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## Peter Meredith: A Personal Tribute

Charles Barber

When Peter Meredith arrived in Leeds, it was at once apparent that he was going to be a great asset to an already illustrious School of English – through his scholarship, his liveliness of mind, his wit, his charm, his modesty, and his openness and friendliness both to colleagues and to students. Of his achievements in his specialized field of study, others will speak. What I have always found striking is the breadth and depth of his knowledge outside that field. In the 1960s and 1970s, he and I and Robin Alston collaborated in producing material for courses on Early Modern English, something of an innovation in those days. This involved not only planning a lecture-course, but also putting together substantial bodies of material for tutors to use in weekly or fortnightly tutorials. Here Peter showed his wide knowledge of the English language, and his sensitivity to English literature of all periods. He is indeed the complete English Philologist. Sometimes, especially at the beginning of a term, two or three of us gave a joint lecture, in which we argued with one another and presented different points of view. We enjoyed this, and I think the students did too. To some extent these lectures were stage-managed, and this reminds us of another of Peter's qualities: his ability as an actor and a public reader. He must have acted in many roles at different times, but the performance that sticks in my mind goes back to 1978, when he gave a fine performance in the title-role of Shakespeare's *Pericles*, in a production by Martin Banham in the university's Workshop Theatre. His ability as a reader has appeared not only in lectures, but also when he has taken part in programmes organized by the Friends of the West Yorkshire Playhouse, on such occasions as Shakespeare's birthday, in which he has shown a mastery of many styles and accents. The generosity with which he has devoted time and energy to such events is typical of him: if a colleague asks him for help, for example by reading through the draft of a new piece of writing, he gives it immediately and unstintingly, and his comments are invariably helpful.

He and Greta have a profound social conscience. They are also wonderfully hospitable, and on festive occasions (such as retirements and promotions), large groups of us have been royally entertained in their beautiful seventeenth-century house in Bramley. We all wish them a long and happy retirement there. I am sure that it will also be a creative one.