

OBITUARY

LIEUTENANT-COLONEL WILLIAM LE HARDY, M.C., F.S.A.

The name of William Le Hardy will be remembered with gratitude by historians of Middlesex present and to come. His death, suddenly, on 28 December, 1961, brought a sense of deep loss to those who had known and worked with him.

He was the first County Archivist for the Counties of Middlesex and Hertfordshire. He held the former post in a part-time capacity from 1947 to 1956. To his drive and initiative is due in large measure the rapid development of the Middlesex Record Office on modern lines and the growth of its record holdings. He was one of the leading local archivists in the country, and the preservation of records and their accessibility for research were the chief aims of his working life. As an archivist he never lost sight of the point of view of the user of the documents in his care, and to those who sought his help he was generous both of his time and knowledge. Many will recall the zest with which he would enter into their problems and bring to bear on them his own great experience of records and record-searching. Acknowledgments of indebtedness to his help are to be found in the prefaces and footnotes of many works of scholarship.

It was almost inevitable that Colonel Le Hardy should find his career and life interest in records, for in this he followed his grandfather, Sir William Hardy, his great-uncle, Sir Thomas Hardy, and his father, William J. Hardy. He assumed control of his father's firm of record agents, Hardy and Page (later Hardy and Reckitt), in 1919 and it was as a record agent that he first became associated with the two counties whose records he was to serve so well. He succeeded his father as editor of the Calendars of Sessions Records of the Counties of Middlesex and Hertfordshire and began those of Buckinghamshire. As editor of the Middlesex Sessions Records, on behalf of the Standing Joint Committee of the County of Middlesex, he made a positive and important contribution to the printed sources for the study of the County's history. His racy and most readable introductions, as well as the calendars themselves, are rich in information and provide a valuable guide to the material for local studies in records of this kind.

Colonel Le Hardy's activities were many and diverse. In the First World War he served as an officer with the Royal Sussex Regiment and received the Military Cross. Between the wars he was Commanding Officer of the 23rd County of London Regiment, T.A., and in 1949 became the Colonel Commandant of the Hertford Army Cadet Force. He was elected a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries in 1923 and was a founder member of both the British Records Association and the Society of Archivists. He became a member of the London and Middlesex Archaeological Society in 1949 and was elected a Vice-President in 1952, an office he held until his resignation from the Society in 1958. He was a contributor to the Society's *Transactions* and served on the short-lived Records Committee appointed in 1957.

His rich personality and genial presence will be sadly missed in the councils of the societies to whose deliberations he brought the experience of his long and eminently practical career.

E. D. M.