

## OBITUARY

### JOHN FOSTER WILLIAMS

Born 18 February 1878, died 24 April 1971

The Reverend John Foster Williams, a Vice-President of the Society since 1954, and earlier Hon. Excursion Secretary 1936-46, and Hon. General Secretary 1946-54, undoubtedly found major archæological and historical inspiration through his maternal connections with Norfolk.

Educated at Merchant Taylors' and Queen's College, Cambridge, he took oriental languages and classics. Ordained in 1901, he held his first curacy at Guisborough in North Yorkshire where he admitted to finding almost as much interest in the Priory ruins in the parish churchyard as in the parishioners. However, he was destined to become a popular parish priest and successively held a curacy at Burghclere and the livings of Ashmanworth (both in Hampshire), Beechamwell with Singham (Norfolk), Bucklesham (Suffolk), Sandon (Essex) and South Walsham (Norfolk). It seems to have been his life-long habit upon moving to a new area to start almost at once the collection of local history and ecclesiology which resulted in his bequest to the Society of around 100 neatly written and carefully indexed notebooks.

He was ever ready to share his knowledge with interested acquaintances and at different periods he was a Cambridge University Extension lecturer. He addressed the Society on a number of occasions and contributed several learned articles to its Proceedings, and acted as guide on many Excursions. Over a long period he made well over 1,000 brass rubbings, all of which were carefully preserved and are now in the possession of his son.

He was Secretary of the Chelmsford Diocesan Advisory Committee and he served later on the like body in the Norwich Diocese and also as an enthusiastic member of the Bishop's "Church Chest Investigating Corps" instrumental in bringing to light many interesting records of Norfolk church and parish history.

He was twice married, his first wife dying whilst he was incumbent at Sandon, Essex, where she is commemorated by his gift of a font cover and he is remembered by photographs and notes displayed on the chancel wall of a "find" in the church; and his second shortly after his retirement to Pykerell's House, Norwich.

J. F. W's contribution to his fellows was great in small things. He retained his lively interest in matters archæological and historical until the end of his long life, which came after ten years' residence at Swaffham Manor House, the property of his daughter and son-in-law, and on all my visits our talk was mainly about the Society's activities and individual members.

A man who held family life dear, affectionately "Juffa" to his grandchildren and great grand-children, he was sincerely interested in the doings of his associates who will long remember with gratitude the friendship of this kindly man to share whose company filled one with calm and with quietly renewed enthusiasm.

E. R. G.