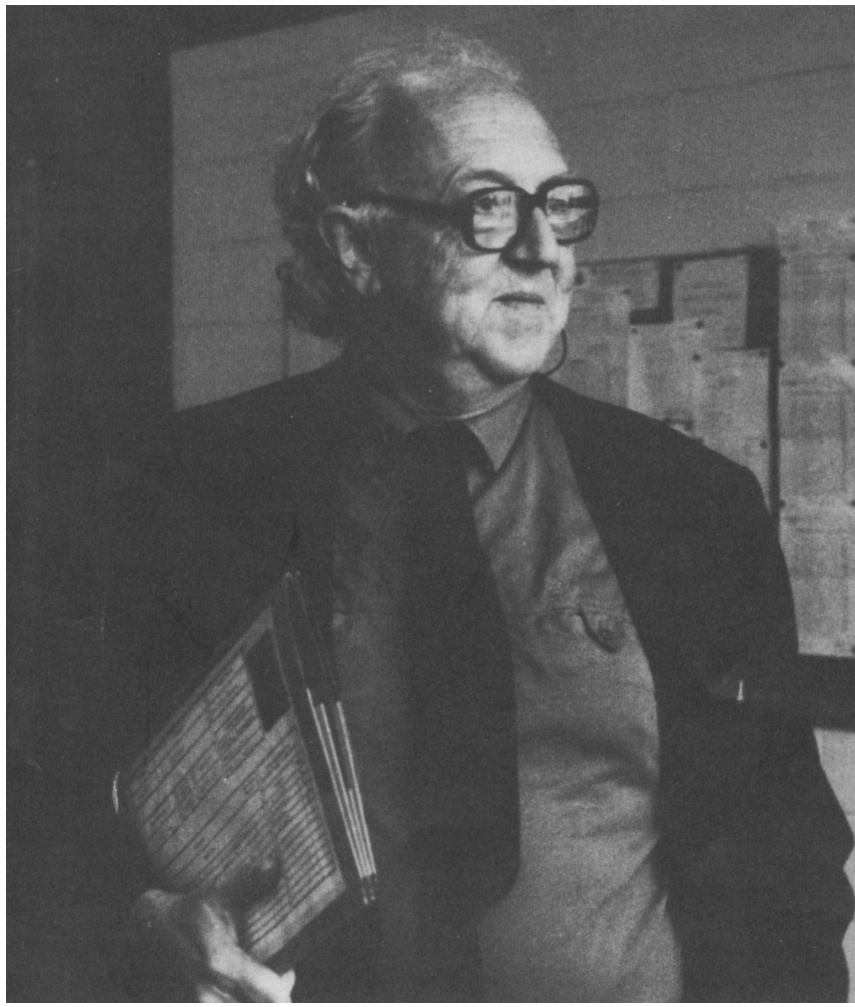

MAURICE BERESFORD

Zygmunt Bauman
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Maurice Warwick Beresford
1920–2005

MAURICE BERESFORD, economic and social historian born in Sutton Coldfield, Warwickshire on 6 February 1920, was the only child of Harry Bertram Beresford and Nora Elizabeth Beresford (née Jefferies). Both sides of the family had their roots in the Birmingham area. Presumably his parents met when they were both living in Handsworth and working in a chemist's company; on their marriage certificate of 1915 his father is described as a despatch clerk and his mother as an assistant. By the time Maurice was born his father had risen to the rank of 'Departmental Manager in Wholesale Druggists Warehouse', a position he continued to hold until his early death aged 46 in 1934. Maurice continued to live with his widowed mother in the Sutton Coldfield area and later in Yorkshire until her death in Adel, Leeds, aged 79, in 1966.

As the family was of modest financial means, the more so after his father's death, all of Maurice's schooling was local to Sutton Coldfield (Boldmere Council Infants, 1925–6: Green Lanes Senior Boys, 1926–30: Bishop Vesey's Grammar School, 1930–8). At Bishop Vesey's, as he was later to recount,[1] two masters in particular influenced the course of his life; William Roberts, a 'stimulating history master' and William Sutton—'a terrifying and rigorous geography master who made map reading as natural and interesting as reading a novel or a play'. Terrifying he may have been, but he did not put Maurice off a love of maps and timetables, which he had already acquired from his father on seaside holidays from Birmingham. Maurice was one of the school's star pupils: when he left in

[1] In his Exaugural lecture given on 7 Feb. 1985 and later published as 'Forty years in the field: an Exaugural lecture', *University of Leeds Review*, Vol. 29, 1986/7, 31.

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1938 he had been a Prefect, School Librarian, Editor of 'The Veseyan' and chairman of the Debating and Dramatic Society. Although hopeless at games, he greatly enjoyed walking and exploring the country around his home. As he was later to recall:

> A boy is lucky who can have the advantage of living in a town and yet be within walking distance of a piece of natural countryside hardly scarred by agriculture. It is a good place to receive an early education in the geography and history of the open air. [2]

At school his talents were literary rather than scientific and it was only a disappointing examination result which thwarted his intention to read English at university. Instead, in the autumn of 1937 he sat the joint exam in History for an Entrance Scholarship to one of six Cambridge colleges. His order of preference was Queens', St John's, Emmanuel, Sidney Sussex, Jesus and Christ's. Although he failed to get a Scholarship at Queens' (worth £100) he heard in December that he had been awarded an Exhibition (£40) tenable at Jesus College. He took up his place in Michaelmas term 1938. Additional financial help came from the award of a Warwickshire County Major Scholarship.

Cambridge, 1938–1941

It is not surprising that Beresford, coming from a lower middle class and provincial grammar school background, was ill at ease in the social fabric of Jesus College in the late 1930s. Already a committed socialist and, in the event of war, on the path to becoming a Conscientious Objector, he often said that he never felt at home among 'the hearties and rowing brigade' of the college. Despite this he flourished academically under the guidance of an understanding Tutor, Bernard Manning, and a supportive Director of Studies, Charles Wilson. A First in Prelims. opened the way for participation in second-year seminars run by the historians John Saltmarsh (King's) and Frank Salter (Magdalene). In his own words

> Salter's amiable and paternal seminars, reinforced with cream buns, convinced me that there was no better life than one spent in teaching by tutorial groups: Saltmarsh's theatrical and energetic seminars propelled me rather reluctantly into my first experiences as a researcher in local history.[3]

[2] M. W. Beresford, *History on the Ground: Six Studies in Maps and Landscapes* (London, 1957), p. 236.
[3] Beresford, 'Forty years in the field', 31.

He was later to dedicate one of his books to Salter in gratitude for his help and encouragement.

Saltmarsh, by then Librarian of King's and therefore with ready access to maps and surveys of the college estates, had already collaborated with a younger Fellow of King's, the historical geographer H. C. Darby, in the study of the early field arrangements of one of the college's Norfolk properties at West Wretham.[4] (He had also noted that the number of ruined churches in the Breckland suggested a significant drop in population at the end of the Middle Ages, a lead on which Beresford was to build in later years.) In the Christmas vacation of 1939–40 Saltmarsh required from his students an essay based upon an aspect of the history of a home locality which illustrated some general theme in economic history. While his undergraduate contemporary, Asa Briggs, took himself off to Keighley, Beresford returned to his home town.

As Beresford was later to observe, local history as such played no part in the Cambridge History Tripos. As elsewhere, it was still seen, except by an enlightened few, as antiquarianism or, in his own words, 'a tolerated hobby alternative to cultivating roses or collecting porcelain'.[5] However, already fascinated by maps and eager to tackle original documents, he seized upon the opportunity presented by the required essay. By exceptional good fortune he discovered that the 'Coldfield' of his home town had a similar in-field out-field system to that already described by Darby and Saltmarsh. We can imagine with what pleasure he handed in his essay! Saltmarsh, presumably very pleased at this supporting evidence from midland England, encouraged Beresford to send a short piece to the then editor of the *Economic Journal*, Maynard Keynes. (Beresford later lamented the loss of the acceptance slip signed by 'the great man'!) Due to administrative complications the article was not in fact published until 1943,[6] by which time an expanded version had been read to the Birmingham and Midland Archaeological Society: it was later published in 1946 in their delayed *Transactions* for 1941–2.[7] In this article the map of the fields was drawn freehand by another Old Veseyan, Norman Lewis, who was reading Geography at St Catharine's. Beresford said that it was Lewis who introduced him to Darby's 'newly-published *An Historical*

[4] H. C. Darby and J. Saltmarsh, 'The infield–outfield system on a Norfolk manor', *Economic History*, 3 (1935), 30–44,

[5] Beresford, 'Forty years in the field', 31.

[6] M. W. Beresford, 'Lot acres', *Economic History Review*, XIII (1943), 74–9.

[7] M. W. Beresford, 'The economic individuality of Sutton Coldfield', *Transactions of the Birmingham and Midland Archaeological Society*, LXIV (for 1941–2), 1946, 101–8.

Geography of England before AD 1800' (Cambridge, 1936),[8] but as this book was published in 1936 his memory may have been at fault, as it sometimes was in later life when he was looking back over forty years. It is as likely that the book was drawn to his attention by his tutor, Bernard Manning, who knew Darby and his work well and to whom Darby was to dedicate his more recent *The Draining of the Fens* (Cambridge, 1940). Whatever the circumstances there is no doubt that Darby's book reenforced Beresford's innate feeling for both geography and history in the landscape. It is curious that the two of them did not meet at that time. As Darby was a Fellow of King's one might have expected that they would have met via Saltmarsh or Manning, but in the circumstances of wartime Cambridge that did not happen. In 1941 Beresford was still an undergraduate, whereas Darby, eleven years older almost to the day, was serving in the Intelligence Corps and, although still in Cambridge, was over-seeing the production of many of the Naval Intelligence Handbooks.[9]

By early September 1939 Beresford had decided to register as a Conscientious Objector. In seeking the advice and support of his tutor, Bernard Manning, he said that he had applied to the University Board telling them that 'I am a member of the Peace Pledge Union, and as a pacifist am resolved to take no part in warfare . . .'[10] Manning was supportive. In a subsequent reference he stressed Beresford's qualities and interests: 'lively and agreeable', 'a strong will and distinct views' and concluded 'Mr Beresford will explain his position in relation to Military Service. There is no doubt about the sincerity of his convictions, and I say this as one who does not at all share them.' In April 1940 Beresford was exempted from Military Service conditional upon continuing his academic studies. In the following summer vacation he did social work in London's East End, an experience which left a long-lasting impression and which influenced the subsequent direction of his career.

He returned to Jesus College in September having been promoted to Minor Scholar as a result of his First in Part I. In Part II he did a special subject in the medieval period thereby honing his skills in Latin and on original documents. Working in the University Library he discovered pre-

[8] Beresford 'Forty years in the field', 32.

[9] Personal contact was not made until 1949 when on 1 March Darby wrote to Beresford from Liverpool asking him for a copy of his paper on 'Ridge and Furrow' (photocopy of letter currently in my possession); the paper was M. W. Beresford, 'Revisions in Economic History: XI, Ridge and furrow and the open fields', *Economic History Review*, 2nd ser., 1 (1948), 34–45.

[10] Information from file on M. W. Beresford in the archives of Jesus College. Beresford had joined the PPU soon after his sixteenth birthday.

enclosure maps in the Map Room and a recently deposited collection of accounts and minute books of Commissioners of Enclosure who had worked in the midlands. Notes taken then formed the basis of his second paper 'Commissioners of Enclosure' published in the *Economic History Review* just after the war.[11] In the same year his further work on Sutton Coldfield was published.[12]

In his student years and true to his discipline Beresford based almost all his work on documentary evidence. Later, with hindsight, he could not understand why it had not occurred to him to try to compare a pre-enclosure map of a midland parish with what was still to be seen on the ground. He had, after all, in his second year been shown the potential of such a comparison when Saltmarsh took him and Asa Briggs among others on an excursion from Cambridge to nearby Grantchester. There they were shown the remains of what were thought to be selions showing as ridge-and-furrow in a field above the meadows of the Cam. It was only later that he realised the significance of the wider survival of such earthworks.

After being awarded a First in History Part II (along with Asa Briggs of Sidney Sussex and J. D. Fay of King's) Beresford again did social work in the East End of London and then, for a year or so, in the Birmingham Settlement where, as he later said, he was 'an embryo social worker and not really what I was good at'.[13] Despite his reservation, however, social work of various kinds was to remain a major interest throughout his life.

Rugby, 1942–8

In the autumn of 1942 Beresford moved to Rugby to take up a residential post as Sub-Warden (and later Warden, 1943–8) of the Percival Guildhouse, an adult education centre. This proved to be ideal for both his social and academic interests as his duties allowed him the occasional visit from time to time to archives in Birmingham, Northampton and Warwick, all of which contained pre-enclosure maps of midland parishes. With tracings of maps in hand he explored the nearby Warwickshire countryside and was able to convince himself (and later, others) that the

[11] M. W. Beresford, 'Commissioners of Enclosure', *Economic History Review*, 1st series, XVI (1946) 130–40.
[12] Beresford, 'The economic individuality of Sutton Coldfield'.
[13] Ernest A. Kirkby, 'Maurice Beresford, the man, time and place', *Northern History*, XXXVII (2000), 3.

extensive surviving ridges and furrows were, in fact, the abandoned selions of late medieval fields. By juxtaposing recently released RAF aerial photographs and pre-enclosure maps of Kinwarton and Ilmington in an article on 'Ridge and furrow and the open fields'[14] he made a convincing case. This was an important contribution to agricultural history, a subject which was then beginning to emerge as a discipline in its own right. Had the *Agricultural History Review* existed at that time (the first volume was for 1953, the year that the Agricultural History Society was formally founded) he would probably have tried to publish it there. While his main interests at that time were very much in medieval fields and field systems, a wider interest in the history of settlement was opening up. A logical follow-up was to try to recreate the medieval selions of a parish which did not have a pre-enclosure map but where there was good survival of ridge-and-furrow. This he did, in 1945–6, for the small Leicestershire parish of Bittesby where, conveniently, much of the ridge-and-furrow could be seen from a railway embankment. He was later to call this visit his 'road to Damascus'[15] because some of the fields he could see were not covered in ridges but in more irregular earthworks. At the time he did not realise the full historical significance of a parish lacking a church and a village but with an area of grassy mounds and hollows. He wrote about his observations at Bittesby to W. G. Hoskins, by then a lecturer at University College Leicester, who had already embarked upon his survey of the deserted villages of Leicestershire. Hoskins, incidentally, had also failed to recognise similar earthworks as those of a deserted village when he first saw them at Knaptoft in 1939. Only with further advice from Frank Cottrill, then keeper of the Department of Antiquities at Leicester Museum, was Hoskins able to identify the earthworks as those of an abandoned village;[16] by 1940 he was taking adult students on excursions not only to Knaptoft but to similar earthworks at Great Stretton and Ingarsby. Writing in 1969 Hoskins said 'I seem to remember going out to Bittesby to study it with him' (Beresford).[17] Realising that Hoskins was well advanced with his Leicestershire work and convinced of the value of such field survey Beresford concentrated his attention on Warwickshire.

[14] Beresford, 'Revisions in Economic History'.
[15] Beresford, 'Forty years in the field', 35.
[16] In letter from W. G. Hoskins to John Hurst, 24 March 1969. Cottrill had drawn his attention to the plan of Crow Close, near Bingham in S. Nottinghamshire in A. Hadrian Allcroft, *Earthwork of England* (London, 1908), p. 552.
[17] Beresford dates this meeting to 27 Sept. 1947.

Working in parallel they produced the two earliest county studies of deserted villages.[18]

Beresford's enthusiasm for this work and his wish to explore other parts of the country led him to consider more seriously an academic career. By early 1946 he had applied for posts in history at Glasgow and economic history at Nottingham. He was not appointed to either of them nor to a post in history at University College London in 1947. With hindsight this is hardly surprising. Although he had a double First from Cambridge he had not stayed on at university to do research, he had published very little and what he had written was then not thought to be 'mainstream' history. Undeterred he applied to Leeds where his potential must have been appreciated as he was appointed to a lectureship in economic history from 1 April 1948. Yorkshire was to be his home for the rest of his life.

Before moving to Leeds, Beresford trespassed into archaeology for the first time. With the assistance of a master and boys from Hinckley Grammar School he dug some trenches at nearby Stretton Baskerville, Warwickshire. These confirmed the site of the church, yielded some small finds, but produced nothing recognisable to him as house foundations. He was to try again on other sites after his move to Yorkshire.

Leeds, from 1948

The new work of Hoskins and Beresford in the midlands had, by 1948, come to the attention of M. M. Postan in Cambridge, who was then developing his theories on the demographic history and economy of the Middle Ages. As Postan realised, the recent identification of so many abandoned places had the potential to re-enforce some of his arguments about population decline based hitherto solely on documentary evidence. For this reason, on the occasion of a visit to Cambridge by the distinguished Danish archaeologist Axel Steensberg in June 1948, Hoskins and Beresford were among those invited to an inter-disciplinary seminar in his college, Peterhouse. The other participants were John Saltmarsh, T. A. M. Bishop,

[18] W. G. Hoskins, 'The deserted villages of Leicestershire', *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological Society*, XXII for 1944–5 (1946), 241–64; M. W. Beresford, 'The deserted villages of Warwickshire', *Transactions of the Birmingham and Midland Archaeological Society*, LXVI for 1945–6 (1950), 49–106.

Edward Miller, Grahame Clark and K. D. M. Dauncey.[19] Of this meeting Hoskins later wrote

> I spoke on the Leicestershire sites, Beresford on the Warwickshire. I remember that Postan was distinctly sceptical at the start but was fully persuaded by the end of the evening. He then demanded to be taken over to Leicestershire to see a good site, and the next day we travelled at high speed to south Leicestershire to see Knaptoft, still a good site. We travelled in two cars, if not three, fortunately—as Postan's brilliant driving at times might have ended the subject for ever by exterminating all the scholars interested in the subject.[20]

Fired, no doubt, by this sudden archaeological interest in deserted villages and eager to explore what for him was new countryside, Beresford, with the help of students and colleagues, dug some small trenches at two Yorkshire sites—Steeton (near Tadcaster) and East Lilling (near Sheriff Hutton)—in the autumn of 1948 and the spring of 1949. The results were disappointing; a few sherds of pottery but no recognisable evidence of structures at least to his untrained eye. At about the same time Hoskins was doing similar exploratory digging at Hamilton (Leics.), work which he later wrote was 'best forgotten. It was simply ignorant enthusiasm and produced nothing . . .'[21] Be that as it may, both men were fostering the idea that new knowledge about medieval communities might be gained from excavation. At that stage neither of them could have foreseen where this would ultimately lead.

At the time of the six-hundredth anniversary of the Black Death, Beresford, in October 1949, gave a half-hour radio talk on the subject for a northern regional programme of the BBC. Whether he was invited to do so or offered it to the BBC is uncertain. What is certain is that in his own words a reference within the broadcast 'changed the course of my life'.[22] The reference was to Wharram Percy (East Riding of Yorkshire) where, when walking the Wolds in June 1948, he had been amazed to find an isolated church and remarkably bold surviving earthworks. He spoke of the local belief that the village had been destroyed in the plague, but knew from his own documentary work that there were still tax-paying vil-

[19] Maurice Beresford and John G. Hurst (eds.), *Deserted Medieval Villages. Studies* (Woking, 1971), p. 77.
[20] W. G. Hoskins letter to J. G. Hurst, 24 March1969. There is an entertaining account of this seminar and excursion in Axel Steensberg, 'The development of open-area excavation and its introduction into medieval archaeology: an historical survey', in *Medieval Village Research Group. Annual Report*, 30 (1982), 29.
[21] W. G. Hoskins letter to J. G. Hurst, 24 March 1969.
[22] Beresford, 'Forty years in the field', 1986/7, 39.

lagers a century later. He argued that even if, as was likely, the population had been reduced by the Black Death, the final desertion of the village must have been much later and for different reasons. By good fortune his broadcast was heard by Mr Winstanley, headmaster of a nearby school in Settrington. He subsequently wrote to Beresford saying that if he ever wanted to do any excavations at Wharram Percy he could use his good offices with the landowner, Lord Middleton, who happened to be chairman of the school managers. Beresford was not slow to take up the offer. Together with friends (as a non-driver he always relied on others to drive him around) he took spades and buckets to the site on two weekends in June 1950 and again in 1951 by the end of which they had found house foundations, associated pottery and some artefacts. The potential of the site was evident; what next?

While settling in at Leeds in 1948, several papers resulting from his archival and fieldwork in the midlands were published. The longest by far was on 'Glebe terriers and open field Leicestershire',[23] but there were shorter papers on his developing interests in enclosure, ridge-and-furrow and what he then called 'lost villages'.[24] It was not until 1950, however, that his major work on the deserted villages of Warwickshire was published,[25] by which time he had begun to identify sites in other parts of the country, especially Yorkshire, and was writing about them in local journals and in *Country Life*. One such *Country Life* article, 'Tracing lost villages' (1948), caught the eye of J. T. Oliver at Lutterworth Press who, in a letter of 30 June 1949, invited him to consider writing a book on the subject.[26] He took up this invitation despite quite heavy teaching commitments in Leeds where, as a new lecturer, he had also been 'kidnapped' (his word) to write a history of the Leeds Chamber of Commerce. He had also reached the stage in his academic career when he was being asked to review books, particularly for the *Economic History Review*. Among them were books by more senior figures including Sir John Clapham, G. E. Fussell and, hardly surprisingly, W. G. Hoskins (*Midland England*). He was already in a position to refute Clapham's assertion of 1946 that 'deserted villages are singularly rare'.[27]

[23] *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological Society*, XXIV (1948), 77–126. Reprinted in W. G. Hoskins (ed.), *Studies in Leicestershire Agrarian History*, 1949.

[24] See Y. M. Fennell's 'Select bibliography', in *Northern History*, XXXVII (2000), 308.

[25] Beresford, 'The deserted villages of Warwickshire'.

[26] In 'Forty years in the field' Beresford records that the letter was from Margaret Stewart, Book Editor of the Lutterworth Press, but a letter of 30 June 1949 currently in my possession is signed by J. T. Oliver, Book Editor.

[27] Sir John Clapham, *A Concise Economic History of Britain* (Cambridge, 1949), p. 197. His editor, John Saltmarsh, already aware of new research qualified Clapham's view in a footnote,

Having sought Hoskins's blessing (generously given) to accept Lutterworth's invitation he had, by the end of 1952, completed a wide-ranging survey of medieval village desertion and despite the strong opposition of a particular assessor, Gladys Scott Thompson, the book was published in 1954. It remains the book with which he is most closely identified. In listing about 1,300 examples he showed the geographical extent of village depopulation and tackled the questions of when and why it happened. He attributed much desertion, especially in Midland England, to the activities of acquisitive landlords and, in particular, to their enclosure and conversion of land from arable to pasture thereby depriving tenants of their lands and livelihoods. While his conclusions have withstood historical re-examination over the last fifty years, more attention is now being paid to internal problems within village communities. In the century after the Black Death there was gradual decline in the social cohesion of many village communities and, with it, the opportunity for wealthier tenants to build up their holdings at the expense of poorer ones. A combination of internal and external factors may explain why some villages were deserted while neighbouring ones survived.

By the time of the publication of *The Lost Villages of England* (London, 1954) the early 'diggings' at Wharram Percy had been put on more professional footing through the involvement of a young professional archaeologist, John Hurst. Having graduated from Cambridge in 1951 and after a year's graduate research (supervised by Geoffrey Bushnell) Hurst joined the Ministry of Works as an assistant to Gerald Dunning, then the foremost expert in identifying medieval pottery from excavations. Hurst thereby built up his own expertise in a field which was essential in identifying and dating medieval settlements. Trained under Professor Grahame Clark in prehistoric archaeology (the core of the Cambridge course) Hurst and his student colleague, Jack Golson, saw that new methods of open-area excavation, modelled particularly on Axel Steensberg's work at Store Valby in Jutland, had great potential for discovering postholes, hearths and other features associated with medieval peasant houses. It was Hurst who first contacted Beresford by letter on 23 January 1952, but it was Golson who, as a history student before changing to archaeology had been taught by Postan, visited Beresford in April 1952 to assess the possibility of excavating at Wharram; in the event he went

p. 80, 'Recent work suggests that there has been more abandonment of medieval village-sites than Sir John Clapham believed at the time when he wrote this chapter. But the subject awaits fuller investigation.'

off to Denmark to excavate with Steensberg for six months and it was Hurst who went to Yorkshire.[28]

It is, I think, well worth emphasising that the annual Wharram excavations, usually for three weeks in the early summer, were, for Hurst, additional to his regular post in the Ministry. With his great dedication to the work one could hardly imagine that this was his annual holiday. For Beresford too, already committed to other research and writing, the annual seasons at Wharram were but one aspect of very busy academic years. With the excavation in 'safe hands' from 1952 onwards Beresford gave his time to organising the dig. Not only was he the historian of Wharram but, in his own words, 'the excavation's recruiting sergeant, its catering manager, its public relations man and its sanitary engineer'. This was no exaggeration, for over the next forty years Beresford was at the hub of a Wharram network through which hundreds of volunteers, young and old, gathered from schools, universities, adult education centres and chance meetings, helped on the dig. As an extension of his prison visiting work Beresford persuaded various institutions to release prisoners, under supervision, to work on site. For several seasons in the 1960s young men from an approved school at Wetherby helped on the excavation, particularly with the heavier work. Beresford had a remarkable gift for absorbing them into the wider social mix and making them feel that they were making a positive and valuable contribution to a worthwhile project. It has to be said that such visits were not without incident, but generally speaking they were a successful and worthwhile experiment. Beresford kept in contact with many after their release from prison or approved schools.

The wider social fabric of Wharram Percy became an essential part of Beresford's life and many who worked there became lifelong friends. The story of the excavation was admirably summarised in his joint publication with John Hurst for Batsford/English Heritage in 1990, *Wharram Percy. Deserted Medieval Village* (London).

Beresford and Hurst's first season of joint work at Wharram Percy led almost immediately to the foundation of the Deserted Medieval Village Research Group in August 1952. Seen from the start as inter-disciplinary, Beresford and Hurst brought in two archaeologists (J. Golson and

[28] Further details about this sequence of events and of Hurst's excavation of Wharram Percy may be found in Lawrence Butler, 'John Gilbert Hurst 1927–2003', Biographical Memoirs of Fellows, V, *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 138 (2006), 147–67, and in Beresford 'A draft chronology of deserted village studies', *Medieval Settlement Research Group*. Annual Report, 1 (1986), 22–3.

G. C. Dunning) an historical geographer (H. C. Darby) and an architectural historian (W. A. Singleton). Their aim was to build up a central file of deserted sites, supported where possible by aerial photographs, and to circulate information through an annual report. With the help of volunteers (financial resources were very limited) work proceeded along these lines and ultimately led in 1971 to the publication of *Deserted Medieval Villages. Studies*, jointly edited by Beresford and Hurst. This summarised progress which had been made historically and archaeologically in the 1960s and while, in effect, it was an update of Beresford's 1954 book, it also included sections on Scotland, Wales and Ireland. A distribution map of the known deserted villages in England (fig. 13 in the book) posed more questions than it answered and was a stimulus to further work in understanding the totality of medieval rural settlement. For this reason, the research group dropped the words 'Deserted' from its name in 1974 and 'Village' in 1987: the resulting Medieval Settlement Research Group, now with a large membership, continues to build on the original research begun by Beresford and Hurst over fifty years ago.

Although the archaeological side was in Hurst's hands, Wharram Percy took an increasing amount of Beresford's time, not only in organising the summer digging season and occasional working weekends on the site but also in historical research, writing and talks about the project which was increasingly at the forefront of medieval rural archaeology. At the same time he carried on with teaching and administrative commitments at Leeds and expanded his work into several aspects of what was later to become known as landscape history. One piece of good fortune was the increasing availability of aerial photography and in particular that undertaken from Cambridge by J. K. S. St Joseph who, coincidentally and unknown to Beresford, had photographed Wharram Percy from the air on 22 July 1948. A geologist by training, St Joseph had an eye for both natural and man-made landscape features and throughout the 1950s built up an impressive collection of low-level oblique aerial photographs. His fine pictures of monastic ruins were used to illustrate the text of David Knowles's *Monastic Sites from the Air* (Cambridge, 1952) and it was Knowles who wrote to Beresford in January 1951 (accidentally to Sheffield not Leeds!) suggesting a collaboration with St Joseph on a more wide-ranging book on medieval England. Preparatory work went ahead, but as Cambridge University Press was unsure of the market for such a book there were considerable difficulties and delays in its production. As a result *Medieval England. An Aerial Survey* (Cambridge) did not appear until 1958. Splendidly illustrated with aerial photographs the book

explored the surviving evidence in the landscape for medieval settlements, rural and urban. Beresford not only analysed what could be seen from the air but, through documents and early maps, explained the shape and forms of fields, villages, towns and relic industrial landscapes. Cambridge University Press's doubts were unfounded: the book was a success and quickly went out of print, as also did the revised second edition of 1979.

In the meantime Beresford's second book for the Lutterworth Press *History on the Ground,* affectionately dedicated 'To my mother who packed the sandwiches', was published in 1957. The dedication reflects his field visits to places which were used to illustrate themes on which he was currently working, namely boundaries, villages, deserted villages, medieval new towns, Elizabethan market places and parks. The book illustrates very well his usual research method; it may be briefly summarised as: first, find good early maps and documents for a particular place; secondly, visit the place, walk around it, take notes and photographs; thirdly, support this 'field' evidence by further research and, if possible, aerial photography; and, fourthly, apply this local evidence to general themes in economic and social history. As he said himself in the last sentences of the book:

> The minimum equipment is an affection for the landscape of town and field; a good pair of boots; and the firm determination that study of documents and exploration of the landscape shall be conducted side by side, and that neither branch of the inquiry shall be self-sufficient. Only this deserves the name of History on the Ground.

Although not now as well known as some of his other works this book was very influential in the emerging study of landscape history in the late 1950s and 1960s. Beresford and W. G. Hoskins, whose seminal *The Making of the English Landscape* had appeared in 1955, were being seen as a new school of 'dirty boot historians' who were linking documentary and field evidence and relating local history to general themes in economic and social history. Like most of Beresford's other books *History on the Ground* has had a long shelf life. Originally published by Lutterworth, a reprint was published by Methuen in 1971 and a paperback edition by Sutton Publishing in 1984, reprinted with a third Preface in 1998.

The sections on towns in *History on the Ground* and in *Medieval England. An Aerial Survey* show that in the mid 1950s Beresford's interests were moving away from agrarian history and rural settlements towards urban history and, in particular, the origins and morphology of medieval towns. He was particularly fascinated by those towns whose layouts showed elements of planning in the Middle Ages; his journeys to 'new towns' in *History on the Ground* were a prelude to hundreds more. While

many such journeys were made by train and by local buses, those to more remote places, especially on the Continent, were done by car. As he did not drive, friends, often students past or present, were prevailed upon to be drivers, photographers, map-carriers etc. Beresford was generous in covering costs; he was good company, if somewhat erratic, and those who went with him remember many bizarre situations as well as enjoyable learning experiences. Many are the anecdotes.

Such travels over several years in England, Wales and Gascony underpinned his major book on medieval town plantation *New Towns of the Middle Ages* which, despite its great size (at 670 pages his longest book), was published by Lutterworth in 1967. Although the foundation of towns could hardly have been a greater contrast to his earlier work on the desertion of villages the two books might be thought to share a similar achievement in that they both showed that what had hitherto been thought of as isolated examples were, in fact, representative of much wider phenomena which linked in to the fundamental issues of demographic, social and economic change. Beresford concentrated his research on towns which were founded between *c.*1100 and the Black Death in places where little or nothing had existed before; some were to become large and successful such as Liverpool, Hull, Portsmouth and (New) Salisbury, while some others were total failures, for example, Ravenserodd, Newtown (Isle of Wight), Warenmouth, Newtown in Burghclere and many others in English-occupied Gascony. Through numerous case studies Beresford was able to demonstrate the speculative nature of town development in a period of boom when population was increasing and the market economy developing rapidly. With hindsight a description of the book as 'a landmark in medieval urban history' seems justified; while much of the detail has been refined and his terminology questioned, his general arguments still hold good. Forty years later it is rarely that a book on medieval urban history does not draw upon Beresford's original research.

Beresford's search for new medieval towns led to collaboration with H. P. R. Finberg in producing the first gazetteer, county by county, of places which, from documentary evidence, were regarded as boroughs in medieval England. Published in 1973 as *English Medieval Boroughs: a Hand-List* (Newton Abbott), the book included a valuable introduction by Beresford to medieval urbanism. As research continued new places were added to the list.[29]

[29] 'English medieval boroughs: a hand-list: revisions, 1973–81', *Urban History Yearbook*, 1981, 59–65.

While *New Towns* was in the press Beresford's urban interests were developing locally when Leeds hosted the annual meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science. This meeting led to fruitful collaboration with G. R. J. (Glanville) Jones, then a senior lecturer in Geography at Leeds and later to become the first holder in Britain of a designated chair in Historical Geography. Together they contributed to and edited *Leeds and its Region* (Leeds, 1967), the latest in a series of volumes written by local authors as introductions to the town and region in which the annual meeting took place. In the longer term this book has served as a valuable survey of the physical and human geography of the Leeds area in the 1960s. Apart from editing (something he rarely did) Beresford's own contribution was entitled 'Prosperity Street and others: an essay in visible urban history'. This was another example of his history-on-the-ground approach for by then he had begun not only to document the building history of Leeds but to walk the streets, usually with his dog, to identify the visible remains of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century housing and public buildings. The task took on almost a missionary zeal as Leeds University was rapidly demolishing older properties to make way for new buildings as red brick gave way to ferroconcrete. Encouraged by the then Bursar, Edmund Williamson, Beresford used the university archives to document the history of local streets which were, as he said, 'under sentence of death'. His talks on the subject drew a considerable following not only in the lecture theatre but in the streets themselves. Later these talks and walks were made accessible to everyone when the University published his handy, attractively illustrated *Walks round Red Brick* (Leeds, 1980).

Beresford's archival researches and recording of houses and streets in the university area were later extended to other parts of Leeds. As information accrued street-by-street, academic articles appeared year by year. There were important papers on back-to-back housing, on little known sources such as fire insurance records, Leeds in 1628, the east end of Leeds in the late eighteenth century (based on deed boxes relating to the affairs of a Leeds soapmaker, Richard Paley) and on 'The face of Leeds 1780–1914'.[30] Much of this material was re-woven into his *East End, West End: the Face of Leeds during Urbanisation 1684–1842*, published as volumes LX and LXI (for 1985 and 1986) of the *Publications of the Thoresby Society* in 1988. The book had been over twenty years in the making and it is not surprising that, near the end of his life, he regarded it as his best

[30] In D. Fraser (ed.), *A History of Modern Leeds* (Manchester, 1980), pp. 72–112.

book.[31] The pity is that it is still less well known than it should be, partly, I think, because it deals exclusively with Leeds (and is therefore thought of just as local history) but perhaps, even more so, because it was published as a double volume of a local society—and it is therefore less generally accessible. This is no criticism of the Thoresby Society; indeed, many of its members had helped at various stages of the research and writing and, but for the Society, the work might never have seen the light of day.

1988 marked not only the climax of his work on Leeds but the fortieth year of his active involvement with Wharram Percy where the excavation was, as planned, drawing to a close. In anticipation of the end of this long-running project Beresford collaborated with John Hurst in writing a joint volume for Batsford/English Heritage on the history and results to date. Published in 1990 *Wharram Percy. Deserted Medieval Village* is a very readable, well-illustrated account not only of the excavations but of the history of the site after the desertion of the village in the early sixteenth century after which only the church, a vicarage and a farmstead survived. There is no doubt that Wharram, one of the largest inter-disciplinary projects of its kind, made a major contribution not only to the understanding of the evolution of rural settlements, but also to the emergence of medieval archaeology as a specialised discipline.

Retirement

Beresford retired from Leeds University in 1985 having been Lecturer (1948–55), Reader (1955–9) and from 1959 holder of the Chair of Economic History. Although posterity will remember him for his research and writing, his contribution to university life through teaching and administration should not be overlooked. He was a witty and entertaining lecturer; serious academic issues were usually enlivened by metaphor and anecdote. His prolific use of slides of maps, documents, earthworks and buildings, unusual for an historian, reflected his emphasis on time and place. Once described as a 'prolix Professor' he found it difficult to keep to time. The story is told of him being gently rebuked by the then Vice-Chancellor of Leeds, Edward Boyle, who began a vote of thanks by saying 'Professor Beresford has the art of making eighty minutes pass like sixty.' As Beresford later said, Boyle kindly did not remind the audience

[31] Personal communication.

that he had been booked for only fifty! Beresford, a large man with a strong voice, could be seen and heard not only in a lecture room but in a red-brick street or on a village site. Indeed, sometimes comments which were overheard when he assumed that they were *sotto voce* led to some embarrassment, particularly with his deafness in later years. He was never dull. His obituarist in *The Times* (2 January 2006) wrote that 'He loved teaching and carried heavy teaching loads; he promoted the democratisation of departmental constitutions in Leeds and served as head of his school three times; he chaired the joint board of three faculties; chaired Sadler Hall [a hall of residence] Council; and was a memorable and fiercely independent debater at Senate. Beresford retained to the end the disconcerting ability to appear asleep in research seminars before asking a devastating first question.'

In 1985, the year of his retirement from the Leeds Chair, Beresford was elected a Fellow of the British Academy. By a happy coincidence a volume of his collected papers was published in the same year by the Hambledon Press. Entitled *Time and Place* (London, it was the title of his professorial inaugural lecture of November 1960) the book includes the original lecture and twenty-four articles drawn from academic journals and books. Their range is impressive. Although not ordered chronologically, they reflect his varied interests from the agricultural history of his student and post-war days through rural, urban and landscape history in his years at Leeds. In retirement he continued his interests in all these fields. He had the pleasure of seeing a reprint of *New Towns of the Middle Ages* in 1988 and a re-issue of *The Lost Villages of England*, with a new introduction by Christopher Dyer, in 1998. Despite arthritis and other aspects of failing health he continued to work and publish on Leeds and to review for both local and national journals. Increasingly housebound he depended for any excursions to other towns and to the countryside on the goodwill and driving abilities of his circle of close friends.

After the death of his mother in 1966 Beresford, who never married, moved from Adel to a terrace house in Claremont Avenue within walking distance of Leeds University. Later, he purchased the house next door and took in lodgers, usually students, several of whom became among his closest friends. Their unwritten tenancies often included 'good turns', not least walking the dog. His very close friend Ernest Kirkby recalls that

> Maurice would ask me to look out for a suitable deserving student who might appreciate a free concert or theatre ticket. His understanding of the difficulties likely to be experienced by a touring company moving from one town to another and its members from one set of digs to the next, led him to write to

> Sadler's Wells Royal Ballet offering his house as free accommodation for one or two performers when the Company visited Leeds.

This gesture reflected the interest in the welfare of young people which Beresford had maintained since his earlier years in social work. Despite the pressures of his professional life, he made time to give talks, listen and encourage, particularly to those with deprived backgrounds and in institutional care. He was a prison visitor at Armley and Wakefield gaols and he persuaded authorities to allow supervised groups of young men from East Moor Approved School to help in the excavations at Wharram Percy. Never interested in sport, Beresford listed his interests in *Who's Who*, 2005 as 'music, theatre, maps and delinquency' to which might have been added literature, film, opera and reminiscence.

The only time that Beresford was away from Leeds University for more than a month or two was in 1975–6 when, as a visiting Professor, he visited the United States for the only time, having been elected to the James Pinckney Harrison Chair of History at William and Mary College. He gave several public lectures there and very much enjoyed his year in Virginia. During his retirement, in the three years 1988–91, he held a visiting professorship, part-time, in Urban History at the University of Strathclyde, another connection which he greatly valued. He served on parole boards and many committees, academic and social, not only within Yorkshire, but also nationally on, among others, The Hearing Aid Committee, The Consumer Council and the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments, England. His academic achievements were recognised in his Fellowship of the British Academy (1985) and honorary Doctorates from Loughborough, Hull, Leicester and, in its Centenary Year 2004, from Leeds, when he was also given the title of Emeritus Professor. He was the recipient of two Festschrifts, one shared with John Hurst for their joint work at Wharram Percy,[32] the other dedicated to him by his colleagues and former students for his work on Leeds and aspects of the local history of the north of England.[33]

As his health deteriorated Beresford gave much thought to what should happen to his property, books and papers after his death. He deposited many personal papers, diaries etc. in the Brotherton Library at Leeds and found 'good homes' in local collections for most of his books.

[32] M. Aston, D. Austin and C. Dyer (eds.), *The Rural Settlements of Medieval England. Studies Dedicated to Maurice Beresford and John Hurst* (Oxford, 1989).

[33] C. E. Challis, G. C. F. Forster and S. J. D. Green (eds.), 'Essays on Northern history in honour of Maurice W. Beresford', being Vol. xxxvii of *Northern History* (2000).

One of his houses having already been made over to the Yorkshire Archaeological Society, the second one (in which he was living) was willed to the Society on his death. As was his wish, his manuscripts and published papers were deposited in local archives. Housekeeping was never his strong point. With increasing disability and even with the great (and appreciated) help of social workers and his current lodger, life in the house became too difficult. After another spell in hospital he was accommodated in a nursing home for several months. However, he did not survive another serious illness and died in hospital on 15 December 2005, aged 85.

Tributes were paid to him in the heart of his 'Red Brick' by academic colleagues and friends in a Memorial Programme at the Clothworkers' Centenary Concert Hall, Cavendish Road, Leeds, on 4 July 2006.

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