

OBITUARY

CANON RONALD FRANK BALE, F.S.A.

RONALD BALE died in January 1967 in his 78th year. He was educated at Merchant Taylor's School and Queens' College, Cambridge, and, after attending Ridley Hall, was ordained in 1912. A brief curacy in Yorkshire followed but in 1915 he came to the Oxford diocese which he never subsequently left.

He was curate at Aston Clinton, Hanslope and Newport Pagnell, Rector of Adstock (1923-6), Vicar of Brill (1926-9) and Vicar of Buckingham (1929-42), where he was also Rural Dean. In 1942, at the special request of the Bishop of Oxford, he took over as Rector of Witney. There he remained till his retirement in 1959. When he arrived the church had been bombed and damaged by a crashed aircraft and church life was at a low ebb, but his inspiring leadership soon changed all, and the damage was slowly restored under his knowledgeable care.

His antiquarian learnings made him an ideal honorary secretary of the Diocesan Advisory Committee for the Care of Churches, a post he held with great distinction for twenty-seven years. In 1923 he edited the Marriage Registers of Newport Pagnell. He was elected an F.S.A. in 1937 and was appointed an Honorary Canon of Christ Church in 1940.

Long a member of this Society, he was elected a Vice-President in 1947, the Society's centenary year. He became Chairman of the Council in 1936 and served for twenty-one years. He was an admirable chairman—clear-sighted, firm, courteous and witty, and these qualities were tested to the full in the difficult years leading up to the agreement to lease the Museum to the County Council in 1957. Feelings ran high at the time and it was Bale's wisdom and patience when presiding at some stormy meetings that contributed as much as anything to the eventual—and satisfactory—solution to the Society's difficulties.

He will surely be remembered as a scholar-pastor of a type which is regrettably declining in the Church of England.

E.V.

COLONEL F. W. WATSON, C.B., M.C., T.D.

FRANK WILLIAM WATSON, the son of Charles Watson of Leek, Staffordshire, was born in 1893 and died 1966. He was educated at Rugby and King's College, Cambridge where he read law and was a fine games player, gaining a half-blue for lawn tennis.

During the 1914-18 war he served with the Royal Field Artillery and was awarded the Military Cross and bar. After the war he lived at Dinton and undertook many public duties amongst which the Territorial Army took a prominent place; he rose

to command the 99 (Royal Bucks Yeomanry) Field Regiment, R.A. and went abroad with them in 1939. He was chairman of the county Territorial Association 1936-54.

Elected to the County Council in 1935, he became an Alderman in 1944, was chairman of the important Education Committee for nine years and vice-chairman of the Council 1957-61. A keen supporter of the Society he played a leading part in the 1957 negotiations by which the County Council leased the Museum and was the inevitable choice for first chairman of the Museum sub-committee. He was now living in Parsons Fee and took great interest and pride in the development of the Museum.

He served as High Sheriff of the county in 1947, was a Deputy Lieutenant and, as a magistrate, was an exceptionally respected chairman of the Aylesbury bench for many years. He was also chairman of the Royal Bucks Hospital before the war.

Although he made no claims to be an archaeologist his experience and wisdom were of much value to the Society's Council whose meetings he rarely missed.

His main recreation was music; he played both piano and organ and no local incumbent appealed to him in vain in an emergency.

E.V.

A. VERE WOODMAN, F.S.A.

WITH the death of Mr. A. V. WOODMAN in May, 1966, the Society has lost one of its most devoted and distinguished members. A life-long member, he served on the Council for many years and became a Vice-President in 1957. He was elected Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries in 1951.

Arthur Vere Woodman was born near Newbury on 16th September, 1884. Both parents were of farming stock, the Woodmans being a Buckinghamshire yeoman family long resident in the neighbourhood of Wing. He was educated at Wimborne Grammar School in Dorset. At the age of twenty-one, he inherited a small independent income which enabled him to devote his life to historical research, except for service in the R.N.V.R., 1914 to 1919. He married Mary Kathleen Bishop in 1909. From 1926, Mr. and Mrs. Woodman lived at Wing, where Mrs. Woodman died in 1960. Their only son, Thomas, is a member of this Society, as is his uncle, Mr. Leslie Woodman.

It was an entry in the parish registers of Wing which set Mr. A. V. Woodman off on his antiquarian career. He determined to trace the connection between himself and Thomas Woodman, buried there in 1611. In fact, he was able to take his family back to 1484. The search brought him into contact with the great scholar, F. G. Gurney. Mr. Woodman spoke with affection and awe of Mr. Gurney—his incredible industry, his vast knowledge of Buckinghamshire families and topography, and his skill in reading old documents. They worked together and, by the time F. G. Gurney died, Mr. Woodman was ready to succeed him as the leading Buckinghamshire historian and genealogist.

Unfortunately, he published little. He was interested in the Reformation and wrote an article on the Pilgrimage of Grace, published in *Oxoniensia* in 1957. He transcribed the Wing Churchwardens' Accounts from their beginning in 1527 to 1566; extracts from the pre-Reformation accounts appeared with an introduction in *Records of Buckinghamshire* in 1960. His index of Buckingham Archdeaconry Wills, containing more than 3,000 entries, is to be published by the Buckinghamshire Record Society. Mr. Woodman wrote two articles on will inventories for *Records of Buckinghamshire*, and articles on genealogy for American journals.

He had correspondents all over the world, for whom he compiled family histories. His letters are models—concise, but not dry, with side-lights on general history and the nature of the legal documents on which genealogy is based. Mr. Thomas Woodman has kindly given to the Society all his father's papers.

The preservation of Parish registers was one of Mr. Woodman's main interests. It was largely due to his persistence that the Bishop of Oxford in 1951 authorised the deposit of registers with the Society for safe-keeping. More than sixty Buckinghamshire parishes have taken advantage of the scheme.

When young, Mr. Woodman was a reasonably good shot, and remained fond of sailing all his life, but these recreations took a secondary place to his antiquarian pursuits. Wednesdays at the Museum were great days for him. Sharp at 10.30 he walked in, keen to get on with his own researches, but always pleased to turn aside to help anyone working on Buckinghamshire history. People came to talk to Mr. Woodman rather than read books and documents. He loved a learned expedition. Journeys to remote vicarages and visits to the Bodleian were planned far in advance. He was never happier than at the Society's outing last April—meeting his friends, talking of medieval families and Saxon charters and finally exploring Hartwell House from top to bottom. He is very much missed, particularly by those of us who worked with him.

E.M.E.