



David Tyrwhitt-Drake Clarke, M.A., F.M.A., F.R.N.S., F.S.A.
1923–2009

David Clarke, Honorary Secretary of this Society from 1954 to 1963, died on 27 November 2009. Born in St Albans, he was educated at Haileybury College. He won a scholarship to Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge, in 1941, and, after an interruption for war service in Italy, graduated in 1947 with a degree in Classics and Classical Archaeology. He held the Sir Charles Walston and Christopher James Studentships at the British School of Archaeology in Athens for 1947–48, and then spent a further year as Lecturer in Classical Archaeology at the Farouk I University in Alexandria. By this stage he had travelled extensively in Italy and Greece, and had catalogued the collections at the British School and at the Farouk I University. He was thus superbly qualified to take up the post of Keeper of Antiquities at the City of Leicester Museum and Art Gallery in October 1949, aged just 26.

At this time the Keeper was based, with much of the collections and displays, at New Walk Museum. However, he was also responsible for all the branch museums and sites, Newarke Houses, Belgrave Hall, the Guildhall and the Jewry Wall site, still referred to then as the Roman Forum. The Antiquities Department also had an extraordinarily broad remit, covering all human activity other than Fine Art and Archives. In the museum annual report for 1950–51, David's first full year as Keeper, the list of specimens acquired by the Antiquities Department occupies 18 of the 21 pages covering the whole museum service. His time as Keeper was one of continuous development. Major structural work was needed at Newarke Houses Museum and, although there was a formal reopening in 1953, work only then started on the Medieval Chantry House.

When David took up his post a major re-cataloguing of the whole museum collection had already started, but it fell to him and his two assistants to carry it through. In his first full year, the Prehistoric, Anglo-Saxon and Medieval

collections had been completed, the Roman collection half completed and a start made on the Social History collections at Newarke Houses. This was to provide the documentary support for the collections through to the re-cataloguing, starting in the 1970s and leading through to the computerised documentation system from the 1980s. This work on the existing collections continued at the same time that new material was being acquired and catalogued. David's prodigious work rate can be seen from towards the end of his time in Leicester, when he catalogued the Spurway collection of 400 pots and 1,000 coins and small finds in five days, using a tape recorder. The Spurway collection was only one of several collections acquired in just six weeks in 1961–62, comprising 6,000 items.

David was a prodigious collector and the range of his interests was extremely broad. As well as major collections such as the S. W. A. Newton negatives and associated archival material recording the building of the Great Central Railway from 1896 to 1899, he initiated a programme of acquiring annual specimens of costume and footwear by local firms to provide a continuous record of fashion. His family fondly recalls him taking photographs of Teddy Boys and later, in Colchester, of Punks to document popular fashion. He also saw the need to build up a representative collection of the furniture of Ernest Gimson and of English silver. Through the steady pursuit of other areas of collecting, he built up a collection of hosiery machinery, described in 1960 as 'the finest in the world', and of costume, described at the end of his tenure as 'one of the finest in the country.'

Although David was involved in the initial planning of the Jewry Wall Museum to tell the story of archaeology in Leicester and Leicestershire from earliest times to the Battle of Bosworth, for all his time the main part of the story was told at New Walk Museum and Art Gallery. The work of re-cataloguing went hand-in-hand with the retelling of the story through the displays. The Roman Room was completed during his first full year, and in the following year the Prehistoric and Medieval collections were redisplayed in new cases. No sooner had this been completed than the Prehistoric and Medieval galleries were redressed to exhibit the Festival of Britain figure groups. The Roman Room was rearranged and new cases added. After all this activity the archaeological displays were moved in their entirety to a new gallery with new casing and layout. The story now ended with the Anglo-Saxons and the Medieval story was taken up in the Chantry House, which it had at last been possible to bring into use. David's approach to display can best be summed up by his comment that 'great care has been taken to make every exhibit alive'.

Meanwhile, Newarke Houses had been developed and some of the established features were introduced in David's time, such as the nineteenth-century street scene, partly transferred from New Walk, the workshop of William Deacon, clockmaker, and the fireplace and panelling from Ragdale Hall. These were always seen as part of a larger picture and in 1957–58 there was a major rearrangement to tell a consecutive story. A major acquisition was the collection of the Royal Leicestershire Regiment, which was displayed at Newarke Houses towards the end of David's time. He also developed the site of the Roman mosaic

pavement beneath 50 St Nicholas Street, subsequently raised and re-laid in the Jewry Wall Museum, as a means of interpreting life in Roman Leicester. Characteristically, the interpretation 'concluded with a Latin quatrain'.

For much of his time, David carried out archaeological fieldwork both in the city and county. He also saw that this was published and was responsible, from 1951, for publishing the annual summary of archaeological work that still appears in these Transactions. His first summary extended retrospectively to 1939, enabling him to bring to published form the mass of notes compiled by his predecessor, Frank Cottrill. For some major projects outside directors were brought in, following the precedent set by the appointment of Kathleen Kenyon to direct the Jewry Wall excavations between 1936 and 1939. However, much of the work, including the initial investigation in advance of the construction of the inner ring road in the late 1950s, fell to David and his small team. The sites he investigated included the Roman kiln at Earl Shilton, the Anglo-Saxon cemetery at Thurmaston, the first in the area to be properly recorded, and work on the Jewry Wall site prior to the construction of Vaughan College. He was responsible in 1957–58 for the first use of machinery in the city to open a trench. It was only in 1961 that a full-time Field Archaeologist was appointed to carry out excavations.

Alongside all this activity there was the everyday work of providing a direct service to the public. In his first year, David recorded 150 enquiries dealt with by his department. By his final year this had leapt to over 800. Every year he gave talks to the public, usually in his own time. In 1951–52 he gave 46 talks, and most years he delivered a course of lectures either in Leicester or around the county. As well as his role as Honorary Secretary of this Society, he was active in many organisations, locally, regionally and nationally. In the same year that he became Secretary he also became Secretary of the regional group of the Council for British Archaeology, as well as a member of the Diocesan Advisory Committee on Faculties. He was active in the Museum Assistants Group, serving as Treasurer, then Chairman, and in his final year in Leicester was President Elect of the Midlands Federation of Museums and Art Galleries. The close co-operation which he encouraged between this society and other local societies with similar interests was acknowledged by his election as Vice-President of both the University of Leicester Archaeological Society and the Market Harborough Archaeological Society.

In the light of his very full work schedule it is difficult to believe that David had much time to spare for his role as Honorary Secretary of this Society. Yet the period of his secretaryship, from 1954 to 1963, was one of considerable activity and development. It is best characterised by the scheme for Active Membership launched in 1958. This set out many ways to encourage local studies among its members, and covered archaeological fieldwork and investigation, documentary and building research, and the perhaps less obvious areas of recording local crafts and industries, and folklore. David was also very active in the events celebrating the Society's centenary in 1955. This provided a boost to the membership, and by the time of his resignation membership had doubled from when he took up his position. The period of closest co-operation with similar local societies

corresponds to the period of David's secretaryship, and there can be no doubt that this was due to his efforts. He re-instituted the practice of keeping a society scrapbook and it was appropriate that his leaving party was recorded in it, as well as being an indication of the appreciation felt by the Society for his service and leadership.

It is not the purpose of this notice to record his subsequent life and career in any detail. However, it would not surprise members to know that his career as Curator of Colchester and Essex Museum from 1963 to his retirement in 1988 was extremely active and productive, and that it finds echoes in his work in Leicester. He re-founded the Colchester Archaeological Committee, which led to the establishment of the Colchester Archaeological Trust. He reinvigorated the museum and greatly increased the staff, something he argued for at Leicester but had been largely unable to achieve. The Castle was totally refitted and the archaeological displays renewed. Holy Trinity Church was acquired and opened as a museum of country life and crafts, and Tymperleys was opened as a museum of Colchester clocks. He remained very active in the Museums Association, serving as Chairman of the Education Committee and of the Examiners. It was in this capacity that the writer was privileged to work with him, although David was always happy to share his knowledge with one who had followed in his footsteps at Leicester. David was also instrumental in establishing the Museums Association's Code of Ethics. He was also active in the work of our sister society, serving as Honorary Editor of the Essex Archaeological Society from 1972 to 1986.

In retirement, David, with his wife Joan (née Kirk), whom he had first met while digging in Canterbury with Sheppard Frere and who was a distinguished archaeologist and curator in her own right, and, like David, a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries, moved to Oxfordshire. There he remained active in fieldwork and local studies, and in giving support and practical help to the local museum service.

David's life's work has been well summed up and characterised by Christopher Young, F.S.A., who writes that he 'combined great knowledge of artefacts and archaeology with a passion for the proper curation and use of museums in their local communities. He believed very much in what is now termed outreach but also that this had to be based on a very firm foundation of scholarship and professional standards of curation. He fought fiercely to maintain the independence of museums as centres of scholarship, learning and their communities.' It is within this context that his service to this Society should be seen, both as a means of reaching out to, and involving, the interested public, and in bringing them into active involvement with the past. Finally, it should be said that David was someone for whom scholarship was fun. This was very well captured when the Society's visit to Noseley in 1959, led by David, was reported to have been accompanied by an 'informed and racy commentary'. Although it is 47 years since he left Leicester, there are still those who remember David Clarke with affection.

Robert A. Rutland