

REVIEWS

The Warden's meeting: a tribute to John Sparrow, ed. Anthony Davis. Oxford, Oxford University Society of Bibliophiles, 1977. 131 pp. £6.00.

This book consists of thirty short essays on bibliographical subjects presented to John Sparrow on the occasion of his retirement as Warden of All Souls College, Oxford. The contributors are all either present or former members of the Oxford University Society of Bibliophiles, of which Mr Sparrow has been the honoured doyen since its foundation in 1951. The book takes its title from the Society's meetings held once a term in the Warden's Lodgings in All Souls, to which for a quarter of a century members have been in the habit of taking their own books to pass round. It is unusual among *Festschriften* in that substantial original research has evidently not been a major criterion in choosing contributions (though several of the pieces represent, on their own admission, starting-points for research not yet done). The editor's aim has been more modest: to indicate something of the range of interests with which the Warden has infected so many people over the years. Dr Bent Juel-Jensen in his engaging introduction ('No one can forget the loving care with which the Warden treasures and handles a seventeenth-century English book in limp vellum') pays tribute to the generosity, wisdom and enthusiasm which have earned Mr Sparrow the affection and respect of innumerable young people learning to love books.

It should be stressed, though, that the peculiarly personal nature of this collection does not make it any less worthy of attention. For *The Warden's meeting* is also unusual in that the essays it contains are a series of variations on the fusing of bibliography and bibliophily – as we all know they should be fused, but the fusion is all too rarely conveyed in scholarly writing. To Mr Sparrow they have always been inseparable. Many people exhibit the two enthusiasms in varying proportions, but there can be few scholars who have achieved such stature in both fields. The Warden's collection has always been a rich mine for his own research (and for other people's – how often has one seen references to 'Mr John Sparrow's copy'!). This is true especially of his celebrated collection of association copies; and he has always believed firmly in the value of collecting multiple copies. The contribution by John Simmons contains some fascinating recollections of Warden's meetings in vindication of this practice, one so far removed from the austerity and 'rationalising' of institutional library budgets as to make one wonder how bibliographers dependent on public collections, as they usually have to be, ever manage to do any comparative work at all.

The essays are as wide-ranging as book-collecting itself, but most of them share a common theme: the unique interest of the individual copy. A number of the contributors illustrate this by examples from their own collections. Michael Hunter describes his copy of Chaucer's *Workes*, 1602, which may have belonged to Alexander Pope. Henry Woudhuysen contributes an interesting note on a little-known facet of the bibliographer A.W. Pollard, describing a presentation copy of Pollard's anonymous *Life, love, and light: practical morality for men and women* (1911). Gregory Stevens Cox tells of the discovery by his father, in a bookshop in Maine, of a group of William Barnes manuscripts. These include a delightfully characteristic letter (of which the text

is given in full) on philological matters, written in old age to his daughter, outlining his theory of cognate relationships ('beware of down-worn words. . . Shematic speech is built in a far different way, from Root-frames of 3 clippings'). Michael L. Turner describes his own copy of the 'second and cheap edition' (June 1930) of Edmund Blunden's *Undertones of war*, which bears a presentation inscription to Richard Cobden-Sanderson and contains compositorial markings which seem to indicate that it was used as copy for the third edition, published in November of that year. Time and again we are reminded that the bibliographical by-ways pursued in *The Warden's meeting* are no more diverse than the interests reflected by the books on the Warden's own shelves.

Several contributors merely describe simple delights which they owe to Mr Sparrow's influence. Elizabeth Knowles, a recent Officer of the Society, was first introduced to Charlotte Mew's poetry at a Warden's meeting, while Helen Peters describes the pursuit and eventual acquisition of her first vellum-bound book after being awed by the Warden's shelves of vellum. Taken individually, these and a number of the other essays, are very slight contributions to bibliographical knowledge; together, they add up to a warm tribute to scholarship at its most humane.

The collection ends with a remarkable forty-page chronological check-list, compiled by Dennis E. Rhodes and Simon Rendall, of Mr Sparrow's published writings, embracing many branches of scholarship and public affairs and beginning with his edition of Donne's *Devotions*, published when he was a sixteen-year-old schoolboy at Winchester. In accordance with what unfortunately seems to be customary practice, the list was compiled without Mr Sparrow's collaboration, and presented to him as a surprise, so that it is almost certain to be incomplete even down to its cut-off date — and it is already notably out-of-date. The contributors to *The Warden's meeting* (which has been advertised unofficially as limited to two hundred copies, though the book itself contains no limitation notice), along with innumerable others, many of whom have known the Warden only distantly, will hope that his retirement will be fruitful of many addenda.

Trevor Mills,
State Library of Victoria,
Melbourne.

NIALL, Brenda. *Martin Boyd*. Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 1977. (Australian Bibliographies) \$4.50.

The first question to ask of any bibliography is: For whom is it intended? The answer to this will determine the standard of bibliographical description required, though the standard of accuracy should not vary between the list of pony-books for a children's library and the *Soho Bibliographies* published by Rupert Hart-Davis. Both these types of bibliography are for people who are only interested in the works *by* an author, in

Copyright of Full Text rests with the original copyright owner and, except as permitted under the Copyright Act 1968, copying this copyright material is prohibited without the permission of the owner or its exclusive licensee or agent or by way of a license from Copyright Agency Limited. For information about such licences contact Copyright Agency Limited on (02) 93947600 (ph) or (02) 93947601 (fax)