

JAMES CROMPTON—AN OBITUARY

The Society mourns the untoward and melancholy death of James Crompton on 26 November 1975; we acknowledge his deep and lasting contribution to all aspects of the Society's activities. Mr. Crompton began his long and active association with the Leicestershire Archæological and Historical Society in 1962 when he succeeded Professor Simmons as editor of the *Transactions*. For the next thirteen years he maintained the scholarly standards of his predecessor while gradually imposing his own particular character upon the journal. He endeavoured to bring the *Transactions* to the widest possible audience by including articles of a popular as well as scholarly interest, like Alderman Brownlow's historical survey of the Melton Mowbray Pork-Pie industry published in the very first number after his appointment, volume XXXIX, 1963-4.

James's personal contribution to the *Transactions* lay in his own professional historical field of John Wyclif and fourteenth-century Lollardy. His paper upon the Leicestershire Lollards in volume XLIV, made an important contribution to the subject based upon the surviving Lincoln Diocesan Records for the later middle ages. Its value to historical research is all the greater because it is a regional study, placing the heresy firmly in the essentially distinctive character and attitudes of Leicestershire. In many respects, *Leicestershire Lollards* constitutes a lasting memorial to James. His character, his idiosyncrasies, his deep though ecumenical religious convictions are all preserved in its pages. Above all, his synthesis of heresy, dissent and underlying social and regional attitudes reveals the stamp of a perceptive professional historian.

As editor, James applied the same scholarly exactitude to the essential drudgery of proof reading. His insistence upon three proofs impressed even his printers. By the very nature of his task, an editor cannot please everyone: his task is to select, more often to reject. Yet even here, in the main, he performed his onerous rôle with sensitivity and understanding.

James Crompton's duties as editor represent only a fraction of his overall contribution to the Society. As a member of the committee, later as Minute Secretary, he brought a presence of charm, authority and positive direction to its policies and discussions. We will long remember the effect of his sharp and restless eyes peering over his half-lens spectacles. What he had to say was invariably to the point and to the enhancement of the subject under discussion. His incisive, good sense will be greatly missed.

There was a further side to his ubiquitous contribution to the Society. A contribution "in the field" or to be more precise, upon excursions. James's wide and enthusiastic interest in vernacular architecture, particularly of English Romanesque made him a unique and fascinating leader of excursions. Indeed, he had a large personal following of members who made a point of attending all his expeditions. At the dinner in his honour on the occasion of

his retirement from active posts and upon his elevation to the higher echelons of Vice-Presidents, his large body of faithful followers on excursions formed a conspicuous element amongst those present. Last but by no means least, through his many contacts in the academic world, he was able to provide the Society with many scholarly and distinguished guest speakers.

In 1975, owing to growing ill health, James Crompton gave up the burdens of executive office. In the event, his tenure as a Vice-President of the Society was sadly brief. He met his death alone, just after fulfilling another of his many honorary commitments, but his character, his eccentricities, and above all, his uniqueness will keep the memory of James Crompton alive for many years in the hearts and minds of those who knew him.

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