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KENTISH HISTORICAL WRITING, 1956-83: AN ASSESSMENT

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In 1955 the present writer was invited to contribute an article on *Kentish Historiography*¹ for the centenary volume of *Archaeologia Cantiana* and with the impending publication of the hundredth volume of that journal some consideration of what has happened since that date seems justifiable. The earlier article, of course, was primarily concerned with the 'greats' of past centuries: with Lambarde, Philopot, and Hasted; with those somewhat suspect writers Harris and Ireland, and, although the general situation in the first half of this century was briefly considered – especially the problem of the *Victoria County History* – the paper essentially finished with that typically nineteenth-century volume, Furley's, *History of the Weald of Kent*. In considering the past twenty-five years or so, the author is limited, as before, to historical affairs since the Saxon invasions and has no brief to consider Roman Kent or the publication of archaeological material.

The previous article also stressed the lack of a modern synthesis of Kentish history, both in terms of the quantity of original sources available and in terms of present day scholarship and interpretation of events. Regrettably, that overall picture has changed little, although even the briefest compilation of Kent titles suggests that a vast amount of effort has been exerted. In other words, there has been a considerable proliferation of books and articles on Kentish topics of very varied worth, and, although there are a few studies which bring together the results of serious research, we still await that giant who can digest both the sources available and produce a reasoned history from the whole. Perhaps, in the twentieth century that is too much to ask, for time is at such a premium that we must

¹ *Arch. Cant.*, lxx (1956), 221-30.

accept a series of major studies on recognizable periods of time or on topics of significance, though these will undoubtedly be supported by the generous labours of so many students of their own localities and worthies.

In broadest terms there appear to be six categories of publication which must be examined, although it must also be appreciated that margins are blurred and that there is a considerable overlap between the recognizable divisions. These are: (i) histories of a general character concerning a long period of time in broad outline or a study of a specific aspect of county history over a shorter period; (ii) histories of a burghal or parochial character; (iii) studies of specific topics limited in time or in the depth of study, or both; (iv) biographical works, including family histories; (v) the publication of source material in full or in calendar form; and (vi) the considerable collection of essays and monographs in periodicals and elsewhere. Such a classification indicates the magnitude of the task and the difficulty of covering each category in any adequate manner. What can be done, however, is to consider in general terms some of the more significant examples in each class and to attempt to assess trends, strengths and weaknesses, which are thus demonstrated. The omission of a particular work in no way invalidates it and only indicates that either the writer has not read it or that in his subjective judgement it does not warrant a specific reference within the limits of this paper.

(i)

It has to be stated at the outset that no single major work, in the sense of a general history, has appeared. It has not proved possible to continue *Victoria County History* and no one who could claim to be Hasted's successor has arisen. Nevertheless, 1958 saw the publication of one significant history of Kent in the scholarly, if modest, volume prepared by Frank Jessup.² The value of this book was twofold: first, it encompassed the whole of Kentish history in a simple, readable and up-to-date form; and, second, and resulting partly from the first, it formed a reasonably sound basis for the closer study of other aspects of Kentish history. Moreover, as good narrative history should, it presented the essential pattern of the relationship of Kent to England over the centuries and in that way set the local topic in its proper place in respect of national and international developments.

² *History of Kent* (1958).

In that sense, therefore, Jessup's *History of Kent*, has a seminal value: it cannot answer all the questions, but it can provide a background against which more detailed research can be carried out. But that statement only emphasises the fact that the other books chosen to represent this category are detailed studies of more restricted periods and topics. The first of these to appear was W.K. Jordan's, *Social Institutions in Kent, 1480-1660*, which was published as Volume lxxv of *Archaeologia Cantiana*.³ This was a most valuable enquiry into charitable bequests during a period of great change, political, economic and religious. If there were some doubts expressed as to the correctness of interpretation – a problem which tends to affect American writers adjusting to British experience and practice – it was still a work of importance for the proper study of the social history of Tudor and Stuart Kent. It is right, therefore, to set against Prof. Jordan's work another erudite study of social and economic life of much the same period in Peter Clark's: *English Provincial Society from the Reformation to the Revolution – Religion, Politics and Society in Kent, 1500-1640* (1977). It is clear that in this study the author is concerned with an even wider analysis than was Jordan and this is, indeed, a volume packed with information and hugely rich in reference and extracts from original material. Perhaps this is the basic problem, so that the outcome, though to be warmly welcomed, is also indigestible and not to be approached lightly despite the immediate attractiveness of the theme. It has a special value in that, true to his avowed interests, Peter Clark provides a specially informative and convincing picture of the urban society of the day and introduces the reader to the mercantile and professional classes and their interests.

But perhaps a still more important book appeared in 1966, though elements had been published in essay form before. This was Alan Everitt's *Community of Kent in the Great Rebellion, 1640-60*. Here was a beautifully written and admirably researched definitive study of the structure of Kentish society during the mid-seventeenth century which established the close-knit pattern of that society as a positive feature in the unfolding shape of history. Less diffuse than Clark, it is an excellent example of local history studied and resolved within the national setting.

Yet another volume appeared in 1965 which also pointed the way towards a better understanding of the social and economic basis of Kentish society. Christopher Chalklin's *Seventeenth-Century Kent* was a clear and concise account based on extensive research though

³ This detailed study was carried out in the preparation for the author's *Philanthropy in England, 1480-1660* (1959).

more particularly associated with the western area of the county and dependent to a degree upon an earlier study of Tonbridge.⁴ What is particularly noticeable is the emphasis upon the two hundred years, 1500–1700, which these various books indicate. While this may be understandable in terms of the general interest of the period, it leaves the study of Kent peculiarly ill-balanced, since no comparable works have appeared either for the medieval period or for the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

There is, however, one more volume to be considered in this category and that wholly different from the foregoing. It is Michael Winstanley's *Life in Kent at the Turn of the Century*, published in 1978. Because it deals with a period of time only now being lost to direct memory it is based on oral tradition, a difficult and dangerous medium to use, but here handled in a manner both sensitive and scholarly. The result is a vivid picture with just the right proportion of editing to retain a proper balance. Experimental, yes, and naturally a form unsuited to the history of earlier times, but, as with the use of much original documentation, an attempt to reach the common man and to understand his reaction to the society of his day. In that sense there is a relationship between all these special studies – they are all based on the record; written or oral; they are oriented towards society as a whole and especially towards the interplay of wealth and poverty within that society. Historians from an earlier age, while recognizing some affinity with Jessup, would be confounded by much of the newer pattern of research, but if others would produce as fine a selection of works for the remaining periods of our county's story, then indeed Kent would have a modern historiography of note.

(ii)

A basic problem associated with the writing of local history is the simple fact that it is 'local' and it has already been suggested that the most significant examples of this *genre* are those in which the development of the locality is seen in its proper relationship to the land as a whole. The nearer which one approaches to the roots of society the greater the risk that antiquity will become important in its own right and the more likely that unsupported legend and myth will survive side by side, if not in competition with historical fact. Parish history, therefore, tends to be of a very uneven quality and it is seldom that its scholarship is wholly unimpugned. There are good

⁴ See *Arch. Cant.*, lxxvi (1961), 'A Seventeenth Century Market Town: Tonbridge'.

reasons for this uncertain quality. Local studies depend upon the amount of original research possible to the author and upon the extent of the surviving documentation. If little survives, relatively little can be expected in return. Moreover, the writer must steer a path between memory, tradition and imaginative legend and may well face the open dismay of public opinion if truth and legend do not coincide. So, too, there is a very real risk that the outcome will be a pastiche of incident and odd fact which fails to become a reasoned study and which, all too often, opens the door to unrelated padding because a particular period or event is unrecorded in local annals.

Nevertheless, the output of this kind of study is considerable, varying from brief descriptive booklets, often limited to an account of the parish church, to full-scale history of a particular locality; and from volumes of disparate collected essays to detailed studies based on research of an erudite character. It is impossible to refer to more than a very few items in this category and those chosen must illustrate some of the points noted above.

The pastiche approach to parish history is admirably illustrated by the series of books concerning Sturry and neighbourhood, edited by Miss K.H. McIntosh. Within a fairly restricted compass they include much which is of value to the local student, but the content is largely unstructured and that lack of structure is to be regretted. Something of the same problem faced the editors of *A History of Bearsted and Thurnham* (1978), but there an attempt was made to bring together material of a common character and thus to provide a more balanced picture. Nevertheless, the limited research possible and the paucity of records held locally resulted in an uneven pattern. Unfortunately, the same kind of fault is seen at a much more pretentious level with Dorothy Gardiner's, *Historic Haven*, published in 1957. What purports to be a history of the town of Sandwich, becomes, in fact, a collection of extracts from records (almost, but not quite a source book), linked with brief editorial notes. The problem arises that this volume, full of good information, was published as a 'history', i.e. a work which digests the original material and presents the resulting reasoned account of the object of study, whereas, in fact, this book results in a selection of incidental documents with little argument or interpretation.

One volume of an outstanding quality in this class is undoubtedly, *Otford in Kent*, by Dennis Clarke and Anthony Stoyel published in 1975. This is parochial history at its best, but it must be added that Otford is extremely well documented and that the authors were therefore working a very rich vein. That is no criticism, for the research and presentation are both of a high quality; it does, however, underline the comment that the significance of any local

study will depend both upon the scholarship and critical faculty of the author and upon the existence of adequate documentation. One cannot make bricks without straw, but by the same token, one cannot make a satisfactory brick with straw alone.

One book, however, stands apart in these studies: *Canterbury under the Angevin Kings*, by William Urry (1967). Anyone who knew the author can attest to the remarkable scholarship and dedication which he showed, especially where the story of his beloved Canterbury was involved. We have, therefore, a definitive study of a very limited period of time, based on a group of remarkable survivals in the archives of the cathedral. Here Urry presents us with a well-digested exercise, supported by transcripts of the basic material used, and a series of plans – the result of his personal research into medieval Canterbury.

A question remains, however, which tends to affect all local historical writing – even the very best – and which can be posed as follows: if one is completely immersed in the resources available, how objective is it possible to be and can one limit one's use of such material in order to produce a readable and cogent argument? The immediacy of the incident or example can become so significant to the writer that nothing can be rejected and the outcome can become turgid or less well presented than should be the case. There is here a clash between what one might term antiquarian writing and true local history, and it is rare for such an ambivalence to be wholly avoided.

(iii)

Reference to Dr. Urry's work leads naturally into consideration of the third group of publications, those concerning special topics. Very many of these are in article form or fall into category six of our analysis, but there are a number of books of this nature which cover a very wide spectrum of matters, everything one might say, from hop-culture to the effects of the war of 1939–45. For the purpose of this article five books only have been chosen, one medieval, two mainly concerned with the early modern period and two for recent years.

It is inevitable that in Kentish terms the affairs of Canterbury should loom large, especially in matters ecclesiastical. In 1952, B.L. Woodcock had produced *Medieval Ecclesiastical Courts in the Diocese of Canterbury*, a basic text book for the study of ecclesiastical administration and then, in 1966, Robin du Boulay issued his volume on *The Lordship of Canterbury*. This, of course, was not a study of the medieval church, but a consideration of the archbishops' adminis-

tration of their extensive estates in Kent. As such, it forms a basic element in the consideration of medieval agrarian affairs in this county and of what were essentially the diverse properties of an absentee landlord who only occasionally made use of their immediate services.

The second and very different study, but no less basic, is Ken Gravett's, *Timber and Brick Building in Kent* (1971). This volume was based on an examination of a particular collection of drawings produced or acquired by J. Fremlyn Streatfeild in the last century. Much of the importance of this beautiful book, therefore, depends upon the introductory material provided by the editor. While, naturally linked with the drawings thus reproduced, this work also serves as a comprehensive study of vernacular architecture in Kent and has, therefore, a wider significance than the plates, themselves, would allow.

A third book of another kind entirely is Alan Everitt's, *The Pattern of Dissent* (1973). It may be objected that this is not specifically a Kentish book since it is a comparative study using Kent as the model for a wider assessment. Nevertheless, the very small quantity of unbiased research into non-conformity, which is available, justifies its inclusion, as also the manner in which it emphasises the debt owed by Kent to Leicester University through the work of Professor Everitt and Peter Clark.

Finally in this section there is Elizabeth Melling's, *History of the Kent County Council, 1889-1974* (1975), with which must be linked Patricia A. Moylan's, *Form and Reform of County Government* (1978). The former is a straight, narrative history based on the surviving records of the County Council; it covers the many facets of local government during the period covered and demonstrates their impact on this county. It is, therefore, a good model of local history as it should be written, if it is intended that the finished work should be a reasoned digest of resources moulded into an argument in which the local and national themes are held in reasonable balance. This contrasts with the analytical approach of Miss Moylan, who moreover restricted her study to the period 1889-1914. It is well to associate these two since what might be termed 'the official history' is inevitably less questioning as to the purposes and impact of local government and the latter book less concerned with a detailed factual account of activities.

(iv)

As in the case of parochial and kindred studies, the writing of

biography and of family history results in many and very varied papers and books. The result may be the full-scale examination of a man of destiny, or the monograph of a village worthy; it may be the consideration of a family of national standing or the result of the devoted study of one's own kith and kin. The interest, therefore, may be wide or intensely local; significant for world affairs or limited to the joys of the genealogist. Once again the dilemma represented by the words 'historical' and 'antiquarian' is fully apparent and again, too, the present writer can only select a few of the very best examples of this *genre*.

Three biographical studies are of outstanding importance: these are D.C. Coleman's, *Sir John Banks* (1963); F.W. Jessup's, *Sir Roger Twysden* (1965); and Retha Warnicke's, *William Lambarde* (1973). It is of interest to note once again that all three are personages of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and that while one, Banks, was a man of business, the other two were both lawyers. Each book is well researched and provides a significant addition to our knowledge not only of the man in question, but also of Kent at that time. The last of the three is by an American and, over the years, Lambarde has attracted much attention on the other side of the Atlantic. In 1967, Prof. Conyers Read edited Lambarde's charges to the Grand Jury in his admirable *William Lambarde and Local Government* and in 1967, Prof. Wilbur Dunkel of Rochester University produced *William Lambarde, Elizabethan Jurist*, a book which unfortunately revealed the worst features of American writing about British affairs, factually correct but failing in interpretation. Mrs. Warnicke's study, however, is in a different class: she had the advantage of support from Professors Jordan, Hurstfield and Sir John Neale and has therefore written an authoritative book.

The magnetic attraction of the Civil War has resulted in one other book which may well be placed here, the late T.P.S. Woods, *Prelude to Civil War* (1980), which is primarily a life of Mr. Justice Malet, Judge of Assize at the time of the Kentish petitions of 1642. This is not, perhaps, the perfect biography, because the turmoil of the age tends to obscure the man, but it is an important contribution to the historiography of the period in Kent.

Inevitably biography and family history are closely allied and while much of the latter is of limited interest, one book deserves mention: *Stanhope of Chevening* by Aubrey Newman (1969). This is a difficult book to assess. It is our only comprehensive study of the Stanhope family, covering in particular the lives of the seven earls and it was prepared with open access to the extensive Stanhope archive before it was generally available. At the same time it remains, stylistically, a difficult book to read and somehow fails to achieve its objective for

the principal characters do not come alive to the anticipated degree. Yet, it does reveal that family history, as opposed to personal history, can play an important part in local studies.

One final example of this category may be mentioned: A. Neame's, *Holy Maid of Kent*, issued in 1971. Well written and fascinating in its handling of a most interesting phenomenon, one has nevertheless to observe that it is biased towards Elizabeth Barton. This does not destroy its validity, but it is a factor which must be borne in mind by the reader. Controversy often rages where a subject of biographical writing is concerned and bias is an essential element of such studies; the writing is coloured by the relationship between author and subject, were it not so the result would all too often be 'monumentally dull' – perhaps it is this element of bias which Aubrey Newman's book lacks.

(v)

Historical writing, national or local, depends to a large degree upon the availability of original source material either in its pristine form or in some edited or calendared version. The nature of demand has been modified to some extent with the advent of easy copying and of microform, but the basic need remains. Occasionally, texts have been reproduced in full by photographic means and an example is to be found in the beautiful reproduction of *Textus Roffensis* in 1957.⁵ All such works are also dependent to a degree upon the excellence of the introduction and any other explanatory material. In this article, however, more attention will be paid to edited and calendared texts which have been issued, though the writer must declare an interest since he was involved directly or indirectly with much which has been done during the period covered. Indeed without the continuing activities of the Kent Archaeological Society and of the County Archives Office the output in this field would have been negligible.

Kent has suffered over the years from the want of a strong and well-funded record society and many of the basic medieval texts to be found in some other counties are lacking. It was not until 1955 that a volume of Kentish *Feet of Fines* appeared and that had taken nearly twenty years to produce. Indeed, if ever a further volume of these records is published, the time-lag would appear to be even longer for such has been discussed ever since 1958! It is, however, the earliest years covered by this type of record which are especially significant,

⁵ P. Sawyer, *Early English MSS in Facsimile*, VII, reproduces ff. 1-118 only of the original.

and the 1955 volume provides just that essential core of information. One other major publication of an edited text was the *Calendar of the White and Black Books of the Cinque Ports* in 1966. This book was a joint production of the K.A.S. and the Historical MSS. Commission and in the light of experience one may doubt whether the effort involved in this task was fully justified: it is not really enough that a record is unique, there must be other overriding considerations.

Anyone who spends time in documentary research is aware of how often he meets with items of more than passing interest which may, nevertheless, hardly justify their publication as a single book and yet are too extensive for the normal article. It was with such thoughts in mind that three volumes of a miscellaneous character were produced for the Kent Archaeological Society. These were: *A Seventeenth Century Miscellany* (1960); *Medieval Kentish Society* (1964); and *A Kentish Miscellany* (1979). The content was wide-ranging and included some fifteen edited items varying from 'A Book of Church Notes' by John Philipot, Somerset Herald to the lay subsidy roll of 1334-5, or a detailed inventory of Swingfield Preceptory shortly before Dissolution.

In contrast to these books of short but significant texts was the *Kentish Sources* series, vols. 1-6, edited so ably by Elizabeth Melling. The difficulty with source books is that since they usually consist of very brief documents or extracts, the effect once again is of a pastiche or patch-work with relatively little form. The design, therefore, was to produce books which covered one topic only and that in depth: the weakness, accepted as inevitable at the time, that the content was limited to the resources of one repository. The continuing sales of these books lead to the hope that they filled a need and that the series will be continued, as indeed it has been in 1983 by Nigel Yates' volume, *Kent and the Oxford Movement*.

(vi)

Any consideration of the mass of writing in essay form or as articles in the various periodicals, national and local, must, perforce, be very restricted and it is in any event most difficult to assess because this class embraces material relating to every one of the categories already considered except, perhaps, the first. So, too, much of the strength of our historical writing lies here, though it is also true to say that all the provisos and strictures stated above apply equally, if not more strongly to the essay form. Published articles may be learned and esoteric or learned and popular; equally they may be turgid, based on false premises or popular in the worst sense. The desire to

write about our heritage and our forebears is natural; the value of what we write will depend upon specialist skills, the use of critical faculties and the innate significance of the chosen topic. Unfortunately, too, publication is expensive and success depends partly upon public taste. It is one thing to produce papers for the transactions of a learned society with a captive readership, it is quite another to publish in the hope of attracting a wide popular clientèle.

We have, therefore, *Archaeologia Cantiana* as a first source for scholarly essays, but because the K.A.S. is primarily an archaeological society and because articles of an archaeological nature sometimes attract resources for publication, the balance of published material can be very uneven. In addition, the editor must satisfy himself that the paper, as presented, is essentially Kentish, so that excellent material may be rejected because its local associations are too tenuous. Nevertheless over the years, the Society's journal has provided a most valuable vehicle for many articles of a high standard both interpretive and editorial in character. Since 1956, we may say that something over one hundred such papers have been published in this way and that they cover an extraordinary spectrum of Kentish local history. Clearly, it is impossible to list all of these or even to isolate those of greatest merit, quite apart from the invidious nature of such a choice, but the subjects chosen range from Saxon Kent and the interpretation of medieval documents, to discussion of the agrarian pattern in Kent, its place-names and some of its estate maps. Equally there have been studies of towns: Tonbridge, Sandwich, Dover and Deal have been examined and the pattern of burghal elections discussed. Industry and commerce, the county administration of the Tudor period, ironworks and oyster fisheries have all found their protagonists, and, of course, there have been studies of a biographical character, including Algernon Sidney and a series called 'Men of Kent'.

Nevertheless, the restrictions noted above are real, and it was partly to overcome such limitations of publication by county societies that *Southern History* saw the light of day in 1979. Here it was hoped would be a means of publishing serious historical papers concerning the whole of southern Britain from Cornwall to Kent, including the Thames and Avon basins. While the result has indeed met much of the expressed hope and produced an annual volume worthy to stand against other regional volumes of a similar nature, the outcome so far as Kent is concerned is somewhat disappointing. Of course, it can be argued that a volume devoted to the history of a region should concentrate on comparative studies and, to an extent, this is so, but only four papers in the first five volumes are directly Kentish in content, plus one which compares medieval Canterbury with Oxford

of the same period. Although this proportion of articles is not unreasonable compared with some of the other counties covered, nevertheless the impression gained is that more stimulus arises from the Universities of Exeter, Southampton and Sussex than from that of Kent and that in this county there appears to be a certain lack of co-ordinated support for local research. It would be unfair not to refer in passing to John Whyman's paper 'Water Communication to Margate and Gravesend as coastal Resorts before 1840' (vol. 3); J.A. Coradas' 'Educational Provision for the Kentish Poor, 1660-1811' and J.P. Dodd's 'Public Health and Sanitation in a Kentish Market Town, Tonbridge, 1850-75' (both vol. 4); or D. Cohn-Sherbrook's study of the Canterbury pogroms of the Middle Ages (vol. 3).

In a sense, the lack of support referred to above was the cause of the tragedy of *Cantium*, published between 1970 and 1974. The purpose was once more for a proper vehicle for serious articles on Kentish topics, but, perhaps this was too ambitious; perhaps, it fell between two stools and did not meet popular need, but, if so, that surely is an indictment of popular need and of the unwillingness of many to read articles of serious import, preferring rather to accept the trivial and oft-times legendary history which abounds where factual research is ignored. Thus the *Journal of Local History*, which followed *Cantium*, is circumscribed both by its close association with the County Local History Committee and by its format. The result, too, is that local history in Kent is popularly represented by *Bygone Kent* a production of essentially antiquarian rather than historical worth.

Finally, one must mention two volumes of essays which have appeared. The first, *Essays in Kentish History* (1973), edited by Roake and Whyman, and comprising a group of articles taken from *Archaeologia Cantiana* reproduced as a collected set of essays, thus saving the student the labour of searching many volumes. Since it covers aspects of history from medieval times to the nineteenth century, it forms an especially valuable *corpus* of material for our county history. The second such book is *Studies in Modern Kentish History* (1983) and is in the nature of a *Festschrift* in connection with the half-century which has passed since the Kent Archives Office began activity. Once again, this is a useful, wide-ranging, series of essays, though more limited in time scale since it begins with the Civil War.

It has been inevitable that this survey should prove both sketchy and, in many respects, inadequate, but if it has helped to indicate the wealth of historical writing and also the very varied quality of the same, then much will have been achieved, for while most of such

work depends upon individual enthusiasm and effort, there remains that curious lack of direction and a certain ambivalence in what has been produced. We have already noted the tendency to study the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to the disadvantage of other periods and although, at times, as with *Cantium*, an attempt to arouse an interest in deeper historical discussion has been made, all too often the antiquarian view that 'old is beautiful' has clouded the efforts of scholars. So, too, until recently, financial considerations have partially precluded the development of a strong body geared to the publication of records or wider historical studies. It was hoped in the sixties with the advent of the University of Kent that a more co-ordinated and higher level of publication might result, but a glance at the contents of the first five volumes of *Southern History* reveals the relative weakness of the response. So, too, the writer has recently examined the comprehensive list of titles of books, monographs, articles and reviews produced by members of the University faculties which appears in the *18th Annual Report* of that institution, published in December 1983. This list, amounting in all to some twenty-four pages of text, with two honourable exceptions, contains nothing relating to the history of Kent, and while there have been some important unpublished theses produced over the years and the Diploma in Local History is a pointer towards better things, the overall will to co-ordinate historical research in Kent still seems to be lacking. Even the publication, despite expense, of some of this original but unpublished research would be a most worthy development.

It is regrettable that nearly thirty years on, the assessment is still so negative, and it has to be recognized that those most anxious to improve the position are often immersed in administration and are only able to encourage and welcome well conceived work as it is completed and received. It is acknowledged too, from experience, that editors or authors often fail to complete the task they have initially undertaken with enthusiasm, but Kent and Kentish history deserve better and the failure to follow up the *Victoria County History* as in some other counties is an indication of the lack of will where it is most needed. The very size of Kent, as well as the mass of resulting documentation presents a problem: the effort to produce a reasonably definitive study of our place-names has already lasted two decades with few signs of progress⁶ and this question of magnitude of

⁶ As long ago as 1959 the late P.H. Reaney wrote an article for *Archaeologia Cantiana* on our place-names to coincide with an effort to begin serious collecting work. This activity was taken over by the English Place-Names Society in the nineteen-sixties but the sheer size of the task has precluded results so far.

task tends to affect other fields of research. Nevertheless, what can be done and what has been done elsewhere is surely possible, and it must be hoped that during the remaining years of this century further positive contributions to the historiography of Kent will be made at all levels and that the many gaps in the present picture will be filled by dedicated scholarship writing for a growing and more discerning readership.