

CHRISTOPHER HOHLER'S ARCHIVE

I suppose that almost everyone reading this will have heard of Christopher Hohler and be aware of at least one of the areas of study to which he made a significant contribution. I have to admit that I was aware of only one when I offered to catalogue his papers, and that was the Penn tiles. The classificatory work that he did was doubtless the main influence on the mental image that I had of him which, somewhat inevitably, fell far short of the reality of the man himself.

The fact that both the man and his work were so much richer than I had realised soon became apparent as I examined the contents of his archive. His early work was on excavations at Notley Abbey, where a large number of Penn tiles were found, and then on the classification of the tiles was familiar from his publications in the *Records*. But his early eagerness to publish soon lapsed, so that his subsequent work, especially that done in connection with the history of Long Crendon, came as a complete surprise.

Christopher Hohler finished his education at Eton and New College, Oxford just in time to join in World War II, most of which he spent in the Middle East. It is hard to imagine that he fitted very well with the army, but he does seem to have learnt from it the value of discipline, for others if not in all matters for himself. Afterwards, and inexplicably, he was invited to join the Courtauld Institute of Art, where he remained until he retired. While there, he researched many medieval topics; gave influential courses; published almost nothing; treated his research students so severely that many did not last the course, although those that did invariably went on to distinguished careers; and infected meetings with his laughter and anarchic love of the absurd.

He carried out his studies in medieval history in parallel with his art historical work. And, as a man of projects, his major work concerned the reconstruction of the Notley Abbey Cartulary, which was never published although he had lined up someone to do so; the transcription of the Buckingham Archdeaconry Archive, which was published by the Record Society with scant acknowledgement; and the history of Long Crendon, a certain amount of which was used by others when publishing histories of the village. His enduring work on Long Crendon resulted, in his own words, from the fact that 'Long Crendon has a particularly interesting history' that is 'particularly well documented', and also that for 'most of my life I lived in Long Crendon Manor, which belongs to my mother' and 'it seems fairly certain to me that my mother's house was not in the middle ages connected with this manor at all.'

So, this archive, which is now catalogued, is that of a clever, complex and hard-working man whose interests were many and varied. I would recommend at least a short look at it to so as enjoy the pleasure of his company and a sampling of the 'secret' work he did over the years. There are other joys to be found, including the mixing of art history and medieval history, often on the same page, and perhaps with a personal memo thrown in, and, of real relevance to the Society, the extent to which he was in continual touch with like-minded contemporaries, such as John Chenevix-Trench and A Vere Woodman.

Garry Marshall