

(The late) CHARLES HENDERSON **Ecclesiastical Antiquities of the 109 Ancient Parishes of West Cornwall.** *Published in four parts, in Journal of the Royal Institution of Cornwall (New Series II, 3, 1955; II, 4, 1956; III, 2, 1958; III, 4, 1960); obtainable from the Curator, County Museum, River Street, Truro; prices on application.*

'Others abide our question, thou art free' is a tribute which can never apply to any historian, but no one more nearly attained this ideal than Charles Henderson (1900-1933), who in a brief but astonishingly fruitful career set a standard for local enquiry in Cornwall that will always stand as a goal for his successors. To the Royal Institution of Cornwall he left a massive legacy of thousands of original documents, calendars, transcripts and notes, consultation of which forms the starting-point (and usually very much more) for virtually every project involving research in Cornish history. It is thus fitting that the Institution, which in 1937 published Henderson's *History of Constantine* as a memorial, should have undertaken the further project here under review.

Its scope is the ecclesiastical history of the parishes forming the western Hundreds of Penwith, Kerrier, Powder and Pydar, and it is difficult to over-estimate its importance for anyone working on this area, since it combines the results of extensive documentary research, often with sources never before used, with those of careful observation in the field. But, great as its value is, the work must be used with caution since, although it was largely written by 1924, the author never revised it for publication and it cannot be said to represent the final word (or even his final word) on any subject. Much of it is in note form, and it does not include some of the author's later discoveries, such as the important grant of 1396

relating to the Chapel of St. Michael of Bree (Chapel Carn Brea in St. Just) (*Henderson MSS. HA/8/1*).

The editing is of the high standard expected from one to whom the younger generation of Cornish scholars owe such a debt as to Mr. H. L. Douch, but a little unenterprising. No one would have wished to have Henderson's own words changed, but it is hard not to regret the absence (except in the first part) of any real attempt to draw attention by footnotes to relevant later discoveries and publications. Much research has taken place on individual parishes, and on more general topics such as crosses and ancient chapels, since Henderson died, and judicious references to it would have made his work even more valuable to modern students. It would possibly have made the task of editing an unreasonable burden for one man, but many would have been willing to share it.

One must also point out that Henderson's original MS. of the work contains many illustrations and plans which are not reproduced in the printed text, and that reference to the former will continue to be desirable for some purposes.

Only one of Henderson's major works, the *History of St. Just in Roseland*, now remains unpublished. It would be unreasonable to expect the Institution to undertake its publication at the present time, but one day this must be done as a final acknowledgement of Cornwall's debt to her greatest historian.

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