



George Shaw Sandon Yule
(1919-2000)

George Yule and British History

This special issue of *Parergon* is published to celebrate the contribution to early modern historical scholarship of George Shaw Sandon Yule (1919-2000), before, during and after his terms as Professor of Church History at Ormond College, University of Melbourne (1957-77) and Professor of Church History at the University of Aberdeen (1978-1988). After graduating from Scotch College, Melbourne in 1938, Yule went on to study for an Arts degree at Melbourne University. There he had the great good fortune to be among the first class of students taking British History B (Honours), in the year that Max Crawford introduced *Puritanism and Liberty*, A. S. P. Woodhouse's recently published edition of the Putney and Whitehall debates, as prescribed text for this course. George recalled in 1998 that 'These unique documents were very close to Crawford's main historical interests ... uncovering controversies over democracy, republicanism and religious toleration between opponents who had a great deal in common, especially in the Whitehall debate, and yet were in serious disagreement'.¹ The complexity, intensity and subtlety of these arguments between the New Model Army's commanding officers and representatives of the rank-and-file troopers resonated not only with Crawford and his newly-appointed lecturer Kathleen Fitzpatrick, but also with their students. After all, the issues and conflicts canvassed in 1647 and 1649 – of freedom and authority, ideology, power, and individual autonomy – were still being played out, and on a world stage. Moreover, Crawford and Fitzpatrick were outstanding teachers; 60 years later George recalled 'the feeling of anticipation I had when I went to attend Max Crawford's lectures, and rarely was I disappointed'.² The remarkable, in many respects path-breaking, first-year course on early modern British history which they constructed during these formative years would inspire several generations of Melbourne students throughout the 1940s and '50s, including an impressive tally of graduates who later went on to publish and teach in that same field.

¹ G. Yule, 'Max Crawford, Puritanism and the Reformation', in *Max Crawford's School of History*, ed. Stuart Macintyre and Peter McPhee (History Department, University of Melbourne, Melbourne, 2000), pp. 59-62 at 62.

² *Ibid.*, p. 59.

Foremost among these was George Yule, who in 1947 submitted a thesis of some 80,000 words on 'The Development of Puritanism' for the degree of Master of Arts. Soon acquiring semi-legendary status among first-year history students at Melbourne, Yule's thesis was among the earliest sustained pieces of historical research and writing on an early modern topic ever completed from an Australian base, and almost certainly the first to have been awarded a higher degree by an Australian university. Although written following a year's research at Oxford on a Rockefeller studentship, his 1958 monograph, *The Independents in the English Civil War* (whose dust-jacket and spine proudly bear the Melbourne University Press imprint) was also a trail-blazing feat for an Australian early modernist, perhaps preceded only by G. V. Portus's *Caritas Anglicana* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1912). For this was still the era of the gentleman/lady-scholar/teacher, who regarded 'publish or perish' as a barbarous American irrelevance, not a career imperative. From our current embattled, performance-monitored academic vantage point, that attitude may well seem to have more going for it than once appeared. But George's publications certainly had nothing to do with self-promoting academic careerism.

Since the 1950s our scholarly environment has been transformed by photocopying, jet flights, computers and the Internet. Graduate studies in non-Australasian historical topics are no longer a rarity in Australian and New Zealand universities. But we should not forget those who led the way in a less technologically sophisticated age. While George may never have gathered a postgraduate entourage around him, his enquiring mind and generosity of spirit touched a great many, students and colleagues alike. Among four brief tributes to George's life and work published in a previous issue of *Parergon* (ns 18:3, July 2001, pp. xi-xviii), my own expressed regret that his 'pioneering achievements have yet to receive the formal recognition of a memorial volume from former colleagues and students'. Happily, these words did not fall on deaf ears or stony ground. At the February 2003 Melbourne conference of the Australian and New Zealand Association for Medieval and Early Modern Studies, three sessions were devoted to 'Religion, Government and Society in Early Modern England: In Memoriam George Yule'. It is especially fitting that most of the papers printed below had their first airing in that forum, given George's prime role in establishing what has become a traditional pattern of biennial academic gatherings by Antipodean early modernists. Besides the authors of papers, we are indebted to two of George's most distinguished former students, Dr Lotte Mulligan and Professor Patricia Crawford, for their eloquent accounts of his continuing influence, both as teacher

and disciplinary colleague. During his first visit to Britain in 1947 this remarkable man impressed R. H. Tawney as 'a very attractive fellow'.³ Those seeking further perspectives should consult the compilation where Dr Mulligan's appreciation first appeared: *A Man of Grace: Papers Given at a Symposium to Honour the Life of Professor George Yule*, ed. Ian Breward (Melbourne: Theological Hall, Ormond College, 2002). The select bibliography of George's scholarly publications on pp. 169-72 below was compiled by Carol Matthews and Helen Payne. Thanks also to Andrew Lynch, Peter Yule and my fellow contributors.

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George Yule and the Craft Of History

I first met George Yule in 1950 when he lectured us in the Honours class on the political and religious thought of the 'English Revolution'. And it was the intellectual content of his lectures rather than the flair or style of delivery which took me by storm. In fact it was only after several classes that I realized what that youthful, yet shambling figure in his tweeds with frayed cuffs and baggy trousers was doing for us, up there, in front of the lectern. He wandered about thinking aloud, ruminating about the structures of thought which informed Presbyterians, Independents, radicals and sectarians, and about the intellectual origins of these modes of thought. What he said transformed my ideas, not just about the content of history but also how it should be studied.

In particular, our class was infected by his enthusiasm for the modes of thought behind the famous Putney debates. At that encounter, between the rank-and-file and the officers of the New Model Army at Putney church in 1647, the differing war aims of its participants and their incompatible ideals for the future settlement of the kingdom were elegantly yet passionately expressed. While the text of these debates was in print it was far too expensive for us to buy. So our knowledge of them came largely from George's lectures or from the one battered copy which the library held and which we had to fight over for an occasional hour's read. I still have my notes from those lectures. This was, I believe, our first real experience of

³ R. H. Tawney to Kathleen Fitzpatrick, 6 October 1947: University of Melbourne Archives, Fitzpatrick Papers, Box 2.