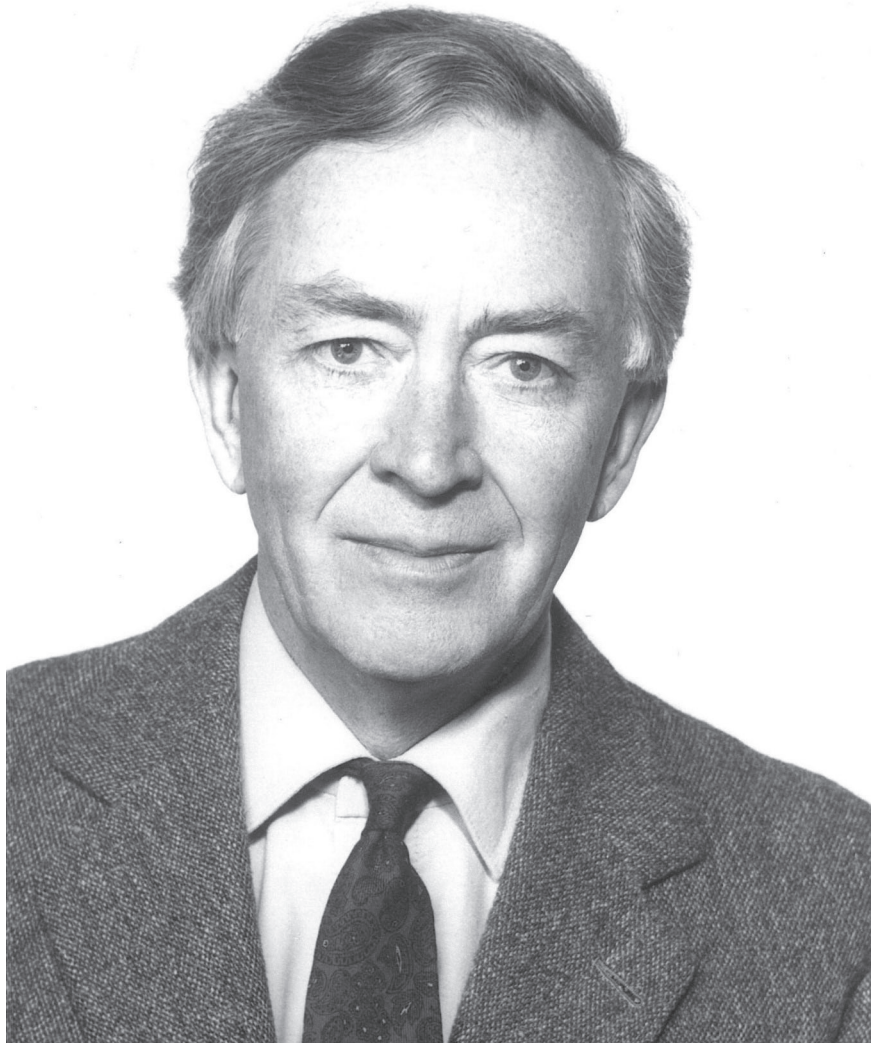

GEORGE KANE

George Kane
1916–2008

For half a century and more George Kane was a leading scholar in medieval English literature and the acknowledged authority on Langland. As general editor of the London edition of *Piers Plowman*, published 1960–97, he was solely responsible for the first of its three weighty volumes, and he co-edited the second and third volumes. With the publication of the first of these editions, a contemporary reviewer wrote that 'for Mr. Kane there is a secure place in the history of medieval scholarship'.[1] These volumes continue to engage academic debate, and they remain an indispensable tool for all who undertake serious work in later Middle English literature. They are complemented by Wittig's *Lemmatized Analysis* (London, 2001) and Kane's own *Glossary* (2005). Their influence is everywhere plain to see, not just in Carl Schmidt's widely used editions and in the framing of Hoyt Duggan's *Piers Plowman* Electronic Archive,[2] but in a host of monographs and articles that continue to build on and examine their contents. The editorial responsibilities handed on by W. W. Skeat to R. W. Chambers at University College London found, in George Kane, the last of Chambers's research students, a worthy successor.

The greater part of Kane's academic teaching life was spent in the University of London, where he was an influential and greatly respected figure, first in University College, then as Professor of English Language and Literature and Head of the English Department at Royal Holloway College from 1955–65 and finally as Professor of English Language and

[1] J. A. W. Bennett, *Medium Ævum*, 14 (1963), 68–71 at 71.
[2] <http://www3.iath.virginia.edu/seenet/piers/>.

Biographical Memoirs of Fellows of the British Academy, XI, 421–446.

Medieval Literature, 1965–76, and Head of the English Department from 1968–76 at King's College, becoming Professor Emeritus of London University from 1976. Then he went on to the William Rand Kenan Jr Professorship of English in the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where he was to serve as Chairman of the Division of Humanities, 1980–3. In 1987 he became, for a second time, Professor Emeritus, and this retirement was marked by a Festschrift, *Medieval English Studies presented to George Kane*, edited by Edward Donald Kennedy, Ronald Waldron and Joseph S. Wittig (Cambridge, 1988). Throughout his life many honours came his way, notably: Fellow, British Academy, 1968, serving on its Council from 1974–6; Fellow, University College London, 1971; Fellow, King's College London, 1976. He was twice awarded the Sir Israel Gollancz Memorial Prize by the British Academy, in 1963 and again in 1999. Elected a Corresponding Fellow of the Medieval Academy of America in 1975, he became a Fellow in 1978, the year in which the Academy awarded him the Haskins Medal, and served on its publications committee and on the editorial board of *Speculum*. He held Leverhulme Trust Research Fellowships in 1962 and 1975 and visiting professorships of the Medieval Academy of America in 1970 and 1982. He was a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences 1977–91, a Fellow of the National Humanities Center, 1987–8, and a Senior Fellow of the Southwestern Institute of Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 1978; and he served on the committees of the New Chaucer Society and the American Council of Learned Societies. Other service on boards and governing bodies included: Council, Early English Text Society, 1969–88; Governing Body, School of Oriental and African Studies, 1970–6; and Governing Body, University of North Carolina Press, 1979–84. An excellent lecturer, he acted as Public Orator of the University of London across the years 1962–6, and he received many invitations to speak all over the world. Among his most important public lectures were: the Chambers Memorial, University College London, 1965; Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, Rome, 1976; the John Coffin Memorial, University of London, 1979 ; the Annual Chaucer Lecture, New Chaucer Society, 1980; the M. W. Bloomfield Memorial, Harvard, 1989; and the Tucker-Cruse Memorial, Bristol University, 1991. Kane's was a distinguished career, rewarded with honours on both sides of the Atlantic.

George Kane was born in Humboldt, Saskatchewan, on 14 July 1916, an eighth-generation Canadian on his father's side—his father's mother was descended from one of the original settlers of Acadie (Nova Scotia). The Kanes were more recent arrivals in North America, early nineteenth-

century immigrants from the North of Ireland. He was a posthumous child—his parents married in September in Muenster and went to live in Hudson Bay Junction where, in late December 1915, his father died suddenly of a heart attack—and spent his early childhood on his mother's parents' farm in St Peter's Colony, Saskatchewan, a few miles from Humboldt, moving with them, when his grandfather retired, into the nearby village of Muenster. His mother, who was, as he was proud to relate, a 'career woman', was a librarian before her brief first marriage and after it a teacher. Her father had come originally from Switzerland, and her mother from Hanover, so George Kane grew up bilingual in English and German, in a household headed by first-generation immigrants. From 1922 he spent his summers with his mother and stepfather, in farming countryside sixty miles north-west of Muenster, as big brother to a growing family of three brothers and a sister. Those summers on the shores of Lake Wakaw were idyllic: swimming, messing about in rowing boats, mostly in a bathing suit. Kane looked back on them and the cottage at Lake Wakaw as his 'Walden, but better than Thoreau's'. In Muenster during the rest of the year he first attended the local parish school and then went on to St Peter's College (1930–4), the school run by the nearby Benedictine abbey where, one of three day boys, he had an excellent education which included a good grounding in the classics. It was a highly academic school, but also played games seriously: baseball, handball, tennis, ice hockey. For his last two years at school Kane was the college's sports correspondent, writing reports for the weekly diocesan newsletter, the *Prairie Messenger*, which the abbey published. There was tobogganing, and skiing too, in a nearby ravine. In winters the journey cross country to and from school was quickly made, on skis. His years at the abbey school left Kane with a sense of admiration for the religious life and a deep understanding of a life of dedication with its daily Gregorian chants, even though he ceased to be a practising Catholic soon after leaving school.

In his final year at St Peter's College, Kane took and completed the First Year Arts course of the University of Saskatchewan, so that in 1934, when he moved west to Vancouver with his mother, stepfather and their four children, he was able to enrol into the second year at the University of British Columbia. His first choice of subjects—English, French and German—was not an available course, and he therefore opted for honours in English and Latin. There were eighteen hours of classes spread over the five week-days, a schedule few universities would impose on Arts students in Britain today. Because of the large content of Latin and Greek language work, it was heavier than Kane, in his King's College London days,

himself thought appropriate for first year undergraduates in English. Then he deemed eleven hours ideal, and ruled that all should, as a matter of discipline, be expected to be in college four days a week (Wednesdays were for the library, intercollegiate lectures and, for the athletic, sports in the afternoon). In his second semester in Vancouver, he joined the University Officers' Training Corps, which met three times a week, an extra-curricular activity that was, unexpectedly, to come in useful a few years later. The decision to weight his undergraduate work towards English came with his selection of the topic 'Critical Opinions in the Plays of Shakespeare' for the substantial essay required of all finalists. He graduated in 1936 with first class honours in English and Latin, and an application to the University of Toronto netted him a generous graduate fellowship that included fees and accommodation for his MA year.

The boy from the plains had first moved west, to British Columbia, but now he travelled east across the continent to Toronto, by ship to Seattle and onwards by the Great Northern Line railway. It was too long a journey to consider going home for the Christmas vacation. He concentrated his MA work at the University of Toronto in medieval and early modern literature, working in some depth on Ben Jonson and elaborating a future research topic on Milton and the theory of the epic in the renaissance. His year as an assistant warden at Toronto's Massey College passed quickly, and was followed by a research fellowship at Northwestern University (1937–8). He had, however, already decided that he wanted to undertake research in Britain and set about seeking funding. The year at Evanston he found academically challenging, 'a good year', even though he knew he was marking time. Taking courses without any examination pressures, he concentrated again on medieval and renaissance literature, adding Old French to his skills and enjoying reading *Beowulf* alongside the *Chanson de Roland*. The former, he discovered, more than repaid the chore of having to learn to read Old English and, in its 'greater sophistication', outshone the 'crude execution and vitality' of the latter. But his two-year graduate studentship, awarded by the Imperial Order of Daughters of the Empire, beckoned and it must have seemed an academic career of promise would follow seamlessly. He knew of course that the Munich crisis was mounting, that there was war in Spain and that Mussolini had invaded Abyssinia, but he was not deterred.

Kane arrived at University College London in September 1938, eager to work on the Milton project he had already mapped out, but was soon to find out that no supervision in that area was being offered. Assigned to R. W. Chambers for research direction, he was sucked into preparatory

editorial work for what would today be called the *Piers Plowman* project. From 1909 onwards Chambers had both separately and with J. H. G. Grattan published a series of preliminary articles in which they spelled out the difficulties of arriving at a final edition of any of Skeat's A, B and C texts before full consideration of the others. Some of Chambers's students, including Elsie Blackman, B. F. Allen (Mrs Tapping), F. A. R. Carnegy and Alex (A. G.) Mitchell, had already accomplished a considerable amount of work towards a new edition, but overall the labour of collation moved slowly. For his Ph.D. topic Kane set about collating the final three passus of the B-text, working for the most part in the Students' Room at the British Museum, where he discovered the helpfulness of a young librarian, later a firm friend, called Francis Wormald, who was to become an eminent palaeographer. There were visits too to the Duke Humfrey reading room of the Bodleian Library in Oxford and to the University of Cambridge Library. For the Huntington Library manuscript he had the photographs made for Chambers's use. In the early summer of 1939 he got down to pulling together his critical edition and by mid-August had begun checking the whole. War intervened, however, and, unable in London to join a Canadian regiment, he enlisted in the Honourable Artillery Company. Chambers insisted that Kane's completed collations and working papers should go to Aberystwyth to be stored with the college's rare books and muniments for the duration: a lucky decision. All the other possessions he left in London were lost in a house bombed in 1942.

From 1939 to 1946 Kane served in the British Army. Although he had enlisted in the Honourable Artillery Company, he was posted to the Artists' Rifles, by then an officer training unit, and he chose to move on from there to the Rifle Brigade. Towards the end of training he volunteered for a battalion to be made up of experienced skiers and mountaineers, the fifth battalion of the Scots Guards, newly formed to help Finland, which had been attacked by the Red Army, an aborted enterprise because Sweden refused the permission necessary to cross into Finland. Briefly, therefore, he was a guardsman (like other officers, he resigned his commission to join this special battalion). Eventually the unit was disbanded, but not before it had as its highlight a week's skiing in ideal conditions at Chamonix (March to April 1940). Meanwhile Kane had missed posting to Egypt with the Second Battalion of the Rifle Brigade, so now he proceeded to his first post as a regimental officer of the Rifle Brigade, Second Lieutenant, with the Motor Training Battalion at Tidworth. By May 1940 he was in Essex, in charge of C Company, digging entrenchments for the defence of England, and then in Suffolk. A call came suddenly on 21 May to move to

Southampton, and next day he embarked for France. There he took part in the chaotic stand at Calais. Leading a fighting patrol towards the end of the defence, he was hit by a bullet that went right through his body. He had to be left behind with other serious casualties, and got taken into Calais by the Germans as a prisoner of war, where he received treatment in a field hospital until fit enough for travel. The first of his escape attempts made while in hospital was foiled by an officious chaplain. In 1984, with his wife and daughter, he visited the place in Calais where he had been captured, only to find it was now the site of a large supermarket.

The journey to his first prison camp was not an easy one. There was transport on 19 June as far as Lille, but after that it was a slow circuitous trudge through much of north-western France and Belgium. He spoke later of spending a night in a condemned cell, the only place with a roof, and of being given an omelette hot from the frying pan straight into his hands, as he walked through Belgium. The column of well over a thousand prisoners reached Antwerp on 1 July, to be herded into goods wagons and taken to a transit camp at Dortmund. Kane was a prisoner first in Oflag VIIC, once a country palace of the Archbishops of Salzburg, near Laufen in Bavaria (July 1940 to September 1941). In January 1941 he was adopted into a tunnelling team, which gave some sense of purpose to his life until its discovery late in June. Otherwise the days were spent mainly in reading Tauchnitz fiction reprints (their purchase was arranged by the senior British officer, Major Charles Shears, who had before the war worked in a publishing firm). Autumn brought a move to Oflag VIB at Dössel bei Warburg in Westphalia, a huge camp into which the Germans had poured most of the prisoners taken after the retreat from Dunkirk, some from the North African campaign and all from Greece, as well as RAF people shot down over Europe, some two and a half thousand officers together with 450 orderlies. An enormous amount of effort went into tunnelling, but managed to get only three officers outside Oflag VIB. One tunnel in which Kane was involved was holed by a collapse in freakish spring weather. From September 1942 to January 1943 he was in Oflag VIIB at Eichstätt, in southern Bavaria. As a fluent German speaker he was much in demand and he was one of the group that escaped through a gate on 24 November, getting as far as Talmühle, about eight miles from Switzerland. His last prison camp was Oflag IXA, not the lower camp in the middle of Elbersdorf but the upper camp, Schloss Spangenberg, where he remained until its evacuation. Spangenberg, a small camp, even had a library, well run by Charles Shears. Somehow Shears managed to arrange for good supplies of new books to be sent over, and others were given to the library

from book parcels received by individual prisoners. Shears invited Kane to become assistant librarian, a role that gave him ready access to the books it became his duty to catalogue. At Spangenberg, he read avidly, and not just English books. He schooled himself through many French novels and he set about learning Italian well enough to read Dante. On 30 March the Germans evacuated Spangenberg, marching their prisoners out to the noise of gunfire. A few days later Kane was one of the small group who slipped away from the column and came across an advance troop of Patton's army. Their adventures were made famous by Terence Prittie who, in *South to Freedom* (London, 1946), describes Kane as having 'exceptional nervous energy' and 'a remarkable determination which serves to keep him awake and alert long after physical exhaustion has claimed the average man'. For his part, Kane remembers rather different detail of the escapes in which both he and Prittie were involved and his account adds significantly to the published records. There are many stories told about Kane's war years, often false. He was not at Dunkirk, despite tales of being seen lying in a ditch there. Nor did he work on *Piers Plowman* collations in Spangenberg, a myth built on a parcel of books Chambers sent to him in 1942.

Kane got back to England in early April 1945, among the first of the 160,000 British and Commonwealth prisoners of war to be liberated. His return to London was to a city horribly changed. At University College the central buildings were 'reduced to first floor level, the fine dome gone, grass growing on the floor where the English Library had been'. The English Department was still in Aberystwyth and not to return until September. C. J. Sisson was with the department, but A. H. Smith was a Wing Commander in the RAF and Chambers had died in April 1942. As far as the War Office was concerned, his time was his own until leave in Canada would come up. He was still in London for VE Day, but later in the summer sailed on the Queen Mary to North America, to travel across the continent and, for the first time in seven years, catch up with his family. An unexpected interruption during his leave was an invitation to the University of Saskatchewan by John Lothian, who wanted him to take over and build up the English Department—it must have been a disorienting experience for someone as yet to be demobilised and with a half-finished Ph.D. VJ Day he spent in New York, just before crossing back to England in the *Queen Elizabeth*. At Southampton Docks he was handed an order to report to the Rifle Brigade Regimental Training Battalion in Nottinghamshire, where there was so little for him to do that out of boredom he demanded a posting—and was told to take some leave. He went

back to London, where he found waiting for him a job offer, an Assistant Professorship in University College Toronto to start in September: an ideal job, except that by now he was planning to marry and settle in London. In the months in London after liberation, before going on leave to Vancouver, Kane had met the girl he was to marry, Bridget Montgomery, sister of a fellow prisoner at Spangenburg, and they wanted to stay in England. Another enticing job offer did come up: Charles Shears of Hutchison's, a fellow prisoner at Laufen, offered him a well-paid post once his Ph.D. was finished, but it was an offer never taken up.

By September 1945 Kane had applied to resume his Ph.D. and he was appointed a Departmental Assistant (unpaid) at University College for the second year of his interrupted scholarship, with an Assistant Lectureship to follow on in 1946. His demobilisation came up in late February 1946, the month in which his collations and notes returned to London from Aberystwyth. So he set about writing up his Ph.D., an edition of Passus XVIII–XX of *Piers Plowman*, submitted in June that same year. He took up his University of London appointment to an Assistant Lectureship in the autumn, and was appointed to a tenured lectureship in 1948. The thesis presented 'a critical text of the archetype of the B-manuscripts of *Piers Plowman*, Passus XVIII–XX' together with 'full notes of the lines in B-XVIII–XX which are likely to be emended from the C- manuscripts', a list which he described as 'the first statement of a project which, with Dr Mitchell's help, I hope before too long to produce in a final form. When it is completed I believe that, where it was possible to work with B- and C-manuscripts, we shall have produced a text very near to what the author of *Piers Plowman* wrote' (50–1). In his first teaching years, however, there was little time to give to editing, for he turned his attention to writing his first book, *Middle English Literature* (London, 1951), daringly a work of literary criticism at a time when historical and language-based approaches were general. A Readership followed soon afterwards, in 1953. This work engaged directly with romances, lyrics and *Piers Plowman,* and was described by an early reviewer as 'one of the best books so far written on any aspect of Middle English literature'.[3] It quickly came to command a wide undergraduate audience, both in Britain and North America, and for its 1970 reprinting Kane was to reflect ruefully 'I could not now revise, let alone rewrite it; what has persuaded me to consent to its reproduction is the consideration that it has become a period piece, such as librarians might wish to include in their documentation of the history of medieval

[3] A. I. Doyle, *The Review of English Studies*, NS 4 (1953), 69–70.

studies.' Further editions were to follow, the most recent in 2000, and it remains a book in student use.

Kane's 1948 paper '*Piers Plowman*: problems and methods of editing the B-Text' (*The Modern Language Review*) formulated in print the task to which he had decided to square up: editing the B-text, with Skeat's chosen basic manuscript, Oxford, Bodleian Library, Laud Miscellany 581, as his base text. Already he recognised that major problems lay ahead, not least that although the B manuscripts preserved a relatively homogeneous text, the many errors they had in common derived from corruption in the B archetype; and that for these the C-text tradition held valuable evidence. He stated the desirability of bringing to his editorial task the methods and insights on the principles of editing practised in New Testament and *Commedia* scholarship, and he foresaw that the B-text would be edited not from the B manuscripts alone but from the forty or so B and C manuscripts together. Pointing out that 'the question of authorship has been allowed to take precedence for a long time over the problem of the text, when in actual fact no point regarding this poem, and certainly not that of its authorship, can be settled upon internal evidence until the text itself has been fixed', he demonstrated the need for a full examination of the B and C texts and for the reconstruction of the 'best possible texts … from the evidence to be found there'. Commenting on the lack of an 'established text' for any of the three versions of *Piers Plowman*, he observed: 'The task has, from the outset, been enormous. Dr Skeat and his approved successors Professors Chambers and Grattan, and their students and early co-workers, Mrs Blackman, Mrs Tapping [B. F. Allen] and Mr F. A. R. Carnegy, have contributed in varying degree to bringing it nearer completion.' Kane presents an optimistic picture: 'Professor Grattan now hopes to take up the A-text again where he left off before the war; Professor A. G. Mitchell of Sydney University has almost completed the collation of the C-text manuscripts; and we may hope that critical texts of at least these two versions of *Piers Plowman* will be in print within the next three years.' When he wrote this paper he did not know that Grattan's edition of the A-text, interrupted by the war years, would not be completed and that Mitchell's work on the C-text would drag on endlessly, but he was soon to realise that if ever the A-text were to be completed, and he needed access to it for editing the B-text, Grattan would require his help.

During the war the Chairman of the Advisory Committee of the Medieval Academy of America had, after Chambers's death, asked Grattan for a statement on the progress of the critical edition of *Piers Plowman*. Grattan's note, published in *Speculum* in 1945, makes depressing reading,

apart from its mention of 'a newly discovered A-MS, which has proved to be of high textual importance'; Kane figures, though not by name, in the statement as an 'important worker who was last heard of as a prisoner of war in Germany'.[4] A revised report, outlining 'plans for a comprehensive critical edition' drawn up after a meeting held in September 1949, was published by Grattan in *Speculum* in 1951, the year of his death.[5] In all, six volumes were proposed, to be published by the Athlone Press under the editorship of Grattan, Kane, Mitchell and A. H. Smith: I A-text (Grattan and Kane, with general introduction by Smith); II B-text (Kane); III C-text (Mitchell); IV linguistic apparatus and glossary (Grattan, Smith and C. R. Quirk); V notes 'under the general direction of Kane, with the collaboration of Professors Morton W. Bloomfield of Ohio State University, and E. T. Donaldson of Yale University'; and VI discussion of background, authorship, etc., 'by the authors of Volume V'. At that point it was thought that the first volume would be ready to go to print in late 1951, that Mitchell's volume was 'almost ready', that II would 'be ready by 1953, and the other volumes would 'follow at short intervals thereafter'. In effect, Kane was now the successor of Skeat and Chambers. The A-text collations, assembled haphazardly in non-compatible layers over many years, were being replaced, and from 1950 Donaldson was working with Kane towards the B-text. In time, editing of the C-text was to descend to George Russell, and Kane would join him in getting it to press. The glossarial work by Kane and Wittig was eventually to bring the critical editions of the A, B and C versions to completion.

Piers Plowman: the A version, Will's Visions of Piers Plowman and Do-Well, first of the three volumes of the Athlone Press edition, was ready for press early in 1956 and appeared in 1960. It was a huge achievement. Kane had himself undertaken a completely new classification of the seventeen manuscripts surveyed in the edition and prepared full collations. He established his text not through what he regarded as the straitjacket of recension but by the exercise of editorial judgement, reading by reading. Not only did he furnish word-for-word collations of the manuscripts, in itself a task not previously undertaken on such a scale in the editing of Middle English, but he attempted to excavate the originary reading at every point of variance. He did not, as had Skeat, use the earliest manuscript, Oxford,

[4] George R. Coffman, 'The present state of a critical edition of *Piers Plowman*', *Speculum*, 20 (1945), 482–3.

[5] J. H. G. Grattan, 'The critical edition of *Piers Plowman*: its present status', *Speculum*, 26 (1951), 582–4.

Bodleian Library, MS Eng. poet. a.1 (the Vernon manuscript), as his base manuscript, but Cambridge, Trinity College, MS R.3.14, a manuscript already identified both by Chambers and Grattan, and by Knott, as preferable and now confirmed as needing less correction than the recently discovered Chaderton manuscript (Liverpool University Library, F.4.8). In a tightly argued Introduction Kane set out an impressive discussion of how variants arise, drawing in great detail on the collations to show the grounds on which his editorial decisions were made. His aim was to determine the authorial word or words behind the variants that confronted him. With the A-text, Kane's emendations, although many, gained wide approbation as judicious. The edition was acclaimed as superseding Skeat's, and was to prove influential in editorial work more generally. The disputed twelfth passus was set apart in an Appendix, an eminently sensible decision, and twenty-eight pages of Critical Notes admirably complemented the lengthy and detailed Introduction. The edition was widely and justly praised. C. L. Wrenn, for example, described it as 'probably the nearest to a definitive text of the A version of *Piers Plowman* that human wit and diligence can hope to attain',[6] and it was awarded the Gollancz prize by the British Academy in 1963. But the edition did not address the issue of authorship, which rumbled on. Knott and Fowler's edition of the A text (Baltimore, MD, 1952) had assumed multiple authorship, as had Fowler's monograph *Piers Plowman: Literary Relations of the A and B Texts* (Seattle, WA, 1961). The latter provoked from Kane a swingeing review,[7] in which he commented that to deal with Fowler's arguments in any detail 'would take two books, one for the evidence for authorship of *Piers Plowman*, another comparing the A and B versions'. Kane followed the review up promptly with *Piers Plowman: the Evidence for Authorship* (London, 1965), a clear and cogently argued analysis that was to quash the issue of authorship for the next couple of decades. A major omission of Kane's A version was any mention of the 'Z' text, Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 851, an AC splice, although he did draw attention to 'the extreme possibility, that even the worst of the surviving A manuscripts was set down from memory, or is descended from a manuscript so set down', only to dismiss the possibility as 'altogether remote' (p. 144); in his 1975 book (pp. 14–15 n. 95) he was to describe Bodley 851 'as worthless for editorial use', commenting that he should have noted its rejection in the A-text volume. It was an omission that was, later, to reopen the authorship question.

[6] *Modern Language Notes*, 76 (1961), 856–63 at 863.
[7] *Medium Ævum*, 33 (1964), 230–1.

Even while the A-text was being edited, work had continued on the collations for the B-text. In his prisoner-of-war years, Kane had been involved in a great deal of tunnelling, of which he said, in the memoir he wrote late in life for his grandchildren, 'Except for the absence of physical hazard collation was like tunnelling in that a man's sense of progress, if he paused to think, was slow. But unlike tunnelling in good soil it was never monotonous: its diversity lay in the response by scribes to the text as it passed through their heads and hand.'[8] From 1950 Kane had the help of E. Talbot Donaldson (Yale University) as collaborator on the B-text, a task that together took them a quarter of a century to complete.

In 1955 he became Professor of English Language and Literature and Head of Department at Royal Holloway College, still at that time a women's college. He was, for a while, one of the very few men in the college. There he inherited the courses of his predecessor, Gladys Willcock, including two years of English poetry from Skelton to Herrick, the period in which he had originally planned to do research. It was a small department, and he was able to tutor each of the ten or twelve finalists every year. It was a good period too for research, for steady attention to the readings in the *Piers Plowman* manuscripts. These were the years in which the children were small: Michael, born January 1948, and Mary, born in the autumn of 1950, shortly after the family moved to Englefield Green. In 1961 they were to move to Shandon Cottage in Beaconsfield, their home for fifteen years. They managed a long summer visit to Canada in 1960, when Kane returned to the University of British Columbia to teach at the July summer school, an opportunity to see his mother and many other members of his family properly as well as to catch up with old friends.

In 1965 Kane returned to central London on his appointment as Professor of English Language and Medieval Literature at King's College in the Strand, where, although his lectures and tutorials were mainly on Middle English literature, he greatly enjoyed his share of tutoring undergraduates on a wide range of topics in their first term. Keenly aware of the changing profiles of university entrants, he whole-heartedly supported first-year work in the classical background for English literature and himself was tutor to the first batch of students admitted without a classical language at O-level among their entrance requirements. Somehow he managed to juggle undergraduate teaching and graduate supervision, a distinguished scholarly output and a heavy administrative burden with a kindly patience and quiet humour that made it all seem effortless. He

[8] To be published by the Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, Tempe, AZ.

cared also for getting to know and work with his medieval colleagues. When I joined the English Department at King's in 1969, for a few years George Kane organised a small reading group which he, Ron Waldron, Janet Cowen and I all went to, one evening a week during term time. One year we read Old High German with Martin Jones, other years Old French and then Provençale with Mary Hackett; and Julian Brown was bludgeoned into doing a huge course on medieval Latin for far larger numbers from the Faculty of Arts more generally. It was all rather hard work but invigorating and, for me, marvellous top-ups to a degree in English and French. In those days the English Department at King's still taught Old Norse as a matter of course, and overall there was a fine array of medieval languages within Arts, giving a strong sense of cohesion to medievalists. Looking back, I realise this was the springboard for CLAMS (the Centre for Late Antique and Medieval Studies), which began as a fairly low-key group set up by four of us from Spanish, German, Byzantine Studies and English, a few years before formal procedures took over. And Ron Waldron has reminded me of Kane's stimulating postgraduate seminars, attended by many medievalists of his acquaintance, for example Tauno Mustanoya and E. T. Donaldson, who happened to be in London at the time, and of the many hours we spent reading aloud (and recording with the help of Nick Budd of the Audio-Visual department) the poems of Chaucer and other Old and Middle English poetry. Within the college Kane served on many senior committees, shouldering disparate commitments that included much of the planning of the new Strand building, and he was noted for his efficiency and impartiality. His remarkable ability to concentrate people's attention was evident also in his chairmanship of the University Board of Studies in English, 1970–2.

Kane retired from King's in 1976, acquiring the first of two titles of Professor Emeritus. Throughout his three decades as a teacher in London University George Kane was a force to be reckoned with in the dealings of the intercollegiate Board of Studies and on its examination boards. Warwick Gould remembers him at an examinations meeting of the University of London Board of Studies in English: asked to comment on a question he had set, he replied sternly, leaning on his silver-tipped walking stick, 'I do not intend to lecture the Board upon *Piers Plowman*', bringing the room to silence (an unusual feat). In addition to his departmental roles and a myriad committee responsibilities, he was the University's Public Orator from 1962 to 1966 and Dean of the Faculty of Arts at King's from 1972 to 1974. Internationally too he had become a force to be reckoned with, invited to lecture in many European universities and in North

America, serving on appointment panels for senior posts, on the editorial boards and councils of learned societies, delivering keynote lectures. In 1970 he directed a summer seminar at Harvard for the Medieval Academy of America in palaeography and textual criticism, and in 1975 he became a Corresponding Fellow of the Medieval Academy of America.

Across these years Kane published papers and lectures of note, as well as shorter pieces and reviews. His Chambers Memorial Lecture of 1965 confronted 'The autobiographical fallacy in Chaucer and Langland studies' in a paper complementing his analysis of the evidence for the authorship of *Piers Plowman*. Arguing that our sense that we know both these men is 'logically dubious', he pointed to the absence in the late fourteenth century of 'any convention of detached, impersonal narrative'. The author may seem to project himself, yet may be presenting a literary fiction. In a footnote he qualified the argument, noting that 'any considerable poet of the time would be writing for a coterie, that set of people, comprising his patrons and their associates, to whom he read, and thus in effect presented and published his work'. For Chaucer, 'there is a reasonable presumption that his patrons and public were to be found in the court', but nothing is known of Langland's patrons. Yet, because of the nature and quality of his work, he envisaged for him 'an educated and intelligent audience' that, 'unless he had independent means', 'in some way maintained the poet'. Attempts to weave up life stories for Langland and Chaucer from their writings have burgeoned wildly in recent years, yet Kane's notion of the poet's supportive 'coterie' continues influential. In 1966 he revisited 'Conjectural emendation', by now an editorial procedure closely associated with his name. This paper was first published in the Festschrift (1969) for G. N. Garmonsway, his predecessor in the Chair of English Language and Medieval Literature at King's, and was soon to be reprinted in the collection *Medieval Manuscripts and Textual Criticism* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1976). In 'Some reflections on critical method', an address to the English Association in 1967 (published as 'Criticism, solecism: does it matter?' in *Essays and Studies* 1976), he reflected on the 'affective element' in our understanding of literature that makes it impossible for literary study ever 'to develop an exact science'. Discussing some of the more nonsensical readings of *Venus and Adonis* and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, he identified as the central problem in both poems the misunderstanding of tone: critics, at sea in what is 'an essentially ludicrous situation', too often prate about ambivalence.

Throughout these years Kane continued to work steadily on the editing of *Piers Plowman*, and 1975 saw the publication of *Piers Plowman: the*

B Version, Will's Visions of Piers Plowman, Do-Well, Do-Better and Do-Best (London), edited with Donaldson. The sub-title, 'An edition in the form of Trinity College Cambridge MS. B.15.17, corrected and restored from the known evidence, with variant readings', reveals that they had abandoned Skeat's base text, Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Laud Miscellany 581, choosing instead an earlier manuscript, exceptional for the consistency of its spelling and in grammar resembling late fourteenth-century usage as found 'in the best known manuscripts of Chaucer and Gower' (coincidentally the 'best' text chosen earlier by Wright). Some objected to the change from Laud Misc. 581. There is after all a substratal layer of south-west Worcester dialect features both in Laud 581 and Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson Poet. 38, probably reflecting Langland's own usage, although such features have on the whole been eliminated from B-text manuscripts by London copyists. Yet, as Michael Samuels pointed out in defence of Kane and Donaldson's choice, 'it is perfectly reasonable to read the B-text in the form in which it would have been understood by the London audiences for which it was intended'.[9] The choice of copy-text was less controversial than the whole-hearted way in which Kane and Donaldson emended its readings in their search for the readings of 'the archetypal B text' and, beyond that, the 'historical truth' of the poem.

Whereas with the A-text Kane's choices had for the most part gained approval as appropriate or at least judicious, the B-text edition met with mixed reviews. The criteria laid down for emendation on metrical grounds drew particular criticism. From their own analysis of the metre Kane and Donaldson argued that Langland 'would not have written lines without discernible alliteration' (p. 137), thus going against Skeat's view that as a variation a line could be wholly without alliteration. There was little to fault in the identification of the alliterative pattern aa/ax as the metrical norm, or in the exceptions they allowed to this norm, but the principles laid down were adjudged overstrict. For example, they claimed that lines with the pattern aa/xa were absent from Langland's verse system and, arguing that such lines were the result of scribal corruption, firmly rearranged them. There was resistance also to the idea that the line's binding alliteration could sometimes fall on unstressed syllables. On this score,

[9] M. L. Samuels, 'Langland's dialect', *Medium Ævum*, 54 (1985), 232–47 at 244. Repr. in M. L. Samuels and J. J. Smith (eds.), *The English of Chaucer and his Contemporaries* (Aberdeen, 1988), pp. 70–85.

Kane's response, 'Music "Neither unpleasant nor monotonous"'[10] should be read alongside the more recent paper, 'Measured discourse', by Ronald Waldron.[11] Because the B-version had so long and widely been read in Skeat's edition, there was a general sense of dismay at the disappearance of accustomed readings with the dislodgement of Laud 581 as basic text. But the excellence overall of the new edition as an authoritative overview of the B tradition and of the detailed information it contains has made it an indispensable tool for future generations of scholars. (Ironically, indeed, the excellence of the editorial materials provided by the Athlone volumes has enabled Laurence Warner to argue against the very identity of a B version of the poem.) Kane himself commented wryly on the usefulness of their collations to later editors. Even as the Athlone edition progressed, new student editions of *Piers Plowman* were already benefitting from the discoveries and procedures of the first two volumes. Inevitably there was little time to make more than running repairs in the new editions of the A and B volumes published in 1988, a decision that drew criticism but must be balanced against the imperative of completing the third volume.

Some critics still objected to Kane's turning aside from recension, but the insights to be gained from variational groupings of the Langland manuscripts were clear and the thickets of the Chaucer manuscripts must have seemed to him an enticing prospect. Together with Janet Cowen, a King's College London colleague, Kane embarked on the first 'open' edition of a Chaucerian work. In their 1995 critical edition of Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women* they presented full variants, plus the detailed evidence that underlies their classification of the manuscripts and underpins the text established. As an exercise testing the methodology and procedures of the *Piers Plowman* texts, the edition was a triumph. Its lack of literary introduction, full language analysis of the copy-text, explanatory notes and glossary means, however, that its audience is scholarly rather than general, which is unfortunate, for it deserves to be more widely used. In particular, the clearly thought-through punctuation of the text makes it a joy to read by comparison with earlier editions of the *Legend*. The detailed work required to produce such editions is inordinately time-consuming, whether for a printed text or for machine-held files as is now becoming customary. The temptation to present accompanying ancillary materials is

[10] P. L. Heyworth (ed.), *Medieval Studies for J. A. W. Bennett, Aetatis Suae LXX* (Oxford, 1981), pp. 43–63.

[11] Ronald Waldron, 'Measured discourse; the fourteenth-century alliterative long line as a two-tier system', *Approaches to the Metres of Alliterative Verse*, Leeds Texts and Monographs, NS 17 (2009), 235–54.

best avoided in the interests of achieving the central task, the establishment of an edition. Papers on Chaucer published by Kane and Cowen during the years their edition was in preparation are paradoxically better known than the edition itself, for example Cowen's discussion of the grounds on which final *-e* should be restored in Chaucer and her literary analysis of the *Legend*,[12] and Kane's analysis of their copy-text.[13] In addition, Kane was to publish a formidable series of more general articles, some on the 'obligatory conjunction' of Langland and Chaucer, others on a variety of Chaucerian topics—integrity, romantic love, philosophy, the idea of poetry. Most are to be found conveniently gathered together in his 1989 collection *Chaucer and Langland: Historical and Textual Approaches*.

Kane's final teaching position was at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (1976–87), where he held the William Rand Kenan Jr Professorship of English. He had been approached by that university to ask if he would consider moving there whilst still at King's. By that time Michael was 28 and training to become a doctor of medicine. Mary was 26 and working as a solicitor in the West End of London. Bridget's mother and father were dead. George and Bridget agreed that a move to America would be a new adventure. The only full professor on the medieval side when he arrived, he carried on the strong tradition of teaching and mentoring graduate students vigorously, taught courses in the Comparative Literature department as well as in English, and acted energetically to support and encourage medieval studies across the liberal arts departments. Graduate students who worked with him remember vividly how they scurried to the *Oxford English Dictionary* and the *Middle English Dictionary*, poring over the meanings of words before they felt ready to appear for each session in one of his Langland or Chaucer seminars. He was a congenial and invigorating colleague to his juniors in the Middle English field, and he saw to the department's hiring of two new assistant professors in Anglo-Saxon, whose careers he took pains to foster. And at the end of each semester, George and Bridget gave memorable parties to which they invited all the medieval students and faculty with whom George's teaching and other activities brought him into contact. Colleagues at Chapel Hill remember those parties fondly. He served on many

[12] 'Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women: Structure and Tone*', *Studies in Philology*, 84 (1985), 416–36; 'Metrical problems in editing The Legend of Good Women', in Derek Pearsall (ed.), *Manuscripts and Texts: Editorial Problems in Later Middle English Literature* (Cambridge, 1987), pp. 26–33.
[13] 'The text of The Legend of Good Women in CUL MS Gg.4.27', in Douglas Gray and E. G. Stanley (eds.), *Middle English Studies Presented to Norman Davis in Honour of His Seventieth Birthday* (Oxford, 1983), pp. 39–58.

university-wide committees, and was for three years the chairman of the Division of Humanities (1980–3). He slipped back easily into the wider scholarly community of North America. He was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 1977, and in 1978 he became a Fellow of the Medieval Academy. During the summer of 1978 he directed a seminar at Duke University for the Southwestern Institute of Medieval and Renaissance Studies, and in 1982, for a second time, he directed a summer seminar in palaeography and textual criticism for the Medieval Academy of America at Harvard. After his retirement from North Carolina, Kane spent the following two years at the National Humanities Center, on a National Endowment for the Humanities Fellowship, as he describes in the 'Acknowledgements' to the *Glossary*. The Center is an easy drive from Chapel Hill, so he and Bridget were able to enjoy two more years in the house they built within walking distance from campus.

In 1989, Professor Emeritus for a second time, George and Bridget returned to live in England, where their son Michael and daughter Mary and their families lived. They had travelled back and forwards across the Atlantic over the Chapel Hill years, and Kane remained an important figure in the lives of his London colleagues. Ron Waldron (King's College) joined Don Kennedy and Joe Wittig (Chapel Hill) in editing the Festschrift presented to him in 1988, drawing together a collection of papers that reflected Kane's international stature. Now it was good to have him back during the university year as well. He lived first in a tiny Georgian house near the British Museum, moving to a house in Hampstead, round the corner from Mary and her family, after Bridget had fallen on ice and broken her ankle, which later necessitated hip operations as well. They moved to West Sussex in 2002, again to be close to Mary. Kane was a welcome figure at seminars and lectures in the University of London for many years, and from time to time he came to the weekly medieval postgraduate seminars held in the English Department at King's. He belonged to two London clubs: the Athenæum; and the Flyfishers'—both still traditional gentlemen's clubs.

His work on Langland continued steadily, and the third volume, edited with George Russell (of the University of Melbourne), the C-text collaborator recruited long before by Mitchell, was published in 1997. For the C-text, again the editors diverged from Skeat's choice (Phillipps 6231, now Huntington Library MS Hm 137), as they had done both for the A- and B-texts. Earlier work by Allen had shown that Skeat's base manuscript came from a sophisticating group and that British Library MS Additional 35157 was to be preferred, the manuscript adopted as base-text by Carnegy

in his 1923 thesis, but in 1924 a previously unknown manuscript came up for sale at Sotheby's: Huntington Library MS HM143. Chambers was able to make a preliminary examination of this new manuscript before it went to San Marino. In 1935 he went to the Huntington Library for more extended work upon it, to discover it was far superior to Additional 35157. HM 143 was to provide the base text for Mitchell's edition of the C Prologue and Passus I–IV, the completion of his thesis overlapping with Kane's first year of postgraduate work in London. The acknowledged superiority of HM 143 as copy-text for editing C was therefore uncontroversial. However, as had been the case with the B-text edition, there were reservations. Indubitably, the edition was an important addition to scholarship, not least for the wealth of excellent detail contained in the lengthy footnotes that accompany the text. As before, there was much praise for new, clever and satisfying conjectural emendations, but there was disquiet again about the degree of editorial interference. The editors were considered over-prescriptive in their treatment of the copy-text, making many changes, particularly relating to grammar and alliteration, which seemed unwarranted. Moreover, during the long years during which Russell and Kane had been forming their idea of the C archetype, Derek Pearsall's best-text edition (1979) had become justly popular, its deft introductory matter, annotations and glossary establishing it as a widely admired textbook undergraduates enjoyed working with. (Pearsall has recently pointed out that its 2008 revision, benefitting particularly from the publication of the Athlone C version, is 'a "critical" edition of a critical edition').[14]

As a mark of his achievement in completing the editing of *Piers Plowman* Kane was in 1999 awarded the Gollancz prize for a second time. For Kane, however, the task he had undertaken was not complete until he got to press in 2005 his glossary for the English vocabulary of the three Athlone volumes. Sustained work on the glossary was under way in the 1980s, with funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities providing the springboard for the great deal of preparatory work still to be undertaken. Under Acknowledgements Kane describes the mechanics of making the glossary. Wittig's electronic files contained some 150,000 words reduced to 5,000 headwords for his 2001 concordance. From 2002 Wittig fed copy to Kane in a variety of appropriate typefaces, for Kane to enter his 'revisions and corrections accumulated over the years', to arrive at a contextual meaning for each word in the three Athlone editions. An

[14] Derek Pearsall, 'The text of *Piers Plowman*: past, present and future', *Poetica*, 71 (2009), 75–91 at 90 n. 30.

intensive week of cross-checking the corrections together in the summer of 2004 was sufficient to enable Wittig to 'set up the resulting glossary in page format as camera-ready copy'. In the Introduction Kane wrote of the particular difficulties presented by terms such as *charite*, *conscience*, *leaute*, *pardon*, *reson*, or *treuthe*, identifying as the most challenging feature of undertaking the glossary 'the undebatable remoteness of the substance of the poem, an intellectually honest man's response to the major religious, thus cultural and in our language social crisis of his time, of a nature quite alien to the libertarian world of today'. It is an assessment that somehow encapsulates George Kane's own intellectual honesty and his deep understanding of late fourteenth-century English literature. He once noted that Chaucer and Langland 'in their combination of similarities and differences [were] the best company a man could wish for',[15] a love of and enthusiasm for his research field that he communicated to undergraduates, graduate students and colleagues in many universities.

The impact of George Kane's editorial and critical work was wide-reaching, and his influence continues to be important in Middle English scholarship. When the Athlone C version appeared, a century had gone by since Chambers and Grattan published the first results of their work on *Piers Plowman*. At last Skeat's parallel texts of 1886 had their true successor, although already new editorial procedures were gathering momentum. It is sobering to reflect that The Piers Plowman Electronic Archive published its prospectus as long ago as 1994, emphasising 'the provisional nature of scholarly editing'.[16] Seven manuscripts have now been edited in the SEENET series: stunning digital facsimiles accompanied by meticulous textual detail and analysis. But CD-ROM publication looks like giving way to on-line publication, as newer PCs struggle to open files held in older technological formats. Two of the five volumes of the *Penn Commentary* have appeared, a project that got under way in 1986. The three volumes that comprise the Athlone *Piers Plowman* will continue to provide an unparalleled amount of invaluable textual detail for some time to come, even to readers who decry the authoritarianism of its critical editions. That they exist at all is down to the unflagging energy of their chief editor who, at the outset of his career, inherited opinions that we now find it hard to credit. Back when Kane completed his Ph.D. thesis, no sustained work had been done on the language of the *Piers Plowman* manuscripts and it was thought that little was to be garnered from them about the poet's dia-

[15] Preface: *Chaucer and Langland: Historical and Textual Approaches* (London and Berkeley, CA, 1989).

[16] <http://www3.iath.virginia.edu/seenet/piers/archivegoals.htm>.

lect—the huge changes brought to our understanding of late Middle English by Angus McIntosh and Michael Samuels lay far in the future.[17] That Kane in 1946 described as the purpose of an editor's work the rejection of errors from the text and opposed emendation for the sake of metre, alliteration and spelling is, with hindsight, a surprise. Perhaps the very orderliness of the copy-text chosen for their B version nudged Kane and Donaldson towards emulation of its norms.

Kane's superbly argued assessment of 'the evidence for authorship' freed a generation of scholars from worrying about Langland's identity and the attribution of the A, B and C texts to him. In Derek Pearsall's words: 'Everyone decided to agree with him and get on with things. Enough was enough, Langland studies began to blossom.'[18] In time, inevitably, discussion of the integrity and sequence of versions came back into play. Two significant publications were to draw Kane's fire. Charlotte Brewer and George Rigg argued for a version that preceded the A version in their 1983 publication of the first part of the Z text (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 851). Kane's 1985 *Speculum* review article was, if you enjoy the cut and thrust of argument, splendidly rebarbative, but to at least one reader the tone felt 'bitterly dismissive'.[19] Nevertheless, an early *Piers Plowman* text comprising the first two visions gained its adherents as an authentic fourth version, and it is included as such by Carl Schmidt in his 'parallel-text edition of the A, B, C and Z versions' (1995–2008). A decade later Jill Mann, in her paper 'The power of the alphabet',[20] stood the generally accepted sequence of texts on its head, suggesting that the A text originated in an authorial abridgement of the B text. Langland himself, she argued, could have made a simpler version for a non-clerical audience, shortening his text, tidying the story line and cutting back on Latin and sexual references. Kane was not the first to mount a refutation of Mann's ingenious reworking of Meroney's 1950 proposition, but once both the *Legend of Good Women* and the Langland C-text editions appeared he had 'time and space' to pen 'an open letter to Jill Mann', firmly arguing that Langland's poem 'unquestionably developed as he wrote it' and that it remained unfinished.[21]

[17] Angus McIntosh, M. L. Samuels and M. Benskin, with the assistance of Margaret Laing and Keith Williamson, *A Linguistic Atlas of Late Mediaeval English*, 4 vols. (Aberdeen, 1986).
[18] Pearsall, 'The text …', p. 78.
[19] Derek Pearsall, *An Annotated Critical Bibliography of Langland* (New York, 1990), p. 25.
[20] Jill Mann, 'The power of the alphabet: a reassessment of the relation between the A and B versions of *Piers Plowman*', *Yearbook of Langland Studies*, 8 (1994), 21–50.
[21] George Kane, 'An open letter to Jill Mann about the sequence of the versions of *Piers Plowman*', *Yearbook of Langland Studies*, 13 (1999), 7–33.

When Kane came to write his *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* entry on Langland (2004) he revisited fully the details known or surmised of Langland's life, now dated by him *c.*1325–*c.*1390. Earlier he had placed the making of the C text early in the 1380s, maintaining that Langland was 'dead by 1387'. In a review article he found Anne Middleton's argument that C V 1–104 shows the influence of three provisions of the 1388 Statute of Labourers so persuasive that he put forward 'an alternative possibility, that just as *Piers Plowman* was a catalyst in the uprising of 1381, so this C passage might be reflected in, have influenced the detail of, the Statute'. Speculatively he suggests that 'Langland of whom it must be recalled we know nothing beyond his parentage and place of birth', had to do with its drafting.[22] Kane does allude to Langland's 'fluency in legal terminology' in the *Oxford DNB* piece, but draws back from involving him in the framing of the Statute. Placing the poet's putative birth in *c.*1325 lengthens his life, a change made in the light of recent discoveries about a cleric named William Rokele, tonsured in the Worcester area by 1341 and (possibly the same man) beneficed within the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Norwich in 1353. Clearly Kane viewed the identification as attractive, if unprovable. A Norfolk connection, he points out, could help explain the distribution of some of the earliest manuscripts of the A version, but does not ultimately affect how *Piers Plowman* is to be read and understood. For Kane, 'Langland stands, for the quality of his art, with Dante and Chaucer among the supreme poets of the European middle ages.' This succinct overview of Langland's life demonstrates clearly the admiration and affection *Piers Plowman* inspired in him and which he communicated so effectively to others.

Kane admitted to one hobby only, which he took up seriously in 1958. A keen flyfisher, the holidays spent wading into rivers or tumbling about in small boats on cold loughs were, apart from reading, his main relaxation, although this could be combined with seeking out little known and often isolated ruins of castles in Scotland and Ireland. There were many visits to Ireland, which began soon after the war: arriving on a ferry into Waterford, George's first encounter with an Irish 'fry' sealed what was to become a love affair with Ireland. But his family was the centre of his life. When Michael was ill, he and his father developed an interest in genealogy, spending time, before the arrival of the internet, in the Mormon library in London, chasing up links from Ireland, France and Germany leading to his family's various arrivals in North America. Michael died in

[22] George Kane, 'Langland: labour and "authorship"', *Notes and Queries*, 243 (1998), 420–5.

1998. In 2008, George and Bridget moved into sheltered accommodation in Eastbourne, as she had developed Alzheimer's disease and he and Mary were unable to care for her on their own. There he continued to work slowly at his typewriter, on requested articles and his autobiography, up to six weeks before his death. He remained interested in politics and academic gossip and delighted in being asked to look through and comment on his grandson's dissertation for his history degree, needless to say on a mediaeval period. He died in Eastbourne, on 27 December 2008, and is survived by Bridget, his wife of sixty-two years, their daughter and four grandchildren.

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Note. In preparing this memoir I am particularly grateful to Mary Kane for all her help and for letting me read a copy of the memoir her father wrote for his grandchildren, from which quotations are taken. I should also like to thank friends and colleagues of George Kane for their help and advice: Don Kennedy, Patrick O'Neill, Joe Wittig (Chapel Hill); Ros Allen, Janet Bately, Janet Cowen, Warwick Gould, Ron Waldron (London). Obituaries for Kane were published in the *Guardian* (19 March 2009), *The Times* (2 April 2009), and *Speculum*, 85 (2010), 782–8.

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