

OBITUARIES

WILLIAM KENT, F.S.A.

William Richard Gladstone Kent, who died on 9 May 1963 in his 78th year, had been a member of the Society since 1930. He was elected to Council in 1947 and served until 1950, being re-elected in 1954. He was a very regular attender and took a keen interest in all the work of the Society, but ill-health caused him to resign in 1955 and thereafter his presence at meetings was infrequent. He will be very much missed by all who knew him.

His enthusiasm for the study of London history dated from 1904, when he entered for a London County Council staff examination and discovered that this was one of the optional subjects. The interest thus aroused remained with him all his life and much of his spare time was spent in acting as a London guide. He wrote upwards of 20 books and their titles give an indication of the scope of his studies: *London for Everyman*, *London for Shakespeare Lovers*, *London for Dickens Lovers*, *London for the Curious*, *London for Americans*, *London Worthies*, *An Encyclopaedia of London*. His knowledge of London history and legend was unusually comprehensive and though the majority of his books contain little original research *The Lost Treasures of London*, issued to members in 1947 in place of the usual *Transactions*, is a valuable record of the destruction wrought by enemy action during the war of 1939–45. He himself suffered a grievous loss when his own library was destroyed by an incendiary bomb which burnt his home in Union Road, Clapham, in 1941.

Fifty Years a Cricket Watcher, the title of another of his writings, recalls yet one more of his enthusiasms and the selection of titles quoted must certainly include *Testament of a Victorian Youth*, the first and only published volume of his autobiography. He was an ardent student of Shakespeare (and a firm believer in the Earl of Oxford as author of the plays), a member for many years of the Society of Cogers, a supporter of the Dickens Fellowship, the Johnson Society and the Lamb Society, was President of the Clapham Antiquarian Society 1947–54 and elected a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries in 1948.

E.E.F.S.

ERNEST RANN

Our old friend Ernest Rann died on 15 May, 1963, after an operation. He made a brave fight, but his age was against him, for he was 93. He joined the Society in 1920 and was at one time a member of Council. His wife also belonged to the Society.

Almost until the end of his life he was a working journalist, writing articles regularly for *The Times*, *The Birmingham Post*, and many articles on London for *The Christian Science Monitor*. To help him in the accurate presentation of facts he accumulated an enormous number of newspaper cuttings, running into many thousands. These were all neatly docketed and pigeon-holed.

Perhaps the most remarkable thing about him was his prodigious memory, which he preserved to the end of his life, everything he knew being as neatly arranged in his mind

as the cuttings were in his pigeon-holes. He was a great book-lover and his study was lined from floor to ceiling with books dealing in many cases—though he was a Worcestershire man—with his beloved London. He was a keen freemason, having been *Master* (in 1928) and then secretary of the Gallery Lodge, the members of which were parliamentary reporters. His great joke was to describe himself as a descendant of a famous highwayman of the same name as himself.

We say farewell to a very remarkable man.

F.W.M.D.