathematical master H. M. Lupton had a real genius for teaching, and it was entirely due to him that after a trial trip for a mathematical scholarship at Harrow in the spring of 1898 I was able to obtain one in the following year.'[2]

At Harrow he overlapped for a term with his brother Lionel, five years his senior, then head of the school, later to be one of the multitude of his generation to die in the First World War. After a spell in the 'Modern remove' he spent three terms at the feet of Edward Bowen, in a class termed the Modern Sixth and First Fifth. 'Among all the Harrow masters I have known he reigns supreme'; to a wider audience known as the author of 'Forty Years On', he was remembered by Clay as an inspiring teacher, especially of history. 'What he taught we seemed to remember, and his handling of Napoleon's campaigns—I remember Marengo in particular—had a fascination of its own.' After Bowen's sudden death he was taught history by the celebrated George Townsend Warner: Warner and Charles Colbeck presided over the top form of the modern side, 'of which I was the head for my last two years'. But though Townsend Warner 'increased my interest in history', his pupil's talents showed more clearly in mathematics; his teachers, A. W. Siddons and C. M. P. Mayo, helped him to win 'the Neeld

[1] 1956, pp. 4–5. The Huguenot register, which he discovered in Le Mans, was edited by him for the Huguenot Society in 1962.

[2] 1956, p. 6.

worsted manufacturers, with roots deep in the soil of south Yorkshire; his mother was descended from a family of Huguenot craftsmen, goldsmiths, silversmiths, and clockmakers, who had fled to London and set up in Soho when Louis XIV revoked the Edict of Nantes. Although Clay in later years was to trace their origins in the Archives Départementales at Le Mans, in his own day they were long established in London and the south of England; and this perhaps is a part of the background to the career of one of the greatest of Yorkshire antiquaries, who nonetheless lived in London.

'My father inherited our home from his great-uncle John Clay, who after a prosperous career had died in 1843; but his inheritance had not become effective until the death of John Clay's widow, Elizabeth Travis, at the age of 97, thirty years later.' Charles Clay himself lived to be 92, and frequently observed how many of his family, on both sides, had lapped over three generations. 'John Clay was the author of a couple of pamphlets, one under the pseudonym of "Philopatria", published in 1818 and the following year, which place him among the earliest exponents of free trade. He received an invitation, which he declined, to stand as a parliamentary candidate for Halifax at the election following the Reform Act of 1832. He had continued with great success the business of worsted manufacture in which his family had been engaged since the first half of the eighteenth century. At the time of my birth the business was prospering under the enterprise of my grandfather who had revived it after a disastrous collapse in the middle of the nineteenth century, and my father was then in easy circumstances. . . .'[1]

'My mother was a member of a Huguenot family whose eldest representative escaped to London from Le Mans after the Revocation. . . . His son Pezé Pilleau is well known as a London silversmith among the Huguenot fraternity of the first half of the eighteenth century. A visit to Le Mans, where I was shown in the Archives Départementales the Protestant register from about 1650 to the Revocation, enabled me to construct an account of the family, with documentary evidence for two or three generations before the migration to England—though a branch remained there until the Revolution—which has been printed in the publications of the Huguenot Society. My mother's father, Henry Pilleau the younger, after a term of service in the army, became an artist in oils and water-colour

[1] 1956, pp. 2–3.

medal for mathematics and a mathematical scholarship at Balliol, though I believe that was mainly due to an English essay'.[1]

'My time at Harrow passed very pleasantly'—enlivened by tennis and cricket; and although his prowess at tennis was greater, cricket remained an abiding interest. He had been put down for membership of the MCC at birth,[2] and his record of attendance at the Eton and Harrow match at Lords must be unique. In later years if one suggested an alternative entertainment, however alluring or however academic, the answer that it coincided with the Eton and Harrow was final and complete; one of the very few references I ever heard him express to the missed opportunities of his life was repentance for the single occasion when he missed the match.

In 'the Modern Side at Harrow... there was a good mixture of Latin, English literature, languages, a little science . . ., besides mathematics. It was, therefore, an enervating experience during my first year at Balliol to concentrate almost entirely on mathematics'; it was a subject which, he found, 'presented no attractions as an end in itself; but as a training it acted as a help for logical development and accuracy'—and its deep impression on his mind, as he himself was well aware, was later visible in the precision of his scholarship and in some of the higher flights of his chronological deductions. 'After a year of that dismal specialization, which ended with only a second in Mathematical moderations, I was allowed to retain my scholarship and explore history. The integral calculus was abandoned. The history dons to whom I owe an inestimable debt were A. L. Smith, F. F. Urquhart, and H. W. C. Davis, and for one term I took essays to Ernest Barker.'[3] For Charles Clay's intellectual development the crucial influences seem to have been A. L. Smith and H. W. C. Davis. Some gifted amateurs have been self-taught, 'auto-didacts', like the immortal Edmund Bishop; some local antiquaries have struggled to high renown from a base almost wholly local. But long before the stately volumes of the *Early Yorkshire Charters* began to issue from Tite Street, SW 3, and the Yorkshire Archaeological Society's headquarters in Leeds, their editor had sampled the best which Oxford had to offer. 'Davis who coached me in the special subject which I had chosen—medieval land tenure—gave me the interest which I was later able to develop as an amateur in

[1] 1956, pp. 7, 8.

[2] By his uncle, Colonel Harry Pilleau; 1964, p. 14.

[3] 1956, pp. 9–10.

palaeography and charter material. History was then regarded as a whole; modern history began, as it still ought to begin, with Charlemagne.' Characteristically, 'the Italian Renaissance with its impetus towards an interest in the arts of painting and sculpture proved a pleasant complement to the feudalism of the twelfth century; and among the lectures I remember were Oman on the Turks, Vinogradoff on land tenure with a Scandinavian flavour, and Marriott on economic history. Eventually I was able to get a place in the small number of first classes in 1908. The Balliol of my day was an institution for which we all had an undiluted admiration. The variety of types of undergraduate from widely different schools—from Eton, from Scottish establishments, or from Blundell's, Tiverton—gave an experience of breadth that Harrow had not produced.' In the two winter terms he kept a horse at Oxford, 'with an occasional day's hunting and riding in a couple of point to points. I was a member of the college lawn tennis six for three of my years, and we won the cup in one of them and were runners up in another. I even played lacrosse once or twice for the University; but I never took to rowing'.[1]

In 1908 he began the search for a career. For a number of years already his interest in heraldry had been growing: he had enjoyed making copies and taking photographs of coats of arms, and while at Harrow 'somewhat boldly I read a paper on heraldry, with slides mostly of my own manufacture, to the school Scientific Society. . .'.[2] So he turned to his father's friend Sir Alfred Scott-Gatty, Garter King of Arms, for advice; but Sir Alfred strongly recommended him 'to keep heraldry as a hobby'.[3] He had some thoughts of staying in Oxford, but failed to secure a Fellowship in the All Souls competition, and was dissuaded by A. L. Smith from waiting for part-time employment in Oxford; Smith was one of those who urged him to try the Board of Education. But it is evident from the diaries that he was strongly inclined for a post which left him ample time for literary work, and already in the winter of 1908–9, as he searched for employment, he was visiting the Public Record Office. After failing to obtain a vacancy in the Education Office he was given an introduction to Reginald Smith of the publishing house of Smith, Elder, who offered to take him as an apprentice, if he would return a few months later reasonably

[1] 1956, pp. 10–11. [2] 1964, pp. 14–15.
[3] 1956, p. 12; and pp. 12–14 for what follows, considerably expanded in the diaries.

proficient in Italian. So he he set off for two and a half months in Italy. One of the most interesting of his diaries plots the journey from London, which he left on 5 February 1909, reaching Turin on the 7th; then Milan, Florence, and Siena.[1] He had intended to pass through Tuscany and Umbria to Rome; he came, however, not only to learn Italian but to indulge a taste for Italian cities and landscape, and his lifelong interest in Italian art; and like many northern visitors he found it hard to break out of Tuscany. The diary describes the riches of Florence, Siena, Lucca, Pisa, and San Gimignano, which greatly impressed him; then, a little breathlessly, a flight through Umbria to Perugia, Assisi—for which only one day, 13 April, could be spared—Gubbio and Urbino; by now he was heading north, via San Marino, Ravenna, Padua, Venice, for London, which he reached on 24 April. For in the meantime, at the end of March, a letter had arrived inviting him to be Assistant Private Secretary to Lord Crewe for five months. He had written at once to Reginald Smith, who made no difficulty, and in May he joined Lord Crewe, in whose service he remained until 1914.

The Earl, shortly to become Marquess of Crewe, was a leading member of the Liberal government, Lord Privy Seal (1908–11) and Secretary of State for the Colonies (1908–10); and for him Clay rapidly formed a deep admiration. The diaries make several references to Crewe's poor delivery as a speaker, but lay more emphasis on his quality and greatness. 'I was engaged in the responsible work of recommending candidates for appointment to the Colonial Service, chiefly in tropical Africa'; and some of the details in the diaries of the appointments to important posts vetted by the young Assistant Secretary are a little reminiscent of Gibbon's celebrated account in his *Autobiography* of the first reactions to the *Decline and Fall*: 'I dare not boast the making Dr. Watson a bishop; . . . but I enjoyed the pleasure of giving a royal pension to Mr. Davies, and of collating Dr. Apthorpe to an archiepiscopal living.' 'Then at the end of 1910 Lord Crewe asked me to go with him

[1] The diaries also make clear, by back reference, that he had visited Italy at least once before; and he also travelled in France in his early life. The diary of his Italian visit has many points of interest, including a visit to a school in Montepulciano where the 'octogenarian' director gave him an effusive speech of welcome and the boys presented him with a eulogy of England and a bunch of violets, 'una memoria di Montepulciano'. That was on 20 March; on the 28th he noted the arrival of the letter offering him the post with Lord Crewe.

to the India Office on his appointment as Secretary of State for India, and to look after his work as Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Lords. The following four years which saw all the paraphernalia of the Parliament Act of 1911, with a spell as private secretary to Lord Morley when he took over Lord Crewe's work during the latter's illness, were intensely interesting.'[1]

1909–14

His work for Lord Crewe also widened his contacts. The diaries give many fascinating glimpses of life in Edwardian London. He returned from Italy on 24 April 1909; on 4 May, Blanco, his lively horse, arrived; on 5 May he made his debut at the Colonial Office. But his official duties, though evidently most conscientiously and efficiently performed, sometimes into the small hours of the morning, normally left him ample leisure, both for Blanco and for the Public Record Office. He lived in his father's flat in Portman Mansions; about 8.00 most mornings he rode in the Mall, in company with various friends, especially (in the autumn of 1910) with Harold Nicolson; his day's work began at 11.00 and normally ended about 6.00,[2] with fairly frequent days off, and weekends visiting relations and friends in the country. At the end of June 1909 life was a little hectic. 'Tuesday was the Levee . . . I wore an ordinary black velvet coat and not a gold lace uniform which I find I am entitled to.' Friday was the King's birthday: 'To the F[oreign] O[ffice] reception where I strutted about in a cocked hat and a sword.' The festivities culminated in the royal ball at Buckingham Palace on 2 July: 'in bed at 2.30; in the row by 8 . . .'. A little later it appears that besides opening the doors of the Palace, his connection with an eminent Liberal minister and with the House of Lords also opened those of at least one of Lord Crewe's political allies. Sir William Robson was one of the long line of eminent lawyers bred at Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge; in 1908 he was Attorney General; in 1910 he became a Lord of Appeal in Ordinary and a peer. On 10 June 1911 'Blanco bolted . . . and tumbled down underneath the Marble Arch. Left me a bit lame'. The following Wednesday evening, 'Dined with the Robsons. Took V.R. to supper . . .'.

[1] 1956, pp. 13–14. *The Autobiographies of Edward Gibbon*, ed. J. Murray, London, 1896, p. 317 (ed. M. M. Reese, London, 1970 (1971), p. 103).

[2] So diary, July 1909: 'But 11–6 has rather extended to 10–8', at the end of a hectic week following the week of festivities described below.

The Hon. Violet Robson and Charles Clay were married in St. Margaret's, Westminster on 24 April 1913. Thus began nearly sixty years of a happy marriage, richly blessed: Lady Clay, whom very many of their friends will remember as a singularly friendly, kind, thoughtful, and charming hostess in Chelsea and Kensington, died in June 1972. By then their family had been enlarged by three daughters, and many grandchildren; and before he died in 1978 yet another generation had begun. All this lay far in the future in 1913, and in the following year the First World War laid a caesura across his career.

By 1914 the foundations for the two careers of his later life had already been firmly laid. 'My appointment with Lord Crewe, for whom I had the warmest admiration, was of only a temporary character, dependent on his tenure of office. And after my marriage in 1913 it seemed wise to look for a permanent post.' He had 'refused a mastership at Harrow; and then in the summer of 1914 Sir Henry Graham, Clerk of the Parliaments, . . . offered me the post of Assistant Librarian in the House of Lords, when Hugh Butler was appointed to succeed Edmund Gosse as Librarian, and this was accompanied by a small post in the Lord Chancellor's Office'.[1] Apart from the years of war service and a brief interlude soon after, he was to remain in the House of Lords Library, as Assistant Librarian and Librarian, until his retirement in 1956.

His career as an antiquary and editor of medieval documents began even earlier. On 12 October 1908 he had dined in Balliol with Urquhart, and the company included William Temple[2] and H. W. C. Davis; after dinner he sat with Davis, who spoke of his work for the *Regesta Regum Anglo-Normannorum*, 'and he gave me hints for gathering matter at the Record Office, where I am hoping to collect a volume of *Placita coram rege* or *de banco* for the Yorks Record Series'. On 30 October he heard that he had been elected to the Yorkshire Archaeological Society, which he was to adorn for nearly seventy years, and on the same day the eminent Yorkshire Antiquary William Brown

[1] 1956, pp. 14–15.

[2] Presumably the later archbishop, who was at that time a Fellow of Queen's. These details and the quotations which follow are from the diaries for 1908; the outline of the story is told in 1956, p. 14, and 1964, p. 16. The diary refers to Davis's 'charter book'—'his charter book is well on'; although *Regesta*, i, was not published until 1913, its preface indicates that it had been under way since 1904. This is much more likely to be the book referred to than Davis's edition of Stubbs's *Charters*, which also came out in 1913.

advised him to try the Assize Rolls of Edward I at the Record Office. On 18 November, 'To the Record Office in Chancery Lane to learn 13th century handwriting . . .'; on the 19th, 'Again to the Record Office where I met my cousin Robert J. Whitwell', also Davis's principal helper in the *Regesta*; 'certainly improved in deciphering the writing and got out a Yorkshire Roll to see what I could make of it. . .'. These are the first of many entries which show him using his spare time in this way; and in his Reminiscences he recalled the help he had received from Paley Baildon in studying palaeography, since there were no formal classes available. His first days at the Record Office were spent comparing his fathers' copy of the Surtees Society's *Northumberland Plea Rolls* with the originals, and he 'was soon able to get sufficient experience to tackle the Yorkshire material. With my own copies, sent to Baildon for inspection, and some further copies made by Miss Ethel Stokes, I collected material for the volume.' The later stages were made easier by a period of comparative leisure when Lord Crewe was visiting India, and the volume 'was eventually published in 1911. This was considered to be a sufficient qualification for election to the Society of Antiquaries in the following year.'[1]

Further back still, and deeper, fundamental for this and for many of his interests, lay the influence of his father. J. W. Clay was a considerable figure in Yorkshire society, much involved in local affairs; but increasingly as he advanced in years he became also one of the leading experts on genealogy and heraldry in the north of England, remembered above all as the editor of Dugdale's *Visitation of Yorkshire*, of *Yorkshire Church Notes*, and other volumes in the Record Series. He was a central figure over many years in the Yorkshire Archaeological Society, and a Fellow of the Antiquaries; and in both settings his son was frequently his companion in his later years. They collaborated directly in copying entries from the registers of the Society of Friends relating to their ancestors, the Travis family, and their connections. The son later lamented that his father was 47 when he was born, which limited the years of their collaboration: J. W. Clay died in 1918, so that 'it was only during the last few years before the outbreak of war in 1914 that I was able to share his interests and learn something of his high standards'.[2] But he always looked to the Library at Rastrick as a major source of his own inspiration. It was never again his home, for after his mother's death in 1935 the house was sold; and on the

[1] 1964, p. 16. [2] 1956, p. 4.

immediate neighbourhood he had mixed feelings: as he observed in his diary in 1908, in words which he would later have regarded as exaggerated, the 'scenery is annihilated' by mill chimneys; even then 'London is the hub of life's wheel'—though he could not bear to think of being confined to it the whole year.[1] Yet his roots lay very deep in the parish of Halifax and the manor of Wakefield; and even in Chelsea he kept about him furniture and books which were visible reminders of his father's library at Rastrick. The books had originally been

> housed in a small room to the left of the front hall until he [J.W.C.] built the library extension with the room above, with its splendid view, for my brother and myself. Of this small room I have a vivid memory. John Clay's two mahogany bookcases, now within a few inches of the table on which I am writing these notes, filled the two recesses on either side of the fireplace. Books were piled in every corner, and on every available chair, and I used to browse on the floor, not interrupting him overmuch, anxious to take an interest in the work on which he was engaged. . . . During the last dozen years or so of my father's life he derived the greatest pleasure from his new library. It was a handsome room with its marble mantelpiece from Italy and the armorial glass of Yorkshire families in the bay window which he had bought from the Savile house at Methley and which I sold back to Lord Mexborough after my mother's death. The room was designed to hold the large bookcase which my father had bought some years previously and had kept in store. It is to be seen in Mary Hill's portrait of my father with one of John Clay's bookcases to the left. . . . When Rastrick House was dismantled in 1935 I moved the big bookcase to my large private room in the House of Lords, . . . and it now [1964] adorns the same room occupied by the Clerk of the Crown.

There were books too in his father's flat in Portman Mansions, first editions of Dickens, Thackeray, and Trollope, 'with several books of the Cranford Series illustrated by Hugh Thomson; and he gradually collected armorial china which forms the bulk of my own collection . . .'. It also contained 'water-colours by late Victorian artists such as Herbert Marshall, Towneley Green, Stacy Marks and MacWhirter' which reflected his mother's taste and also gave Charles Clay himself 'daily enjoyment' in later years; and the flat was a particular pleasure to his mother, who had many friends and relations in London, as well as being convenient to his father for visits to Somerset House, the Public Record Office, and the Society of Antiquaries.[2]

[1] Diary, 29 Oct., 29 Sept. 1908. [2] 1964, pp. 2–3, 6–8.

1914–56

1914 saw Charles Clay well established as a married man, and already living in the house in Tite Street, Chelsea, familiar in later years to so many of his friends; also established as an Antiquary and local historian, still under his father's influence but beginning to chart courses of his own. It also brought the War, and with it, from 1915 to 1919, a long period of military service. On 20 May 1915 his diary records a conversation with the Lord Chancellor, Lord Haldane; on 8 June he was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in the Royal Devon Yeomanry. His service included periods as ADC to Lieut.-General Broadwood, GOC commanding the 57th Lancashire Territorial Division, and as Staff Captain and Deputy Assistant Quartermaster General at GHQ in France. He was twice mentioned in despatches: as Temporary Captain (substantive 2nd Lieut.) on 7 November 1917, and as temporary Major (substantive Lieut.) on 8 November 1918, immediately before the Armistice; and a Major he officially remained until 1935, when he relinquished his Commission in the Territorial Army Reserve. Meanwhile the French Minister of Agriculture, on 28 September 1917, had named le capitaine Clay 'Chevalier de mérite agricole', which has a pleasantly bucolic touch.[1]

'After the war of 1914–19 I was naturally restless after my return to the Library, where at that time prospects of rising to any higher post than that of Assistant Librarian were far from bright.' But a few months' secondment at the Treasury cured him of any desire to be a 'leisureless official', and he returned to his last, to be rewarded, in 1922, by promotion to the Librarianship;[2] and thereafter he never ceased to be thankful that he had never accepted any other post which would have prevented him from finding his vocation as Librarian.[3]

[1] This paragraph is based on his war service documents, commission etc., and 1956, p. 15, where he notes that a cousin had command of a squadron in the Devon Yeomanry.

[2] Edmund Gosse, whose enforced retirement at 65 in 1914 had been somewhat mortifying to him, briefly re-emerged at this time, suggesting himself for the post of Librarian again, 'for a year or so', then to 'be succeeded by Clay'. Clay's view of Gosse was reflected in his treatment of a bust of his eminent predecessor, which was kept, from its presentation in 1938, 'on top of a stationery press with his face to the wall' (see pp. 322–3).

[3] From pp. 2–3 of a note on appointments he had refused, which included a proposition from Chatto and Windus (1908), the offer from Smith Elder (1908–9), and a mastership at Harrow (1911–12).

The Librarian of the House of Lords serves two kinds of official employer: the politicians and the law lords; and Charles Clay could not have had two more experienced guides in these two fields than his former employer, Lord Crewe, and his father-in-law, Lord Robson. It has also a lighter side, to the general public perhaps associated with the hereditary, or legendary, addiction of the peers to the grouse moors and the hunting field. But it was my pleasure in the late 1940s to introduce the Librarian to a young hereditary peer,[1] then my Company Commander, and observe these two great men rapidly soar above my intellectual level in their common interest in the *Observer* crossword.

From 1947 to 1956, when Clay retired at the age of 71, Christopher Dobson was his assistant, and it gave Clay great delight that Dobson followed him as Librarian from 1956 to 1977. The successor has most kindly provided me with this account of his former chief.

'Charles Clay said to me more than once that he felt he never wanted any other job than Librarian to the House of Lords. With his first-class intellect he could no doubt have achieved a higher place, salary-wise, in the public service, but he was not ambitious . . .' When he returned from the War in 1919, 'the Librarian [Hugh Butler] was not in good health and had prolonged absences from the Library. Charles Clay used to say, with a smile, that "when he was Assistant Librarian he did the work of the Librarian, and when he became Librarian (in 1922) he did the work of the Assistant Librarian"; until 1929 when Frank Carr joined him. . . .

'Charles Clay, in his 34 years as Librarian, undoubtedly did more for the Library than any other holder of the post. The contents of the four main rooms were re-organized and grouped by subjects, and the books, particularly the Law section, catalogued on cards, within two or three years—a big task for two men. In 1925 he initiated the display of manuscripts from the Victoria Tower in the Queen's Room, where they joined the Death Warrant of Charles I which had been kept in the Library since 1851.

'Charles Clay's immense knowledge of literature and history was greatly valued by Peers and by his fellow Officers of the House. He was invariably consulted whenever Peerage Cases came before the House. It is, however, true to say that, apart

[1] Major the Earl Wavell (the second Earl), who died soon after on active service in Africa.

from the war years of 1939–45 (when he was on his own and only occasionally helped by Charles Hendriks, the Leader's Secretary), his actual work as Librarian rarely occupied a full day. On arrival each morning, he would deal with a letter or two; enter new books in his accession book, and then spend the rest of the morning on *EYC* or some other work not connected with the Library. The period after lunch before the House met would see him at his desk where he was available to give help to Peers. He would usually go into the Chamber to hear a speech or two in important debates, then return to the Library to peruse a new book or read book reviews in *TLS* before continuing his private research.

'Charles always regarded the legal side of the House as the most important part of his job. Certainly, before the war, the Law Lords used the Library much more than the other Peers, who rarely asked him to produce memoranda for their Parliamentary work until perhaps the early 1950s. The frequent demands for information, involving written research, for debates did not come until some years after his retirement in 1956. It would now be quite impossible for any research on non-Library matters to be undertaken by the Librarian. *Tempora mutantur*!'

The Early Yorkshire Charters

Among the sports which Charles Clay enjoyed in his early life was golf, and it was golf which first brought him to Fixby, 'half an hour's walk from Rastrick . . ., as a boy, often tutored by Alec Herd, once an open champion'. To Fixby he came again in the early 1920s in search of charters. William Brown, Secretary of the Yorkshire Archaeological Society Record Series, 'an antiquary in the first flight', was engaged in compiling *Yorkshire Deeds*, iii, which appeared in 1922.[1] It was a mark of Clay's modesty and good sense that he frequently joined in other men's projects, and carried on what they had begun; and it was equally characteristic of him to set his own mark indelibly on the project before he had finished with it. Thus it was in a measure with the *Yorkshire Deeds*; thus, beyond all measure, with the *Early Yorkshire Charters*.

It happened that I was then making the acquaintance of Mr T. B. Clarke-Thornhill, the owner of Fixby; . . . who put at my disposal his large collection of Fixby muniments which he had consigned to the care of A. E. Stamp, then Secretary of the Public Record Office under the Deputy-Keepership of Maxwell-Lyte, for the purpose of being

[1] 1964, pp. 17–18.

catalogued.[1] I was enabled to take instalments to the House of Lords Library where I could make abstracts at leisure on the model of William Brown, who took a consignment for his third volume. In this work I was constantly helped by Stamp, who deciphered for me words of apparent difficulty which gradually grew fewer. Brown's volume was published in 1922; and he then invited me to continue the series, placing at my disposal as a nucleus for a fourth volume some of his abstracts from the larger Middelton collection which had been presented to our Society. This led to wider interests outside the parish of Halifax. During the ensuing eighteen years I was able to edit five volumes of *Yorkshire Deeds*, bringing the total to eight volumes in the series. Several more instalments of the Middelton collection were included, with many more documents in the Society's possession: and among the collections to which I had easy access were Lord Allendale's at Bretton, Colonel Lloyd-Greame's at Sowerby; the British Museum's relating to Byland Abbey, Sir William Worsley's at Hovingham, the Duke of Leeds's at Hornby Castle, the Duke of Norfolk's at Arundel, Westminster Abbey's relating to Yorkshire, . . . —

a list vividly illustrating the peculiar advantage of the editor's situation: the heir to Rastrick and the eminent Yorkshire antiquary had 'easy access' to Yorkshire muniment rooms; the Librarian of the House of Lords met many of the owners in the course of his profession, and worked in the Palace of Westminster, next door to the Abbey. The volumes calendar and annotate deeds to the death of Elizabeth I,

with some more of a later date; and the contents of the volumes were designed to spread so far as possible [to] places throughout the three ridings. The collection at Chevet, where I went to visit Sir Thomas Pilkington on several occasions, provided two remarkable finds. One was the charter of Edward I granting to Roger de Pilkington free warren in his lands in Lancashire, adorned with a delightful series of beasts and birds including a peacock, reminiscent of the illumination in the Tenison Psalter.[2] . . . The other find consisted of several charters, mostly relating to the monastic houses of Yorkshire, left behind at Chevet by Roger Dodsworth after the siege of York in 1644 and the destruction of St. Mary's Tower which had driven him to seek the hospitality of Sir Francis Neville.

The contents of St. Mary's Tower, lost in the Civil War, some of its treasures restored by Clay out of the papers of Dodsworth —though much work remains to be done on them—are familiar to all who have worked closely over the *Early Yorkshire Charters*.

[1] This paragraph is based on 1964, pp. 17–20.

[2] See 'An Illuminated Charter of Free Warren, dated 1291', *Antiquaries Journal*, xi (1931), pp. 129–32.

Many attempts have been made to reconstruct the geography and history of feudal society; the *Early Yorkshire Charters* (*EYC*), in its fully developed form, takes great honours one after another—Richmond, Paynel, Skipton, Warenne, Stuteville, Trussebut, Percy, and Tison—and studies their structure from the top down, with a history of the lords and their holdings, from the Norman settlement in the late eleventh century down to the early thirteenth, and sometimes a little beyond; and then edits the charters of the lords with a careful commentary on the date, on notable persons and points of interest in the charters, and textual apparatus; all this is followed by similar details of the tenants, their families, and fees and charters. These volumes thus form artificial cartularies. They are also detailed studies of the structure of feudal society. They enshrine all that was best in the tradition of charter editing in this country in their generation; they show also the inheritance of J. H. Round and the editors of the *Complete Peerage*—to which Clay was a major contributor—the principles and practice of feudal genealogy as a basis for understanding feudal structure and family history. They combine the principles of the two major works of William Farrer's last years, *EYC*, i–iii, a massive collection of charters arranged by honours and fees but with only a skeleton of notes, and *Honors and Knights' Fees*, an elaborate analysis, honour by honour, but without the texts of charters and ranging freely over the feudal world, without a fixed local base, of the groundwork of 'feudal history and . . . medieval genealogy'.[1]

'In 1923 we were staying at Caton near Lancaster, and my wife and her cousin put me down one morning at Whitbarrow Lodge' near Grange-over-Sands: thus opens Clay's own account of his only meeting with William Farrer, the man with whom students of medieval charters will always particularly associate him. 'It was a wild and wet day with the view over Morecambe Bay obscured, and we sat for several hours in his library discussing the material for medieval Yorkshire history.' The first three volumes of *Early Yorkshire Charters* had been printed at Farrer's expense in 1914–16; but as he worked Farrer had seen

[1] 1964, p. 21; W. Farrer, *Honors and Knights' Fees*, London, Manchester, 1923–5; for details of *EYC*, see note at the end of this memoir. Clay's chief contributions to the *Complete Peerage* (by G.E.C., revised edn. ed. V. Gibbs, H. A. Doubleday, Lord Howard de Walden, G. H. White, and R. S. Lea, 1910–59) are listed in the Bibliography in *Notes on the Family of Clere* (1975), but they went much deeper than this shows, and included long service as one of the Trustees.

the feudal geography which lay at the heart of his scheme spread out from Yorkshire to the neighbouring shires, then to every corner of the Anglo-Norman empire. This, it appears, was the essential reason why he put aside his work on the *EYC*, and turned to *Honors and Knights' Fees*. 'Little did I think', Clay went on, 'as I enjoyed our discussions, that it would fall to my lot to attempt the continuation of any aspect of his work.'[1]

In August 1924 Farrer died, and in 1932 the Yorkshire Archaeological Society, having gathered, 'due to the enterprise and diplomacy of our President Colonel Parker', the notes and drafts which Farrer had left both for the *EYC* and for such parts of *Honors and Knights' Fees* as related to Yorkshire, 'we decided that steps should be taken to make at least some of it available for medieval historians. I was invited to make a start on the honour of Richmond'; and so the Extra Series in which *EYC*, iv–xii (and the index to i–iii) were to appear, was launched, in a format which sits comfortably by i–iii, and improved by 'collotype plates of original charters on the model of the volume that had recently been issued by the Northamptonshire Record Society'.[2] The latter had been the fruit of a combined enterprise between Miss Joan Wake, a remarkable personality who enjoyed similar access to the embattled muniment rooms of her own county to Clay's in Yorkshire, and Professor F. M., later Sir Frank Stenton; and it is an admirable volume reflecting Miss Wake's flare for unearthing documents, and Stenton's scholarship and good sense in their deployment. Clay combined, *in einer Brust*, both qualities. Behind the immaculate finish, as I was myself to observe in the later volumes, lay wonderfully clean proofs prepared by the West Yorkshire Printing Co. and his own neat and lucid manuscript—none of it was typed. In addition, his cousin Miss Edith Clay collaborated with him in the magnificent index to vols. i–iii for which all users of those volumes have been deeply grateful.

Stenton himself was shortly to applaud the appearance of volume iv, 'A splendid volume . . . which has diverted me from all my proper duties'; and in 1950, the year which saw Clay's election to the British Academy, he noted of volume viii, on the honour of Warenne, that it was '. . . for the moment the last number in the finest series of Charters now appearing anywhere

[1] 1964, p. 21.

[2] 1964, pp. 21–2; cf. Preface to *EYC*, iv. The reference is to *Facsimiles of early charters from Northamptonshire collections*, ed. F. M. Stenton, Northants. Record Soc. 1930.

in the world . . .'. In a similar vein, many years later, when the scholarly world had had time to take stock of the achievement, and to look about it, Sir Richard Southern described the *EYC* as 'the *summit* of Charterland, which is a noble country with many peaks, but only one Everest'.[1] Doubtless these compliments brought a modest, incredulous smile to the editor's lips, and perhaps a blush—for when the Society which had published *EYC* held a pleasant celebration of his diamond jubilee as a member of it, presided over by his friend Professor John Le Patourel, on 31 October 1968, he spoke kindly in his diary of the lecture I gave in honour of the *EYC* and its editor, but observed that it 'made me blush continuously'.[2]

Clay's *EYC*, as Pope John XXIII is alleged to have said about himself, is not infallible. There are a few slips and errors and inconsistencies; the corrigenda in the later volumes reveal the fact. The nature of the plan, combining the local feudal geography of Yorkshire with the whole immensely complex structure of Anglo-Norman feudal society, made for some strains and stresses and variations in treatment. Moreover, it is not complete; and although a substantial gap has been filled by the British Academy's volume *Charters of the Honour of Mowbray 1107–1191*, edited to Sir Charles's great contentment and with his encouragement by Dr Diana Greenway,[3] it is doubtful if it ever will be. This is not an echo of the pessimism he himself used to express after each volume appeared, as to whether it would have a successor; but there are still two major honours, Tickhill and Vescy, unaccounted for, and at the very end of such an enterprise there must be minor fragments which hardly form part of a Yorkshire enterprise at all.

Yet it remains a masterpiece, and a model for any serious editor of medieval charters, and for much else, to which I and many others have returned again and again for guidance and inspiration. It is a work of all but impeccable[4] scholarship. Farrer had notable qualities: enthusiasm, drive, and vision; but he lacked the patience needed to master the intricate details of a scholarly problem. When Farrer dated a charter, he occasionally got it precisely right; more commonly he laid

[1] From letters of 28 Oct. 1935, 13 Mar. 1950 (F.M.S.) and 14 Jan. 1977 (R.W.S.) in the possession of Mrs Maxwell-Hyslop.

[2] At the end of the lecture he rose to his full height, gripped me by the arm, and cried 'you wretch!'

[3] *Records of Social and Economic History*, New Series, i, London, British Academy, 1972.

[4] The word was used by Sir Richard Southern in the letter quoted above.

a pair of dates on the page which represented a rough impression, often a reasonable impression, of when the witnesses flourished, but which may deceive a later reader into supposing that he has been given firm limits. Since he rarely explained his dates, they are singularly difficult to check and correct. I have seen proof sheets of Farrer's *Lancashire Pipe Rolls* (*1902*), which suggested that he had sent transcripts of the documents to the printer and edited them in proof; no greater contrast to the proofs of *EYC* as I knew them could be imagined. Farrer was indeed a notable pioneer; but, as I have said elsewhere, he 'was an impressionist, whereas Clay employs the craft of Jan van Eyck, minute, meticulous and marvellously precise'.[1] A great deal of the history of England in the eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth centuries must be reconstructed from undated charters; Clay set new standards of precision in dating: it is not that he devised any wholly novel techniques, but that he was exceptionally precise and comprehensive in his use of all the methods of chronology. His early mathematical training helped him, and his enjoyment of puzzles of all kinds: 'who but he would have observed that the abbatial lists of Fountains Abbey are precisely correct if we assume a lunar rather than a calendar month as the base of the calculations?' Above all, he never left a date unexplained: he was determined that other scholars should understand his dates, and so have confidence in them—and be able readily to check them. All this was done with a singular economy of space and language. Thus stated, it sounds simple; but anyone who has worked over numerous editions of charters through the period when *EYC* was appearing will have noted a change of approach and of standards. There are many reasonably well annotated; some admirably so; innumerable editions of charters, however, have fallen short in these respects. The general standard has improved, both in precision and presentation; and Clay's is one of the influences which has led to this improvement: one of several, but a crucial one. The editors of *The Heads of Religious Houses, England and Wales, 940–1216*[2] had to check the dates of some thousands of charters, and in a majority of cases the notes in the printed editions were useless or inadequate, and we had to do the work ourselves; in

[1] This and the quotation below are from the appreciation which forms the Preface to *Notes on the Family of Clere* (1975).

[2] Ed. D. Knowles, C. N. L. Brooke, and Vera C. M. London, Cambridge, 1972; see below for the fundamental contribution Clay himself made to this book.

every case the date was checked, but for a charter in the *EYC*, iv–xii, this normally meant no more than a glance at Clay's note.

The deceptive simplicity of his achievement is enhanced by economy of language: there is a fine, almost philosophical, precision, partly derived from years of calendaring *Yorkshire Deeds*, of correcting antiquaries with minds less clear than his, of ensuring correct statement in the two labyrinths in which he marched with such exceptional assurance, of feudal land law, and of genealogical research. He did not eschew jargon when it was needed; but he had adapted an instrument to his work and to his temperament ideal for its task. The language of charters and feudal inheritances must be cool and dry and formal if it is to do its work; and this can give the impression that the historian who employs it himself suffers from these qualities. Clay's style was the result of discipline and conviction, not of dullness. The attentive reader of *EYC* will find references to his wider interests: the honour of Richmond was chosen for his first encounter with the project, partly because of the 'historic associations and natural beauty of that part of the honour known as Richmondshire . . . , whose scenery has been a source of inspiration for the art of Turner and the melody of Walter Scott'.[1] He also enjoyed an exceptional facility for epigrammatic light verse, for examples of which the *EYC* may be explored in vain. In 1954 it so happened that A. E. (later Sir Albert) Richardson, then President of the Royal Academy, inadvertently addressed him as a peer, an error he urbanely corrected:

> Although you be a P.R.A.
> (The gods, I know, applaud it)
> You cannot carve a peer from Clay
> —Besides, I can't afford it![2]

Behind the precision and success of *EYC* lay many years of training and experience, and a shrewd and modest readiness to accept what was valuable in other men's methods of work. He had inherited from his father intense enthusiasm for genealogical research; he had learned from H. W. C. Davis the historical importance of land law and the historian's attitude to charters. But in truth as an editor he was greatly superior to Davis: it is not until the third volume and the late 1960s that the quality of the *Regesta Regum Anglo-Normannorum* came into

[1] *EYC*, iv, p. viii.

[2] From a note preserved by C.T.C. with Richardson's acknowledgement. Presumably a secretary had wrongly addressed the envelope.

the same dimension as *EYC*. He himself correctly underlined his debt to eminent amateurs, such as William Brown, his immediate mentor, and Lewis Loyd, perhaps his closest collaborator; but he would also have admitted the value of his growing acquaintance, which blossomed into friendship, with a group of professional scholars, of Sir Frank and Lady Stenton, of D. C. Douglas, with whom he edited Loyd's 'address book' after Loyd's death, and above all, A. Hamilton Thompson, with whom he collaborated on the *Fasti Parochiales*. In later years more were added to the list of historians who were also close friends; but it is significant that the chief associates of the 1930s and early 1940s were scholars with a strong personal interest in mingling local and general history. The encouragement of Stenton, Douglas, and Hamilton Thompson played an important part in his work, but it remained securely anchored in the best traditions of local history, founded in a deep knowledge of Yorkshire, its topography, its families, and its archives.

Feudal history is the playground of the social and legal historian—and the sociologist and the anthropologist—as well as of the antiquary. Clay was perfectly well aware of the wider sweeps of Stenton's and Douglas's books, and of what the great continental scholars, Ganshof, Marc Bloch, and their disciples, were engaged in. But this was not for him: it was the amateur's privilege to put behind him the problems that must agitate the university lecture room and the international conference. He never wrote on general historical problems. He was for many years a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society, often on its Council, in his last years an Honorary Vice-President; but he never lectured to it. He had a profound understanding of the professional standards required; for the rest he could pursue his special interests unimpeded. No one has ever understood the intricacies of feudal genealogy, nor the possibilities and limitations of writing the history, or studying the legal structure, of medieval knights' fees, better than he. When he was already over 90 a research student working over some passages in *EYC* came upon a curious genealogical problem; I struggled with its intricacies and was baffled, and wrote to him, and almost by return there came his answer, showing that in an instant he had seen a crucial element in a problem of family relationships which had eluded us.

Volume iv was published in 1935; in 1955, in the preface to volume x, even Clay was moved to observe that in the interval 'certain progress has been made', and the consolidated index

at the end showed that he expected the volume to be his last. This was a marked characteristic: he often observed that he hardly knew whether he would bring another volume to completion, or if he did, where the money would come from to finance its publication. Happily two more volumes followed, Percy and Tison; the Pilgrim Trust, the British Academy, the Marc Fitch Fund, and private donors joined their resources to those of the loyal and generous members of the Yorkshire Archaeological Society, and the volumes appeared in print to the astonishment of no one but their editor.

They form a continuous series, uniform in appearance, scholarship, and theme; yet there are subtle differences within them. At the outset it was pointed out that the honour of Richmond included lands in eight counties; and its lords were deeply involved in Breton and Norman history too. To Brittany indeed real justice was done, and *EYC*, iv, is a mine for the Breton historian. But Richmond had a secure base in Yorkshire, where the largest concentration of its tenures lay; and volume v, which contained the tenants' charters for Yorkshire alone, broadly speaking, justified the Yorkshire base in that the largest territories in the complex held by the lords of Richmond lay there. But the Warennes were earls of Surrey, and it is therefore no surprise that volume viii most conspicuously bursts the bounds of Yorkshire; though even here there is still a preponderance of Yorkshire material printed in the volume, and an alluring frontispiece of Conisborough Castle, to disguise the fact. This volume was perhaps his best. It contains an exceptional concentration of pieces of scholarly criticism, including an exposé of two notable fabrications of the monks of Lewes priory, of which the Warennes were founders and patrons: their claim that the founder's wife, Gundreda, was daughter of William the Conqueror—long doubted, now laid to rest; and their foundation charter with its famous story of William de Warenne's visit to Cluny. In this case he not only showed it to be a forgery but presented a facsimile of the genuine charter from the archives of Cluny;[1] his demonstration was complete,

[1] *EYC*, viii, plate I, facing p. 55, a photograph obtained from the Bibliothèque Nationale with the help of Dr Janet Sondheimer, then Miss Janet Matthews (not Joyce, as, by a rare slip, the preface says, p. xiii). For Gundreda and the forgery, see pp. 40–6, 59–62. No student of diplomatic can ignore his demonstration that an early twelfth-century earl can witness without the title (pp. 46–7), any more than they can (or should) ignore the celebrated discussion of the meaning of clauses 'pro salute . . .' and 'pro anima . . .' of friends and relations in *EYC*, iv, pp. xxvii–xxx.

though it has escaped the notice of some Cluniac historians. It also contains an account of that exceptionally interesting family, the Warennes, who illustrate many passages in social history—the importance of royal favour to a rising family, the importance of marrying late so as to be sure of the best heiress available, the complexities of feudal structure. I had almost said the impossibility of feudal genealogy; for to make any clear distinction of generations opaque, every Warenne heir for six generations, and several lesser members of the family, were called William; and even one of the two men who married their heiresses, King Stephen's younger son, had been providently given the name by his far-sighted godparents. Finally, the structure of the Yorkshire holdings has many points of interest: the witnesses to the charters reveal the composition of an honorial court better than any collection known to me; and if any scholar imagines he knows the answer to that hoary question—what is a manor?—let him study the manor of Wakefield. For it seems as if this manor was like a skeleton, which a strong man had lifted and shaken and scattered all over the neighbouring wapentakes. The map of the manor of Wakefield and its limbs, with which the chapter on it opens, must have given the editor particular pleasure, since in its centre lies Rastrick.[1] This gave him the opportunity to record in the preface, dated 1949, 'my gratitude to my father, whose work for the Record Series and in other fields prompted me more than fifty years ago in our home in Rastrick, itself a member of the honour of Wakefield, to share his interests in the early history of the West Riding'.

York Minster Fasti

It is not only the Warennes, the Stutevilles, and the Percies who shine in the reflected glory of his scholarship; for in his detailed studies of the Yorkshire clergy, parish priests, archdeacons, abbots and priors, and the deans and treasurers and chancellors of York, he laid foundations for the study of the Church in Yorkshire and for similar enquiries elsewhere. This began with his collaboration with Hamilton Thompson on the first two volumes of *Fasti Parochiales;*[2] the fourth, published in

[1] *EYC*, viii, facing p. 178; see p. xiv for the quotation which follows.

[2] *Fasti Parochiales*, i, ii, ed. A. Hamilton Thompson and C. T. Clay, Yorks. Arch. Soc. Record Series 85, 107 (1933–43); iv, ed. Norah K. M. Gurney and C.T.C. was published in 1971 (133 of the series; vol. iii, 129 of the Series (1967), was ed. N. A. H. Lawrence). His articles on the

1971, was also partly his, partly the work of the late Mrs Norah Gurney. In the 1940s he first pursued the dignitaries of York, and it was among the archdeacons that he and I first met. I have described elsewhere how as a timid schoolboy, on a January day in 1945, I 'faced the policeman who defended the House of Lords against intruders. I passed the ordeal successfully and was rewarded a few moments later by a friendly greeting within the purple and gold of the Palace of Westminster by Mr. Clay; and in the Library and the restaurant, among the mitres and the coronets, we had the first of many conversations about the archdeacons of York, Richmond, Cleveland and Nottingham; and perhaps even of the East Riding, though I am sure we both . . . had in common the feeling that the archdeacons of the East Riding, being to all intents and purposes an invention of the year 1218, were too recent and parvenu for serious consideration.'[1] It was a happy meeting, for although he was in his sixtieth year and a distinguished scholar, he characteristically treated me as a colleague and an equal. His interest in the archdeacons was undoubtedly stimulated by the need to use them in dating his charters—the archdeacons of Richmond already figure in the introduction to volume iv. They raised many subtle problems, in which he revelled; but at the end of the day they had fixed, and sometimes short, terms of office, and were not all called William, so that they are valuable pillars of chronology. A human interest lights up the career of the Archdeacon Osbert, who was accused of murdering his archbishop and so retired into private life and re-entered the world of *EYC* as a minor baron; or of John aux Bellesmains, John of Canterbury, Treasurer of York, later bishop of Poitiers, and archbishop of Lyons, and a major figure in the French church.[2] When the Institute of Historical Research launched the scheme for re-editing the whole of John Le Neve's *Fasti Ecclesiae Anglicanae* in the 1950s he was a natural adviser, and he showed the way forward by himself contributing to his own Record Series two volumes of *York*

York dignitaries and archdeacons appeared in the *Yorks. Arch. Journal*, xxxiv (1939), 361–78; xxxv (1940–3), 7–34, 116–38; xxxvi (1944–7), 269–87, 409–34.

[1] Preface to *Notes on The Family of Clere* (1975), p. x.

[2] On Osbert, *Yorks. Arch. Journal*, xxxvi. 277–9; for other references see A. Morey and C. N. L. Brooke, *The Letters and Charters of Gilbert Foliot . . .* (Cambridge, 1967), p. 164n; for John of Canterbury, *Yorks. Arch. Journal*, xxxv. 11–19.

Minster Fasti, models of their kind and of his art.[1] Later again, and greatly to his pleasure, the mantle of Le Neve and of the *EYC* both in some measure passed to Dr Diana Greenway, a young scholar who enjoyed his guidance and help both in her work on Le Neve and in the *Charters of the Honour of Mowbray*.[2] Meanwhile, over a longer period and with like pleasure, he had seen his own series of *Yorkshire Deeds*, and later his work as Secretary of the Record Series, continued by Mrs Margot Hebditch, later Mrs Stanley Price;[3] first, as a young widow, she presided over the Society's collections in Leeds; later, married to an eminent QC, now a judge, working commonly in Yorkshire, she was often able to provide the Clays with a Yorkshire home for their visits, and equally to keep in touch with him in London.

It was characteristic of him that though he had his own highly individual manner of work, much of it was done in collaboration. His list of gifted amateurs culminated in Lewis Loyd, who came closest of all, perhaps, to Charles Clay's own ideal. Loyd had an exceptional knowledge of the documents and topography of Normandy, and great skill in feudal history and genealogy. Behind *EYC*, viii, lies Loyd's study of the Warennes; but the debt undoubtedly was mutual, and in the end Loyd owes his lasting fame to Clay, to D. C. Douglas and to the Stentons. For Loyd had no interest in publishing his work, and shared with Edmund Bishop a fastidious distaste for seeing his name in print. After his death his 'address book' as Clay always called it, miraculously appeared in the shape of *The Origins of Some Anglo-Norman Families*, edited by Clay and Douglas for the Harleian Society, and his splendid edition of *Sir Christopher Hatton's Book of Seals*, completed by Lady Stenton, became Sir Frank Stenton's first Festschrift.[4]

To this volume Clay contributed, in particular, the descriptions of the seals. At the time of its appearance he expressed concern to me how few younger scholars there were who could

[1] Yorks. Arch. Soc. Record Series, 123–4, 1958–9 for 1957–8. The Institute's project has been published in many volumes under the title J. Le Neve, *Fasti Ecclesiae Anglicanae*; in the period before 1300, which most interested Clay, Dr Greenway herself has edited vols. i–iii (London, 1968–77).

[2] See p. 327 and n. 3.

[3] *Yorkshire Deeds*, ix–x, 1948–55 (vols. 111, 120 of the Record Series); Mrs Stanley Price succeeded him as Secretary when he became President of the Society in 1953.

[4] Harleian Soc. Publications, 103, 1951; and Oxford, 1950, also issued as Northants. Record Soc., vol. 15.

adequately describe armorial seals; and the whole range of the subject had great interest for him, as his early articles on the seals of Yorkshire revealed.[1] The story is told that when he was completing one of these papers he found, to his astonishment, a reference to an unknown book on the subject in a standard work of an earlier generation; hastening to the British Museum, he found it to be on aquatic, not heraldic, seals. I wish I could have witnessed the discovery, for no man showed surprise more expressively. If he found an error in one of his own works, he behaved much (I imagine) as an eminent abbot confessing a fault in his chapter house, and the event was equally rare. Error in other men's work never ceased to surprise him, and his expressive eyebrows and characteristic 'oh!' were often to be observed.

His published work faithfully reflects a substantial part of his interests: charters, family history, genealogy, Quaker and Huguenot history, seals and heraldry, a little literary history in his study of *Wuthering Heights*, a little art history in 'An illuminated charter of Free Warren, dated 1291', a little Balliol history in 'Two Dervorguillas'.[2] It was all the work of an enthusiast, none of it done for personal vainglory. One of his most substantial papers is on 'The early abbots of the Yorkshire Cistercian Houses', which contains much biographical and prosopographical material as well as some very refined chronology; and it was one of a series of papers on Yorkshire monastic superiors.[3] When the editors of *The Heads of Religious Houses, England and Wales, 940–1216*, turned to him for advice, he freely offered drafts for almost all the other Yorkshire houses, notes on his own papers, and corrections to their own efforts. His skill and generosity were here most happily combined; and his devotion to literature, to Yorkshire, to family history, and chronology all appear interwoven in his fascinating 'Notes on the chronology of "Wuthering Heights" '.[4]

As the years passed the distinction of his work, both for the House of Lords and for scholarship, received recognition: an

[1] Esp. 'Seals of the religious houses of Yorkshire', *Archaeologia*, lxxviii (1928), 1–36.

[2] For all these see Bibliography in *Notes on the Family of Clere* (1975); for the illuminated charter above, p. 324 n. 2; for *Wuthering Heights*, below, n. 4; for the Dervorguillas, *Eng. Hist. Rev.* lxv (1950), 89–91.

[3] *Yorks. Arch. Journal*, xxxviii (1952–5), 8–43; to the list of other papers on monastic superiors given in *Heads of Religious Houses* (see p. 328 n. 2), p. xxiii, can be added some notes and appendices in the later volumes of *EYC*.

[4] *Brontë Soc. Publications*, xii (1951–7), pt. 62 (1952), 100–5.

Honorary Doctorate from the University of Leeds in 1943; the CB in 1944; the FBA in 1950; knighthood in 1957. But mounting honours and years—though age deprived him of his horse, and eventually of his tennis and golf—left him still essentially simple and modest, and a man of many friends.

The antiquary and his friends

A solitary report survives from his days at Harrow. It records his scholarship at Balliol and concludes: 'Excellent. I hope that he will read something worth reading in the holidays.' No man has ever employed his spare time to better advantage in reading English literature, and he had the widest command of it—especially of poetry—of anyone I know. In his later years there commonly lay on his desk one or two of the leaflets of obscure quotations with which those deeply learned in English literature puzzle their wits, and it was no uncommon event for him to capture a prize in these competitions. I believe that in the many years that I have glanced over these puzzles with him I once, and once only, helped him to a solution he had missed; it was a good moment, a little like finding a mistake in the *EYC*.

But he was indeed a man of many interests, in books, and china, and heraldry, and painting, and all manner of arts, and above all in people. He moved in many circles: in the House of Lords; in his Club, in the exquisite eighteenth-century setting of Brooks's; and in the many societies of which he was a member. He was a devotee of dining clubs, especially those with a learned flavour. In youth he was an ardent member of the Tykes, the Yorkshire Archaeological Society dining club which flourished before the First World War; in later years he was a Dilettante, and for over thirty years he enjoyed the company of the Cocked Hat Club, one of the dining clubs of the Society of Antiquaries. He was in middle life an active Freemason. From the 1940s the Roxburghe Club was among the societies closest to his heart, and in due course he made his own contribution to its publications, a facsimile of the thirteenth-century York Psalter, edited for him by the late Dr E. G. Millar. In 1965, as his eightieth birthday came and went, he noted down the list of committees from which he had not yet resigned. This included the council of his own Yorkshire Archaeological Society, of which he had been President from 1953 to 1956, and others of its committees; the Surtees Society, the Harleian, the Croft Lyons Committee (for work on heraldry) of the

Society of Antiquaries, one of the Roxburghe committees; he was Vice-President of the Halifax Antiquarian Society, of the YAS, of the Thoresby Society, Honorary Vice-President of the Royal Historical Society. His expertise as a librarian was still heard in the councils of the London Library and the Library Committee of Brooks's. He was drawing towards the end of a long period of service on the two major committees of the Institute of Historical Research, the *VCH* Committee and that of the Institute itself: in earlier days his diary had recorded a sense that the older London history professors had little time for the amateur; I hope he had no similar cause for complaint when I sat with him on those two committees as a London professor in the late 1960s. Perhaps of all these the one which gave him the greatest satisfaction was the Reviewing Committee for the Export of Works of Art, which he left in August 1965 after thirteen years' service. Latterly he had had the added pleasure in the fact that his son-in-law, A. R. Maxwell-Hyslop, was the D.E.S. Assessor on the Committee from early 1964 until his retirement.

He had a wide circle of friends, who appreciated his charm, his kindness, his readiness to help and serve where he could, the consistent good sense of his advice and the clarity and distinction of his mind; perhaps especially his lofty standards of conduct and courtesy. At the centre of it all lay his family, which grew up in the lofty Chelsea house in Tite Street—tall and slender, as was its owner, a house whose many flights of stairs were always a little baffling to a guest not as agile in arithmetic as he. The Clays also had a house in Aston Tirrold on the Berkshire Downs, which they rented for many years and to which they could escape from the smoke of London, and, during the Second World War, from other inconveniences. To Tite Street I repaired on many occasions in the 1950s and 1960s, to be greeted by Charles Clay in his study on the ground floor; then by Violet in the drawing room, a room full of their joint possessions, yet always radiating in a special way her cordial, friendly welcome, which made even a shy visitor instantly at ease. After dinner, in their later years at least, Lady Clay retired early, and we repaired again to the study, where he smoked the last of a carefully numbered ration of cigarettes, and we talked of our common interest and our common friends, both of the twelfth century and of the twentieth. At other times, I know, the house was alive with the bustle of grandchildren, for Lady Clay was a dedicated grandmother. Of his three

daughters, Diana died, to his great sorrow, not long before he did; Rachel Maxwell-Hyslop, the eldest, a distinguished expert on the archaeology and art of the middle east, for many years Lecturer in Western Asiatic Archaeology at the Institute of Archaeology of the University of London, continues the apostolic succession of the Clays among the Fellows of the Antiquaries; and Rosemary Howarth, the youngest, formerly a student, and long a part-time member of the staff, of the Courtauld Institute, has long shared his interest in the history of art.

He remained active and agile far beyond most men's span; and even in his eighties could occasionally impress and alarm his friends by unfolding his long figure, and immaculate umbrella, from the top of a double-decker bus. But he was none the less aware of the passage of time. It is perhaps significant that *EYC*, x, with its air of finality, came out in the year he reached 70; *EYC*, xii, his swansong, as he became 80. As each volume appeared, one looked forward with assurance and eagerness to the next, and such a suggestion always brought from him a smile of appreciation instantly followed by a slight deprecatory frown, a modest statement of uncertainty, which left one with a definite impression that it would be unwise to lay money on the event—though his friends had some difficulty in simulating surprise when news came soon after of the progress of Trussebut or Percy or whomsoever it might be. He was always anxious, however, not to carry on after his powers had begun to fail, and this was the essential reason why he laid down his baton when he was eighty. Even then, he continued to work and to write; and his final study of *Yorkshire Families*, happily embellished with a collection of documents edited by Dr Greenway, was a fitting end to the series of his books.

In 1967, when Lady Clay was finding a vertical house beyond her strength, they moved to a spacious flat in Kensington, all on one floor, which could still house most of his books, and where the old life carried on for a time. Early in 1972 his wife's health was giving cause for serious anxiety, but a visit to Hampshire for convalescence brought hopes of recovery. It also brought both of them an invitation to lunch in the ancient cottage on the Sussex border where Dom David Knowles spent his last years; for between Charles Clay and David Knowles long acquaintance fostered by many common interests in literature as well as history matured into warm friendship in these years. But, soon after, her health failed again, and she

died on 25 June. Her death left a gap which could not be filled; but in other ways he carried on as before, slowly reducing his commitments. Until he was well over 90 he was able to live on in the flat, frequently visited by a devoted family, often sallying forth to visit them. In 1977 his heart too began to fail, and in December a move was made to the Maxwell-Hyslops' house in Oxfordshire, where he could have a room with some of his own furniture and books, and be fully cared for. In the event, it proved a brief coda: after four weeks he was moved into Oxford for an emergency operation from which he never recovered, and he died a week later on 31 January 1978, in his 93rd year.

Yet the real denouement had come earlier, in July 1975, at a happy dinner party splendidly arranged by Mrs Stanley Price to celebrate his ninetieth birthday. To it came representatives of his world: of his family, of his friends, his fellow historians and fellow antiquaries, and they presented him with two gifts: first a small volume of appreciation, with a bibliography of his works and a characteristic paper of his own, *Notes on The Family of Clere*, edited by Mrs Stanley Price, offered on our behalf in a speech of congratulation by the President of the Antiquaries, Dr J. N. L. Myres, FBA; and also a personal gift by our hostess, of armorial china embellished with his own arms. This she had painted herself, and it must have reminded him that behind his own life-long interest in the blazoning of china and of book-plates lay an early enthusiasm for the 'elaborate book-plate' of a member of his mother's family (containing several quarterings 'to most of which modern research proves that he was not entitled'); of this the young Charles Clay made 'a large copy, properly emblazoned, in the art school at Harrow for which I was awarded one of the Yates-Thompson prizes'.[1] At the end of dinner he himself made a speech, most carefully prepared and studied, and showing his quality to the full: rich feeling and mellow kindness, spread amply over one of the clearest, sharpest minds it has been my privilege to know. That is how his friends and colleagues will remember him.

CHRISTOPHER BROOKE

NOTE. This notice is a token of affection, gratitude, and admiration to a friend, based largely on personal knowledge and long acquaintance with his writings; also in a measure on a lecture I gave in 1968 at a celebration arranged by the Yorkshire Archaeological Society to mark the sixtieth anniversary of his

[1] 1964, p. 11.

membership; and a brief appreciation in *Notes on The Family of Clere*, by Sir Charles Clay, with a Bibliography of his writings, which was presented to him by his friends on his ninetieth birthday in 1975. In that appreciation, as here, I was greatly indebted to Mrs Stanley Price and Dr Diana Greenway; and I have also benefited from the kind help of Professor John Le Patourel, Mr Christopher Dobson, and Dr Rosalind Brooke.

My knowledge of his early life has been transformed and my task greatly eased by the kind help of his two surviving daughters, Mrs Rachel Maxwell-Hyslop and Mrs Rosemary Howarth. Mrs Maxwell-Hyslop generously placed at my disposal her collection of his papers, letters, etc., and in particular his diaries, on which I have drawn extensively, especially for the period 1908–13, when they are fullest—for his later life, though often interesting, they are very short—and two brief reminiscences. The reminiscences are fundamental sources for my text, and I am especially grateful for her permission to quote extensively from them. The first, dated 'Aug. 1956', opens indeed with a statement that it was composed specifically to help the compiler of his notice for these *Proceedings*, who 'may be faced with the not inconsiderable difficulty of a dearth of material'. This was excessively, though characteristically, modest; yet a happy thought to which I am deeply indebted. The second, entitled 'Some Reminiscences of an Amateur', carries a similar suggestion for its use, and is dated October 1964. In the notes I have referred to these as '1956' and '1964'.

EYC refers to *Early Yorkshire Charters*, vols. i–iii, ed. W. Farrer, Edinburgh, 1914–16, index to vols. i–iii by C. T. Clay and Edith M. Clay, Yorkshire Arch. Soc. Record Series, Extra Series, iv, 1942; vols. iv–xii, ed. C. T. Clay, Yorkshire Arch. Soc. Record Series, Extra Series, i–iii, v–x, 1935–65.