

Clip: DICKENS GEOFFREY_GEOFFREY DICKENS WITH BOB

**Name: DICKENS GEOFFREY_GEOFFREY DICKENS WITH
BOB SCRIBNER HARVARD _MASTER TAPE 1 1 MIN BARS
ODB TONE AUDIO CH 2_BOX2 _cust ref_MID19725858**

S1 00:00:58:19

A. Lip licking themselves.

UU 00:01:03:23

Out next door.

S2 00:01:12:03

Can you reach your water? We'll probably see. I suppose we probably won't talk any much louder than that. We'll let them. Louder than this. And we'll let them adjust. Can you hear me? If I'm talking fairly softly? A little bit more. A little. A little bit. A bit more.

S3 00:01:27:13

Volume than that.

S2 00:01:28:09

A little bit more volume than that. Yes. Okay. Because one does need to project a little bit the way you're.

S3 00:01:34:06

Speaking now is just right.

S2 00:01:35:16

It's just right. Okay. Right. Great. I was just wondering about that.

S3 00:01:41:01

Okay, then. I think we're about ready to go. Give me if you would like to mentally count backwards from about ten. I will do the same. And then you're off. Okay.

Clip: DICKENS GEOFFREY_GEOFFREY DICKENS WITH BOI

S2 00:01:52:03

All right. All right.

S3 00:01:53:09

Okay, Here we go.

S2 00:01:54:19

There's a snag.

S3 00:01:56:08

Somebody's trying to call.

S2 00:01:57:11

Yes.

S4 00:01:58:14

Is still on.

S2 00:02:00:01

Yes. I wondered about. That's what made me wonder about the sound level. Whether Jeff could hear me. Because I thought there was this.

S3 00:02:08:14

Just this. Well, thank you very much.

S4 00:02:12:02

Okay.

S3 00:02:12:16

Little thing that we shouldn't overlook. Right where we were before. Going backwards from ten now.

Clip: DICKENS GEOFFREY_GEOFFREY DICKENS WITH BOI

S2

00:02:20:22

No. Right. If one were to ask a group of history students to play a word association game and to ask them what was suggested by the title the English Reformation, I think almost all of them would come up with the word AG Dickens or the name AG Dickens. Jeff Dickens has been associated with the writing of history on the English Reformation for almost 50 years now at the level of local history and of national history and then at the level of international history. I'm going to be talking to him today about this very long career. Jeff, you're a born bred Yorkshireman.

S3

00:03:04:15

Very much so.

S2

00:03:05:15

And I suppose there's a certain naturalness that a Yorkshireman should turn to local and regional history, given this pride that Yorkshireman take in their region. Can you tell me about how you got into local and regional history?

S5

00:03:19:21

I never even thought about this. It seemed so natural that I or I would be interested in it. I mean, as a schoolboy I got ideas about the Middle Ages and Beverley Minster and other of course, in York above all places, and it always seemed very reasonable as well as habitual, to think in local terms as well as in broader terms. I tried to do both things, of course.

S2

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So this was an interest you took with you and you went up to Oxford?

S5

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Oh, certainly. Yes. Yes, indeed.

Clip: DICKENS GEOFFREY_GEOFFREY DICKENS WITH BOI
S2 00:03:57:04

And then your period in Oxford deepened that and moved you into research.

S5 00:04:05:05

I became interested in broader things when I was in Oxford, even, however, of course in Oxford local history, which is just as local in a way. But I acquired very broad interests in European history when I worked with Sir George Clark, Jan Clark, who was one of my tutors. And again, when I worked on the Italian Renaissance, the special subject, which I did in my third year and in the third place doing political philosophy with C.S Lewis was one of my more interesting tutors and he was immensely broad in his interests and he conveyed something of that to myself.

S2 00:04:53:05

We wouldn't, of course, normally think of C.S Lewis in connection with political philosophy and that certainly this.

S5 00:04:59:22

Was somewhat unusual. He was a Don at my college at Maudlin Oxford, and he used to teach some of the scholars of the college in the field of political philosophy was by trade, a philosopher, a thing which many people overlook, of course, but that's what he normally did. And he took on a few historians as well. And that's how I came to work with him individually and to know him fairly well.

S2 00:05:28:05

Would that be fairly typical of the type of scholar that you're encountering in Oxford at this time? This is the the late 20s, early 30s, isn't it? Yes.

Clip: DICKENS GEOFFREY_GEOFFREY DICKENS WITH BOI

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Oh, yes. I think I was greatly attracted by medieval history, of which I had done little until that point. And I was very fascinated, for instance, by Maurice Pogue, who was Regis professor at that time and whom I got to know was much better later on when I was a Don there. But he had a great love of the Middle Ages, and a lot of this communicated itself very readily in my early stages, but I mixed with medievalist quite a lot and that has been invaluable from my point of view of my later interests.

S2

00:06:19:03

And I remember you telling me once that you're very struck by the fact that all of these teachers were very Victorian in their orientation, that they were.

S5

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Yes. I was thinking perhaps when I said that more about my colleagues in the common room at Keeble, where I became a fellow only a few months after graduating, and I lived with three old men there who had been grown men long before Queen Victoria died, and from whom I acquired a good deal of my values. I think in a sense, I mean the ten shall say perspectives, and they were very much Victorian and yet Victorian upper class, as one might say, or rather different from Victorians I'd met in Yorkshire. But nevertheless I don't feel at all out of place and I'm dealing with the Victorian period. I think the people I loved most when I was young were my grandparents who were born in the 1850s and had a lot of the values of of that. Time.

S2

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So from a scholarly and very much values of rigor and precision and thoroughness, which we always associate, of course. Yes. I'd like to think.

Clip: DICKENS GEOFFREY_GEOFFREY DICKENS WITH BOI

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That that was what one learned from them, certainly. And of course, in Yorkshire, particularly, the ideas of working hard and having a career and being a success. But it vulgarly I mean, one was brought up in those ideas.

S2

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Of course, is the enduring Yorkshire tradition. We don't have to go back to the Victorians for that.

S5

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No, indeed, it still exists.

S2

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Yes. And then of course, you started to bring this sort of rigor to local history. And this is the first most interesting aspect of your career of starting to develop local history as something which is taken seriously on a national level rather than working in an antiquarian level. Yeah. Were you aware of the importance of this at the time?

S5

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Not entirely. I had a suggestion from one of my tutors. This is Bruce Macfarlane of Maudlin, who was of course a 15th century specialist, and he suggested when I was looking round for a postgraduate subject that I should write about the Catholics of Tudor Yorkshire, who of course were rather important in the history of that time. And I did work for 2 or 3 years, mainly on these people. Then I began to realise that after that a greater subject would be the Reformation in general, and I got more interested, I think on the whole in the Protestant aspect of it ultimately. But I've always been interested in those who didn't move with the Reformation and of course in northern old fashioned society in Yorkshire and North. This is a very fascinating scheme.

Clip: DICKENS GEOFFREY_GEOFFREY DICKENS WITH BOI

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So in a sense, as a Yorkshireman used to being out of step with the rest of the country, you went for people who were out of step with the others.

S5

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Yes, I always tended to do that. I think I think it's important that some of us should do this. I had, incidentally, no inspiration at that time from the the French National School, who, of course, were doing something very similar without my realising it because I was not really acquainted with their work until much later, in fact, and not much until the 1950s when I began to see that this combination of the local and the general was being done in a slightly different spirit in France particularly.

S2

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Well, is this the sort of interest that moved you into following up the work on the lowlands? Because the lowlands had been rather neglected, hadn't they?

S5

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They were rather neglected, yes. At that time, because it wasn't generally understood that Lowland persisted in many parts of England well into the Tudor period, and indeed merged in with the Lutheran or the Protestant Reformation and its spirit, the spirit of lowland. It never quite disappeared, one feels in that period. And gradually I came to see that they were part of the story. And even in Yorkshire, where they were not very important, they were part of the story. And I suppose my first big book, as I think of it, was called Lowlands and Protestants in the Diocese of York, which included Yorkshire, Nottinghamshire very largely. And I think that was, if I might. So it was one of my more influential books because that particular combination of ideas was by no means generally grasp at that time.

S6

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Yes.

Clip: DICKENS GEOFFREY_GEOFFREY DICKENS WITH BOI

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And of course that book made people start thinking about looking at history from the grassroots in the sense no, no. Did that develop out of your local history, local historical interest? Did local history lead you to so to say, well, let's look at the grass roots of ordinary people, or was that a subsequent development?

S5

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Well, I think it was both in a sense. I began to think along these lines even when I was writing about Catholics, because I read in some detail the material on the Pilgrimage of Grace, which was the biggest of the rebellions of the Tudor period and the records of which are mainly in the archives of the state, revealed a great deal about the mentality of humble men and clerics of the middle orders, even peasants. One learnt a bit more about the Matilda Rebellion was rather like taking the lid off society somewhat in terms of the record which it left. You could say that of a number of those revolts. We have a lot of evidence about them. And thinking about that I think was or was rather an influential stage. I began to see that even ordinary people had ideas about religion and politics, local and national and so on, and that the idea that the peasant or the craftsman was just an operative who did a job and was a figure in economic history without a face, so to speak, he wasn't really like that. He was a human being. Just as the better recorded people in the higher classes of society were. And I think that was the most influential thought I had. And I began to apply that on a rather wide scale.

S2

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And this then led you into looking at a whole range of sources that have been rather neglected. I mean, you mentioned the stuff about rebellions and I think rebellions was being neglected and certainly when did you start working with the Will material? Because Wills is another.

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S5 00:13:31:03

Yes, yes. So I've always been interested. Well, that arose because quite early in the day, this is in the early 30s, well over 50 years ago, I went to York and started work on the archives of the Diocese of York. They now live in a separate institute in York, but at that time they were moldering and cobweb and in a mess in the building immediately attached to the minster itself. That is to say in the diocesan registry, where they'd scarcely been disturbed since they took all the time that they were produced. And there's a very rich collection of material there, including the medieval registers of the Archbishops of York, which are of course of immense value. But also the thing that interested me more, they included a lot of the court books of the ecclesiastical courts, which gave a lot of very basic information on Tudor men and women. And I spent quite a long time copying out whole passages from these activities, particularly, of course, in the ecclesiastical courts, which dealt with morals and heresy and things of that sort. And I found those extremely informative. And at that time they were entirely new material. The only other person who knew much about them was one of the canons, Canon Purvis at the the minster who was began reorganising them at this time and indeed during the war years while I was away, completed their reorganization and made them much more accessible. One of the few scholars who worked there along with me in the 1530s was a professor of the University of Leeds who happened to be interested at this same time, but they were very little used in the 30s. And what was in the beginning of something there?

S2 00:15:37:20
Yes, partly because it was so difficult to get access to them.

S5 00:15:41:17
Oh, certainly. Yes. Yes. One had to work in the room along with the typist of the registrar who came in occasionally, looked around. It was all very sort of 18th century, the whole atmosphere.

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So you're doing almost a job of archaeology on the sources?

S5

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Very much so, Yes. Yes, yes. I found this an attractive stage to be in on the game, but one's progress was a little slow, Of course.

S2

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Yes. I find it was all very remarkable because all of these themes we've talked about are now, so to speak, the very trendy themes of modern historical research. And you're in on the ground floor in this 50 years before anyone else even thinks.

S5

00:16:22:00

And saying, well, somewhat before, of course, the the diocesan registries throughout England have been increasingly exploited, shall we say, during the last 30 years by younger scholars, very largely. And they, of course, were not the only archives we exploited, but there were a new archive, by and large, at that time.

S2

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And of course, all this was very much being done quietly because your earlier publications are in local history journals and their shorter articles.

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Yes, very large.

S2

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And so there is a sort of substratum of interesting material there waiting to come up later. But then the war came along and rather interrupted your research.

S5

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Oh, very much so. Yes.

Clip: DICKENS GEOFFREY_GEOFFREY DICKENS WITH BOI

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Yes, yes, yes. How how did you start to feel about that in terms of the break with career? Because I know you started to get very involved as.

S5

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Yes, I, I started getting involved a year or two before the war started because it struck me that I was. Course, an established character, a junior character in Oxford. At that time, it struck me that not enough preparation was made for the probability of air raids should war break out. And we were at that time, of course, very immersed in the Spanish Civil War, and one's friends went to Barcelona and saw it being bombed and all this kind of thing. And I teamed up with a group of doctors in London who felt quite sure that the hospitals would not be able to manage the casualties. It really heavy bombing developed and when the war started, it obviously more or more obviously was going to do. And we did a lot of propaganda in writing in the newspapers and things. I got my first taste of what you might call public activities in all that, and I was rather closely allied with JBS Haldane, a very eminent geneticist who was incidentally communist, which I was not, but he was a very active man on the platform in London. I used to come up to London very frequently to join in these activities and I was more immersed in that than in academic work from the time of Munich to the beginning of the war, indeed, slightly beyond that point.

S2

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So quite a considerable campaign.

S5

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Oh, yes.

S2

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How did you fall onto this? Because it doesn't seem to me that these are people you would normally meet sitting in Oxford common room, so to speak.

Clip: DICKENS GEOFFREY_GEOFFREY DICKENS WITH BOI

S5

00:18:57:19

The people were agitating about air raid shelters and all that, you mean? Yes. Yes. No, Partly the the one of these doctors with whom I became very friendly wrote to me about a letter I myself wrote in the Times to begin with. And he later published our all our letter campaigning letters in a kind of a pamphlet, which must be one of the rarer printed items in the in the British Library, I would think. And I, I gradually got mixed up. Of course, a lot of other people were thinking, as I was at that time, partly due to the Spanish situation.

S2

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So this was put together very much as an ad hoc group without very much connection with existing political groups.

S5

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Oh yes. It really wasn't very political where these people were mainly rather conservative people in general. It became more and more immersed in in left wing politics later on, but rather less than people think. I would have supposed Haldane's group tended to be very leftist and to tie it up with the social and political problems of the time. And of course, when you were thinking about the possible fate of the East end of London, it naturally got mixed up with the social problems of one sort or another. Yes. Anyhow, from that point I wasn't doing much in history until after the war. During most of which I was in the army, in fact. And that allowed me some time to think. But not. Not much to read books?

S2

00:20:36:20

Yes. Reflecting in the Lincolnshire Fens.

Clip: DICKENS GEOFFREY_GEOFFREY DICKENS WITH BOI

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I was on the fence for, well, about two years early in the war. I was in anti-aircraft command and that was rather strategic area. We were attempting to stop things getting through to the big Midland Towns and Sheffield and things of that sort, and it was fairly active area. It was it was a new experience. Of course I'd be I went to an officer training unit and all that kind of thing and was commissioned by the time I got there. And it was rather a curious intermission.

S2

00:21:15:24

And then you lifted out of this rather what might say rather quiet scene into the kind of heady life of being a field press censor. Oh, yes. Which must have been chalk and cheese.

S5

00:21:27:07

Yes, it was very different. By the time we got to about 1943, the interest had rather gone out of the anti-aircraft world and I wanted to do something else. And the War Office took me out and sent me on a few jobs travelling round 21 Army group before the invasion and all that. Then after it started, in fact, well after it started, I was sent to Germany as a field press censor. That was not all that long before the war ended, but it was rather interesting. I was there at the time of Arnhem, though I personally didn't go to Arnhem might. One of my colleagues went there and we felt rather nearer to the scene of action. Of course, when we got over there and studying the attitudes of the Germans was already became rather a an obsessive thing.

S2

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What were you censoring?

S5

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Uh, we were censoring the reports. Which newspaper men sent back. Oh, I see. It was. It was not at all a difficult job because, in fact, they knew very little about the secret things and they weren't awfully interested in that. And one was using the rubber stamp much more than the blue pencil.

Clip: DICKENS GEOFFREY_GEOFFREY DICKENS WITH BOI

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So then it was a natural step that you then moved into Lubec after the war.

S5

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Well, I. I moved there immediately at the end of the war. I saw the Germans coming out of their last positions up in Holstein where the quite near, uh, in Denmark, quite all finished. And I was sent to Lubeck in order to start up newspapers for the military government, which was just beginning to take shape at that moment. And we simply walked into the main fact the only large newspaper firm in this ancient and considerably bombed city. And we took over their machinery, including some of their journalists even who. Had no means of communication with the outer world. By that time, the whole of the telephonic and telegraphic links were cut by bombing and one thing or another. All we could tell them to do was to take down the BBC news reports, which was sent out in German, and we made them into a news sheet. Nachrichten. But on the following day that's how it started. But in the 5 or 6 months I was there, we built it up to a sizeable newspaper. So we.

S2

00:24:06:03

Became a real.

S5

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Newspaper and became a real newspaper. I recently revisited Lubeck and they'd already got most of the early issues of this, this newspaper, and were very interested, in fact, the few last issues of this newspaper under the Nazis, one of them a flaming panegyric on the Führer by a journalist who in fact I had dismissed soon after my arrival as being unsuitable to be employed. They have been glad to take it on. It was all rather intriguing.

Clip: DICKENS GEOFFREY_GEOFFREY DICKENS WITH BOI

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Yes. So you then wrote what is probably one of your least known publications, Your Lubeck Diary?

S5

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Yes. That is not not very well known. Well, when I got back again to Oxford in the autumn of 45, I suddenly pulled out from there, told I must go back to Oxford and start teaching again, which was, after more than five years. Absence was somewhat nonplussed. Anyhow, I settled down there and I thought it would be of some interest in the situation as it was at that moment in the autumn of 45 to have a more or less objective diary as to what things looked like in the British Zone of Germany under the under military government. I did it partly for that and partly because I wanted to start a sort of reconciliation with the Germans who by that time I'd realised were not hadn't all gone bad by any means. And I thought this would help in the atmosphere. And I was supported by Victor Collings, who sent for me. I talked to him at some length about this was great humanitarian, and he thought from that viewpoint it would be a good thing to publish it and in due course did. So It didn't take on very widely. It was read and commented on by a few people in the newspapers and sold a few thousand copies. But it was it was just a straight diary. Now, recently when I revisited Lubeck, it was just being republished in selection in German, but with the emphasis more on the local history of Lubeck rather than on the general issues, which I'd sought to discuss when I'd written it originally. But all these things somehow connected up.

S2

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Because Lubeck ended up very much exactly on the border between the two Germans. Were there any signs of that developing when you were there? Oh yes.

Clip: DICKENS GEOFFREY_GEOFFREY DICKENS WITH BOI

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But to begin with, we met up with the Red Army considerably to the east of Lubeck in Schwerin, that kind of area, what, 30 or 40 miles east of there. And while I was in Lubeck, in fact, I went with an American officer across the No Man's land, which separated us from the Russians, which highly interesting expedition is that we didn't really know where they were. None of our outposts had seen them, and rather stupid of us to go with. Neither of us could speak a word of Russian, but we we soon found them. And as good luck would have it, one of the Russians on the frontier spoke fairly good German and we were able to communicate with them and they sent for officers of similar rank to our own. And we had very interesting conversation with them. That was the the one and only time I've seen the Red Army, as it were, in the field. And I was I was moved a good deal because we'd begun to realize by that time how much the Russians had bled for us, so to speak, without necessarily wanting to do this had happened. And the attack of Hitler upon Russia was the greatest good thing that ever happened to us because we were not in a position to stand it like a huge society as Russia. Russia was, the Soviet Union was.

S2

00:28:14:01

And then you had to make this difficult transition from making history back to writing history and pick up the threads. Was that difficult moving back into the academic environment? Well, it was.

Clip: DICKENS GEOFFREY_GEOFFREY DICKENS WITH BOI
S5 **00:28:23:22**

A little, I think my old Victorian friends that of course retired or died by that time and it was a bit more sort of streamlined and. Victoria, but I felt somewhat restive in Oxford going back there, and for years after that I in fact went back to my native city as head of the history department in the University of Hull, which was being redeveloped. It had already existed since the late 20s, but when I got there it was still a very early stage of redevelopment and I thought that would be an interesting job. And I was offered this job and I went there and I spent 13 years at the University of Hull doing administrative work as much as teaching. It wasn't the ideal situation from point of view of writing history, in fact. But we had a very big job of administration to do since at that time you see that that sort of a university. It only had about 12 professors and departments. They got landed with all the sort of central decisions as to what one was doing. But I found that very interesting job. I'm glad I did it.

S2 **00:29:41:10**

What sort of university was it? I mean, was it did it draw very heavily from people from the vicinity?

Clip: DICKENS GEOFFREY_GEOFFREY DICKENS WITH BOI
S5 00:29:47:04

Was it kind of not so much as you might think, and increasingly less so as time went on. When I left it 13 years later, we already had 3500 students, of course, immensely enlarged, and we'd put up a lot of buildings by that time after a rather slow start. We had 600 students when I went there in 49 and 3500 when I left, which was not due to my personal magnetism in any way. I mean, it was just one of these things. And my point being in reply to your question, that the more we had there, the less local it became. Indeed, it's just a university like anywhere else. Not not a university from one corner of, of Yorkshire. I should, however, say that I was already very interested in adult education and these universities, in fact, which isn't always appreciated now do play an enormous regional role in dealing with the laity, as you might say, with the population as a whole in their regional areas, not least in East Yorkshire, which is tends to be a rather isolated part of the country. And I was fully seized of the vast importance of such universities for British society as a result of my experiences there.

S2 00:31:05:18

And did that sort of interests move you on to the next layer of your career, which is of course writing essentially books to popularize some of the ideas on the reference teaching books, essentially.

S5 00:31:17:05

I started teaching books while I was at Hull and went on with them for some time afterwards. I felt that the textbooks I'd been brought up on were no longer in consonance with modern ways of thinking about history. They were highly political and didn't have much else in them. And I think we all felt by the 50s and 60s that much more of cultural history and of course political ideas naturally, and religion and all that sort of thing must be brought into the thing much more vigorously. Well, this suited me very much because I'd already arrived at that notion in regard to local history, as I think I was suggesting.

Clip: DICKENS GEOFFREY_GEOFFREY DICKENS WITH BOI

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00:32:04:13

I noticed that two of the volumes that you can do there fly under the flag of the Teach Yourself history series. What was was there a concept behind that school teachers?

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There was I think it was largely arrived at by Al Ross, who was the general editor for teachers yourself History. I knew him when I was in Oxford and indeed as a young researcher, I would have liked to work with him because he had, though somewhat differently from myself, he had ideas on local history and wrote one of our most notable books that is, say, Two Day Cornwall, his own county, and I think it's the finest book he ever wrote, although he wrote it early in life. And he pulled me in on this, and I did for that series, a Thomas Cromwell and a Luther. The idea being that you you did a biography, but you also brought in the background in a big way. It was a man and a movement, as you might say in general, which I think is a rather good recipe for teaching history or popular history, if you like. And collaborating with Ross was very agreeable and he he had good ideas on style and pulled one up at the points where it was a good thing. And some of my ideas on style I think were developed by writing these kind of books rather than doing this rather heavy stuff. On the local history and so on, which I'd done in previous times.

S2

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I think a whole generation of students were very grateful for these books. But were they aimed primarily at students or did you have a more general audience?

Clip: DICKENS GEOFFREY_GEOFFREY DICKENS WITH BOI
S5 00:33:46:16

I had more general ideas than that because I felt that there was a whole class of general readers, which I think indeed does exist and did exist, who were naturally historians in the sense that a natural interest in history and the soil around them was impregnated with it. And writing for those sort of readers I thought was a very well worthwhile thing. I like to write in fairly high gear. However, I was more interested in generalizing these readers rather than in localising them, so to speak. I think one ought to do this sort of thing to give them some rather different ideas from what they may have accumulated locally.

S2 00:34:37:05
Yes, I mean, I remember those volumes as slim volumes with lots of shafts of insight that steered the student in the direction of analytical history.

S5 00:34:45:23
I am glad to hear you developed an interest in them from that point of view. I hadn't any very preconceived plans, but I of course was sometimes invited by firms to do things. For instance, the the one on the Reformation and, and on the Counter Reformation two books, which I did for Thames and Hudson and Hudson. They were intended to be illustrated books, but they were intended to be a bit more than that. And I took great interest in developing each side of those kind of books. They were in a big series inhabited in edited by Hugh Trevor Roper and the the. They even involved periods and themes in the ancient world as well as later on.

S2 00:35:33:17
But here bringing in another interesting concept in what we might call popular history that is the illustrated book, but where the illustrations are not just casually related to the text, but they actually have a meaning in terms of the.

Clip: DICKENS GEOFFREY_GEOFFREY DICKENS WITH BOI

S5

00:35:47:00

Text, a field in which, if I might say so, you have yourself excelled at a somewhat later date? Yes, I think so. Of course, I exclusively used contemporary sources of illustration. I mean, you make a marvelous thing out of the German Reformation by using Holbein and Dürer and Carnac and all these great artists of the time, and equally so with the great baroque artists of the Counter-Reformation. It was, you know, there's the things made for you almost from the point of view envisaging it. I think students in general, readers should have a clear pictorial sense for what life looked like and what it was like in material terms, which does help them to understand the more important things.

S2

00:36:36:09

And then in 1964, this classic work on the English Reformation appeared. Then very quickly, you seem to shift gear across the channel. And the next book that struck me very much was Your Martin Luther and the Reformation, which shows you looking into a European context.

S5

00:36:55:11

Yes. Yes. Well, when I was in the later stages with the English Reformation, which incidentally I've just done, another version of it had just been published recently, the second edition of it was considerably changed, but at the time I was doing it, I became conscious of the fact that the Reformation was essentially an international movement and a more interesting international movement than I'd thought earlier on. And I couldn't go much further, even with English themes, without knowing more about Lutheranism and things of that sort. So I'd been working on that a bit while I was doing the English Reformation and became increasingly conscious of the fact that far too much of that period in English history had been written by people who didn't know enough about the international movement, which after all, affected lastingly. Half of Europe and I spent several years from that point working on on German history rather than on on English history.

Clip: DICKENS GEOFFREY_GEOFFREY DICKENS WITH BOI

S2

00:38:00:23

It struck me very much driving down today, of course, that there was a certain appropriateness of about a Yorkshireman writing on Martin Luther, who might be said to be a kind of honorary Yorkshireman with a sort of perseverance and obstinacy and tough mind.

S5

00:38:13:20

Yes, I think you could meet him in that television series you have about veterinary surgeons in the Yorkshire Dales. I mean, you meet some hard men there and that of course was something very different. He wasn't only a hard man, he was a very stentorian man. And I think in. Anyways did harm through calling the Pope, Antichrist and all this kind of things all very well. But in the long term, I don't think that was a very good idea. I mean, maybe it needed saying at that point in history, but I certainly think he has those kind of qualities which rightly or wrongly, are identified with North Country people in England.

S2

00:38:58:11

But then your approach to Luther picked up and I think concentrated or emphasized very heavily something you'd been doing all the way through, which is looking at ecclesiastical history, but paying full attention to the secular aspects and bringing out the interplay between these ecclesiastical figures and society.

S5

00:39:16:23

I'm glad you mention that. I think this is a very great importance. I still think so. I think too much on the Reformation. I say this with all due respect. I am, as you know, practicing Anglican and I respect our clergy and the Roman Catholic clergy and so on, but I think rather too many of them are written from a pathological point of view without enough interrelationship between the religious life and the secular life, and the fact that these two things impinge into penetrate one another and one has to see, for instance, in thinking about, shall we say, Henry the Eighth, who is blamed for many things, that in many ways he was a friend of

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the poor man because I don't think neo feudalism had really been conquered by Henry the seventh and England was still centrifugal. It was full of self important noblemen and other important people who are ready to start revolts. And in my view, anarchy was the worst fate which the common man could run into power perhaps, or a major epidemic or something of this kind. But when you think about the French wars of religion, all the things that went wrong in some of these these other countries, one is grateful to the Tudor dynasty, irrespective of the personal morals of the people who ran it, but grateful for those who like Henry the seventh and Henry the eighth and Queen Elizabeth were really firm and thoughtful characters and never forgot their secular objectives. It comes hard, I think, for people to stand that in Henry the eighth. Still, I think he was a great man in many ways, and in a sense it was his job in history to frighten people. If he frightened some of the the ones who didn't need it. Maybe. But you see, we have to get clear about the idea. We're not in terms of modern ideas of freedom and democracy and parliament and the law and all this kind of thing. They didn't need very firm leadership and they needed to be put off selfishness by by fear of what might happen to them. That's how I mean, Tudor men of all classes were very hot blooded, impulsive, and as citizens were in discipline, frankly, and did nothing to take them out of that syndrome, apart from a strong ruler who feared nobody. And this was partially, of course, a religious concept because it was an anointed king who could do this owing to the quasi religious beliefs of the time. And this is where a legitimate king was in a very different position from a rebel over able rebel might have been, I think why not see that side of Tudor, England.

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S2 00:42:27:13

Too? It struck me, though, that this interest in tutoring is very much that of a generation, and it's very much this generation that spans the Second World War through to the accession of Elizabeth the second. Now, we sort of conscious of this. I mean, is there a connection to be made between sort of Englishmen reacting to that sort of society and looking back to the Tudor period where you've got analogous problems or analogies, modes of reaction, Is that something you think plays a role?

S5 00:42:55:21

Yes, I think the what I saw of something near anarchy in Germany and other places convinced me that extremism and personal rebellions and things of that kind were a bad idea on the whole. And I'm far from wanting to speak like a totalitarian. I hope I'll never be one of those. But we sometimes, in our striving for liberty, we sometimes forget that it can be ill used, could be ill used by conservative people as well as socialist. People as far as that's concerned. But I think we have to keep in mind peace and order as among the highest values of life, such as they were acknowledged to be in the Middle Ages, especially when we look around the third world and we see it collapsing at the moment, that should increase our view that peace and order are the greatest of blessings.

S2 00:43:58:03

And of course, I, I suppose just listening to what you were saying, it strikes me very much that perhaps, um, at a time when the pieties of churchmen don't seem quite to apply so much to daily life in wartime that perhaps one is more willing to take up the question of secular influences on these great movements. And was that something that you're conscious of when you start? I mean, it is a very big innovation to start to move these secular questions into the history of the Reformation, where I suppose until the late 50s, early 60s, it's written purely in the mode of confessional history. And this is something that your work breaks through completely.

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S5 **00:44:38:01**

Yes. Well, I yes, I consciously wanted to break through that because although I'm personally an Anglican, I have the view that there are a lot of arguable issues in Christianity, even rather profound ones where more than one view is perfectly possible. And of course this enters into all these problems of reunion with Rome for us all that kind of thing, which I don't want to talk about now particularly, but I'm whether the Anglicans like it or not, I'm a very liberal Anglican. I don't necessarily think any one church has all the answers to the problem of Christianity. What does interest me about the Reformation is the fact that it was the time when people began to see that they had to be historians as well as theologians in the sense that only by going back to the early documents of the church and indeed the documents of Jesus and the apostles, and only by that can you speak with any authority on what is Christian and what isn't Christian. In other words, a biblical Christianity was what the Reformation was getting at, as opposed to a church like Christianity, where the church, rightly or wrongly, had taken upon itself to interpret things in my present view, sometimes illicitly and I'm not a biblical tub thumper or fundamentalist or anything of that kind, but I think a Christianity which isn't rooted in the sources of the New Testament is rather worthless or at any rate is speculative rather than authoritative, authoritative. And I think both Protestant and Catholic theologians have invented far too much and have tried to canonize their own inventions.

S2 **00:46:40:03**

So you really found yourself very much at sympathy with the humanist movements that feed into the Reformation. And then of course, your, again, very interesting book, which I think leads to the German tag that's always put on you. The Reformation is an urban event. Yes. This is this is Dickens pure.

Clip: DICKENS GEOFFREY_GEOFFREY DICKENS WITH BOI

S5

00:47:02:05

And this was this was, uh, in my I think that, that came in my book on the German nation and Martin Luther did the Germans for some reason either took up this. It was only intended as a sort of joke. I mean, obviously it was more than an urban event. But the success of the Reformation in Germany, as you know better than I do, depended very largely on the attitudes of municipalities and relatively small groups of more or less self governing men in a way that an English townsman was not and or scarcely at that time.

S2

00:47:36:09

But it has an interesting title and some interesting early chapters. It's The German Nation and Martin Luther, and you do start off talking about German nationalism. And of course, I'm bearing in mind what you said earlier about creating reconciliation with Germany and bringing a different view. Was there a conscious element in that of writing something about a time when the German nation had a different kind of cast to it, a more positive cast to it?

S5

00:48:05:17

Yes, in a way. I of course, the Germans are not very easy to think of as a nation, as you know, it's a very, uh, as as we've seen in the politics of our own day, there are very regionalised people, even more, considerably more than we are, I would think. And the idea of a German nation tends to be a cultural idea, perhaps a linguistic idea, of course, more than a political reality. I would have thought. I think this was always the case in some degree, wasn't it, of the German speaking peoples?

S2

00:48:39:20

Yes. And that's, of course, something that's emphasized quite strongly in the book.

S6

00:48:44:07

Yes.

Clip: DICKENS GEOFFREY_GEOFFREY DICKENS WITH BOI

S2

00:48:45:08

Well, then your next career move, so to speak, is then back to London, to yes, to King's College in London, then on to the Institute of Historical Research to be director there. Was that a great jolt? I mean, a shift from Hull and Yorkshire back into the metropolis?

S5

00:49:03:20

Yes, I thought I'm a bit career minded, I think, or what? To go to London was a thing I did very, very deliberately at that stage. I'd reached the point at which I had to go back to one of the big universities or stay where I was, and I was pro-vice-chancellor at Hull and it was a sort of right hand man of my vice chancellor, the late Sir Brynmawr Jones, who died very recently, whom I loved very much and I think got that far. I thought I'd done what I could there, and I must then get back to a job which left me more time for writing of history. And of course, naturally, anywhere in the provinces, the thought strikes one. There's the British Museum, the British Library, rather, which is the great thing. All the wonderful resources which we have around about the world where were now sitting. And this this struck me as a thing. And when I was offered this headship of the department at King's College, I wasn't simply interested in doing the same job as I'd been doing at Hull, but making a transition to something rather different. And I should have been quite happy to conclude my career at King's College. But in the event I was only there for five years, when I was asked whether I'd undertake the job of being director of the Institute of Historical Research, and that again involved me in another lot of heavy administration. Yes. Which was you see, one's life isn't really very hard.

S2

00:50:46:14

Got the short straw there. Do you.

S6

00:50:48:06

Get research.

Clip: DICKENS GEOFFREY_GEOFFREY DICKENS WITH BOI

S5

00:50:48:24

Time? It looked easier than it was in the sense being here next door to the British Library and so on. It had very interesting research connections, but it more concerned helping other people with their research than doing one's own. However, I managed to keep moving thanks to Firsttrillionate secretarial help and the advantages of this.

S2

00:51:13:17

And then on top of that, then came being Foreign Secretary of the British Academy, which then took you back into the European?

S6

00:51:20:03

Yes, it did. Yes.

S5

00:51:21:21

That again.

S3

00:51:22:11

I can just stop you there. But you're going to run out of time soon. Perhaps you could pick up on that point after we've had a little.

S6

00:51:28:22

Well, that.

S5

00:51:29:10

Yeah, that that. Don't be easy to start from there. We'll remember where we are.

S6

00:51:32:19

Yes, yes.