



FREDERICK WALTER DENDY.

I.—FREDERICK WALTER DENDY.

BY W. STANLEY MITCALFE.

[Read on 28th May 1941.]

Frédéric Walter Dendy (plate 1) was born at Great Yarmouth on the 9th December 1849. He was the only surviving son of Frederick Dendy and his wife Eleanor, daughter of Thomas Fayerman of Norwich. He was educated at private schools and in France, and in 1866 was articled to his cousin William Holt who held the office of coroner and justices' clerk at Great Yarmouth. In 1871 he was admitted attorney and solicitor and became a notary public in 1890.

After gaining experience in London and Cornwall he came to Newcastle in 1875, and three years later entered into partnership with the Right Honourable Robert Spence Watson, LL.D., carrying on business at first under the firm name of Watson & Dendy and later Watson, Dendy & Burton.

He ceased to practise in 1899 upon being appointed Registrar of the Newcastle upon Tyne County Court and District Registrar of the High Court of Justice. He relinquished these offices in 1924.

In 1878 he married Jessie, daughter of John Percy Baumgartner, J.P., who died in 1904. In 1910 he married Honor Elizabeth, daughter of William Lamplugh Brooksbank, J.P., and by his second wife, who died in 1933, had a son Walter, born on the 27th September 1918, and a daughter Mary, born on 16th July 1921, both of whom survive him.

He died on the 19th December 1940, aged ninety-one, at his home, Eldon House, Jesmond.

It is interesting to note that in 1878, only three years after his arrival in Newcastle, he is referred to in a *Personal Sketch* in a local paper as a "rising and successful young lawyer." The writer continues: "Mr. Dendy seems to have enough energy for ten men—men of more phlegmatic habits see him shoot past them as if he had been projected out of an Armstrong gun. He pushes forward with a courage and earnestness which are unfailing. As a lawyer he is considered to be thoroughly sound and he has considerable talent for pleading."

His activities during a long and useful life were in fact immense and so varied that in the short space available it is not possible to do more than enumerate some of the main features.

In 1894 his professional ability was recognized when he was elected President of the Newcastle upon Tyne Law Society. He was the author of an instructive legal work entitled *The Duties of Executors*, and another publication of interest to lawyers is a lecture he delivered in 1893 to the Newcastle Law Students on the practical details of the working of a lawyer's office.

Throughout his professional career he proved himself to be a most accurate and painstaking lawyer, and he was always most courteous and helpful to the younger members of his profession.

For many years he acted as local agent at Board of Trade Shipping Enquiries, and from 1918 to 1939 was chairman of the Blyth and Tyne Maritime Board. He was chairman of the Court of Referees for unemployment insurance claims and was throughout the last war deputy chairman of the Newcastle panel of the Northumberland Military Appeal Tribunal.

In 1883 and again in 1893 he was under-sheriff of the city of Newcastle upon Tyne.

Amongst other appointments he was for some time chairman of the District Board of the British Law Insurance Society, a director of the Newcastle upon Tyne Electric

Supply Company, a trustee of the Newcastle upon Tyne Savings Bank, a co-opted member of the Public Libraries committee of the Newcastle city council, a vice-president of the Newcastle Literary and Philosophical Society and a governor of Armstrong College.

In 1910 the University of Durham conferred on him in recognition of his attainments, and more particularly of the work he had done for local history, the honorary degree of Doctor of Civil Law, and for his services to the country during the last war he was made an officer of the order of the British Empire.

In politics he was a Liberal and was one of the founders of the Junior Liberal Club, becoming later chairman of the Newcastle upon Tyne Liberal Club.

He was also interested in social work, and in his early days played a leading part in establishing night-schools for working men.

He was a keen fisherman and was for many years president of the Newcastle Angling Club. He used to say that some of his happiest days were spent beside the Coquet, and a song written by him, "Let us go to Coquetside," is still remembered. He was also fond of shooting and spent many days at Charlton on the North Tyne.

In later years his garden at Eldon House became a bird sanctuary, where he kept an ample table for his feathered friends during hard weather.

As a local historian and antiquary he established a wide reputation. He became a member of the Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle upon Tyne in 1887, a councillor of the society in 1894, a vice-president in 1901, and was president of the society for the years 1931 and 1932. He was elected a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of London in 1922, an honour which he greatly appreciated. He was chairman of the Northumberland County History Committee from 1922 to 1939, and during this time five volumes were published and the work completed. In 1913

he was president of the north-eastern branch of the Historical Association.

His most important publication was the *History of Jesmond*, which appeared as volume I of the third series of *Archæologia Aeliana*. This remains the standard work on the subject and shows not only great research but also a meticulous attention to detail. He was a prominent member of the Surtees Society, becoming a vice-president in 1897. He edited five of this society's volumes, namely : two relating to the Records of the Merchant Adventurers, that of the Company of Hostmen of Newcastle upon Tyne, and also parts I and II of *Heraldic Visitations of the North*. A paper which he read before the Newcastle Economic Society on Medieval Guilds shows that he had closely studied the history of these guilds from the days of their earliest beginnings in Europe.

Few people can have known the history of their adopted city better than he did, and a reference to his lectures on *Old Newcastle and its suburbs* is essential for anyone who wishes to become acquainted with this subject.

He was also particularly interested in genealogy as is shown in his notes on the Killingworths of Killingworth and the Heton-Fenwick-Denton line of descent in *Archæologia Aeliana*.

During the years 1889 to 1923 his writings on various subjects of antiquarian and historical interest which appeared in *Archæologia Aeliana* and in *Proceedings* were not only numerous but covered a wide field as will be appreciated from the bibliography below.

According to John Buchan : "The historian, if he is to do justice to the past, must have a constructive imagination and a reasonable mastery of words." To this one might add that he should have sympathy with his subject, which will inspire him to carry out the necessary exhaustive researches. Dendy possessed these attributes to a remarkable degree, and his writings remain a lasting memorial.

His activities were in fact so numerous and varied that

he was described by Mr. H. S. Mundahl in a valedictory address when he retired from the office of Registrar as the "admirable Crichton of the north."

He died full of honour and years, and his death marks the passing of a notable figure of old Newcastle.

Dr. H. H. E. Craster writes :

"Our old friend Dendy was already well on in his fifties when first I became acquainted with him. He was at that time engaged in seeing through the press the proofs of his *History of Jesmond*, the best of his works and a model of what a manorial history should be. He approached history from the standpoint of a lawyer. One could not have wished—if I may speak from my own experience—a better master than he showed himself in the law of real property. If an interpretation of complicated evidence won his solution, one might place absolute confidence in the correctness of the solution. His interest in genealogy, which was considerable, and a lesser interest in heraldry, derived from his interest as a lawyer in the descent of estates. He was primarily a medievalist and regretted that decline in medieval studies which is a passing phenomenon of our archæological societies. His aim was to record, as he himself put it, 'not in a popular and superficial but in a dry, correct and lasting way.' In his historical writings there was a good deal of the dry accuracy of a lawyer's statement, but to those of his habit of thought dryness does not mean lack of interest. He admired and exhibited scholarship. History to him was the faithful presentation of fact as revealed by original record. On that account the production of local history should be preceded, in his view, by the search for records, especially for those which bear upon devolution of property, which he regarded as the framework of all manorial history.

"I have spoken of him as a historian, and if any nowadays regard his conception of history as narrow and arid, I would reply that forty years ago, when entering as a

beginner upon a field in which he was already a master, I found his influence intensely stimulating. He had many other interests, many admirable qualities. He was patient, wise, kindly, loyal in friendship, an excellent man to have on a committee. There was much that was Galsworthian in our friend's make-up, English characteristics that we can ill afford to lose."

BIBLIOGRAPHY.

Surtees Society's publications.

- Extracts from the records of the Merchant Adventurers of Newcastle upon Tyne, part I, with introduction—vol. 93.
- Extracts from the records of the Merchant Adventurers of Newcastle upon Tyne, part II, with introduction—vol. 101.
- Extracts from the records of the Company of Hostmen of Newcastle upon Tyne, with introduction—vol. 105.
- Heraldic Visitations of the North, part I—vol. 122.
- Heraldic Visitations of the North, part II—vol. 133.

In Archæologia Aeliana.

- The Ancient Farms of Northumberland—AA² xvi, 121.
- The six Newcastle Chares destroyed by the fire of 1854—AA² xviii, 241.
- Obituary notice of Sheriton Holmes—AA² xxii, 72.
- Memoir of Dennis Embleton—AA² xxiii, 1.
- Extracts from Privy Seal Dockets—AA² xxiv, 184.
- An Account of Jesmond—AA³ i.
- The Killingworths of Killingworth—AA³ ii, 10.
- Exchequer Commissions and Depositions—AA³ iv, 1.
- Extracts from the De Banco Rolls—AA³ vi, 41.
- The Struggle between the Merchant and Craft Gilds of Newcastle in 1515—AA³ vii, 77.
- Wardship in Tenure by Socage—AA³ viii, 1.
- Memoir of Thomas Hodgkin—AA³ ix, 75.
- The Heton-Fenwick-Denton Line of Descent—AA³ xiv, 173.
- Memoir of Robert Coltman Clephan—AA³ xix, 99.
- Memoir of John Crawford Hodgson—AA⁴ iv, 122.
- Memoir of Herbert Maxwell Wood—AA⁴ vii, 77.
- Memoir of Joseph Oswald—AA⁴ vii, 179.

Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle.

- Many brief communications published from 1889 to 1923.

Other Publications.

The Paston Letters. A lecture delivered at the Literary and Philosophical Society, Newcastle.

"Let us go to Coquetside," a fishing song. (Harbottle's *Fishers' Garland*.)

The Duties of Executors (London).

Banking Law, a lecture delivered to the Newcastle Law Students' Society.

The Practical Details of the Working of a Solicitor's Office. A lecture delivered to the Newcastle Law Students' Society.

A Talk on Books and Libraries (*Home and Country* for July 1920).

Three Lectures on Old Newcastle, Its Suburbs and Gilds and an essay on Northumberland (Literary and Philosophical Society, Newcastle).

The Rights of the Public on Commons and Waste Lands (*The Vasculum*, vol. xii).