

Introduction

Article

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**EAST ANGLIAN AND OTHER STUDIES
PRESENTED TO BARBARA DODWELL**

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BARBARA DODWELL

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Barbara Dodwell was born in India, where her father, who worked in the Indian Museum Service, became curator of the Madras Record Office before returning to England to the Chair of Indian History at the School of Oriental and African Studies in the University of London. The study of history, and of one of its most taxing and essential disciplines, the interpretation and editing of local records, was therefore in her blood.

In 1931 she went up to Bedford College London to read History, graduating in 1934. She immediately began work, under the late Professor R.R. Darlington, on her M.A. thesis, the subject of which, 'The Sokemen of the Southern Danelaw', reflects the lifelong interest, amply reflected in her published work, which she had in the free peasantry of medieval East Anglia. The thesis was submitted in 1936, and earned her the first Mark of Distinction awarded by the University to candidates for the M.A. for ten years. She was, from 1936-38, Student Assistant in the History Department at Bedford, but her career was interrupted by her mother's illness, and it was not until 1941 that she was appointed to a post at the University of Exeter, where she remained until 1946.

In that year she moved to the University of Reading, where she spent the rest of her academic life, being promoted Reader in 1962, and acting as Director of the Graduate Centre for Medieval Studies from 1974 to 1977. But her academic interests were by no means confined to Reading. She also acted as Secretary to the Pipe Roll Society, and was for many years in charge of the muniments of Norwich Cathedral.

Her two main areas of scholarly interest have been the economic and social history of East Anglia and the edition of local records. A long series of publications (see Bibliography below) testifies to her distinguished achievements in both, culminating in her edition, for the Pipe Roll Society in 1974, of the Charters of Norwich Cathedral Priory.

But Barbara Dodwell has been not only a fertile, careful and critical scholar. She has also, and rightly, the reputation of being a distinguished teacher, and of that rare sort who expends as much patience and concern on the less able as on the gifted. Generations of Reading undergraduates and postgraduates have reason to be grateful for her vigorous, stimulating, critical, but always kindly supervision of their work; she taught them not only her own high standards of argument and exposition, but also the humility and sympathy essential to the historian faced with the sometimes bewildering or rebarbative records of the past. Nor has her generosity and patience been confined to them. Her colleagues have at least equal reason to thank her for her lively insights, her willingness to devote time to their queries and her careful assessment of their ideas.

None of this, however, is sufficient to explain the affection and esteem which have prompted the publication of these essays. Barbara Dodwell has made her mark not only as a scholar and teacher, but also as a person. Her twinkling eye, her dry humour, her immense and undemonstrative kindness, the unselfishness which was especially apparent in her long care for her mother but which to some degree all of us have experienced, her brisk and adventurous approach to life—these are only some of the reasons why we dedicate these studies to her not only with homage but also with love.

PMcN

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