

Obituary.

GEORGE PAYNE, F.S.A.

Mr. George Payne, who passed away in the early autumn of last year (1920), had been for so many years a front-rank man amongst Kentish Archæologists, and had done so much good work in antiquarian research, that his loss leaves vacant a place which it will be very hard to fill. Archæology was to George Payne no mere bye-path of knowledge, to be pursued in a leisure hour, but the all-absorbing study of a lifetime, to which he brought a tenacity of purpose, an industry and devotion, which seldom have been equalled.

Possibly the range of his knowledge was not very wide. Certainly at times his friends thought him lacking in a just sense of the proportion of things. But within certain limits his antiquarian knowledge was remarkably sound and thorough. Nor was his habit of magnifying the importance of small things without its value, since it led to nothing being overlooked. His great strength, without a doubt, lay in discovery—the “spade work,” as it is called, of Archæology. In this direction his services were of immense value and his success extraordinary. He seems to have possessed a wonderful flair for “treasure hid in a field,” and his care in excavating was equalled only by his fidelity in recording a find.

It is not too much to say that through his painstaking labours some lost pages in the history of extinct civilisations have been recovered, and for this he is entitled to an honourable niche in the archæological Valhalla. George Payne was born at Sittingbourne in 1848, and was the second son of the late Mr. George Payne of that town. Both the place and date of the boy's birth had their influence in developing the tastes he afterwards acquired. The district, though not particularly rich in objects of antiquity above ground, contained beneath the soil an

extraordinary wealth of such objects, which, in the sixties and seventies of the last century, were being brought to light almost every day. This was due to the fact that at this period extensive excavations of brick earth were being made to meet the unparalleled demand for bricks during the construction of the underground railways in London. During the Roman occupation of Britain the district had been thickly populated, and, on either side of the Watling Street which runs through the town, interments, many of which afforded valuable evidence of the customs and crafts of a long vanished people, were constantly being discovered. These relics of the past were turned up as acre after acre of the alluvial soil was removed, but they were not necessarily preserved. The labourers employed were in a hurry, and had little or no appreciation of the value of their discoveries. Even when the finds escaped destruction, the objects found were too often hidden away in drawers or cupboards, where their educational value was altogether lost. If the exceptional opportunity was not to be missed, it was necessary that careful supervision should be exercised by some person possessing knowledge, vigilance, energy and tact. That young George Payne should have been possessed of all these qualities is remarkable, since his educational opportunities had not been great. He had been sent to a private school in the neighbourhood of his native town, of no great repute, but had left it at an early age to become a pupil in the local brewery. Clearly his archæological equipment was not derived from his school. The explanation appears to be that the inspiration came originally through the late William Bland of Hartlip-Place. Bland, who possessed much amiability of character, as well as great natural ability as a mathematician, took a kindly interest in young Payne, invited him to Hartlip to see the Roman villa on his estate which he had recently explored, and the antiquities it had yielded. The interest displayed by the lad impressed Bland so much that he introduced him to Charles Roach Smith, who happened to be at Hartlip Place. Roach Smith was perhaps the foremost authority on Roman and Saxon remains

in England at that time. He seems at once to have cast a spell over the boy, who from that moment became an ardent disciple of the savant, and later his devoted friend. It was to Roach Smith then that Payne owed most of his archaeological equipment; but he must have made very good use of his opportunities, since, as far back as the year 1870, we find him taking a leading part during our Society's first meeting at Sittingbourne. From that date his archaeological activities were unceasing. Nothing escaped his notice. No distance was too great, no hour was too inconvenient. On the slightest rumour of a find he was on the spot, instructing the labourers, noting the position of the objects found, extracting them with his own hands, and finally cajoling the owners of the soil to allow the relics discovered to be transferred to his own private museum. The latter, however, was a temporary arrangement only. At no period of his career was Payne a mere collector of antiquities. To him their educative value was paramount. With this view he formed the laudable ambition, when quite a young man, of founding a public museum in his native town. Accordingly when—for business reasons—he made up his mind to leave Sittingbourne in 1883, his collections, which at that date were of considerable size and importance, were offered to the Local Authority as a free gift. There were difficulties about housing and maintenance, and finally the offer was declined. To George Payne this was a keen disappointment, but looking back we may be doubtful whether there was much real cause for regret, since the antiquities subsequently found their way to the British Museum, where they may be studied to the best advantage.

On leaving Sittingbourne Mr. Payne lived, for short periods, first at Halesworth in Suffolk, and then at Tunbridge Wells, but finally he settled in Rochester, where he spent the last thirty-three years of his life, occupying a charming little house on the south side of the Cathedral Close, which had once formed part of the ancient episcopal palace—an environment well suited to an antiquary. At Rochester Mr. Payne found abundant scope for his anti-

quarian proclivities. The Castle Keep was repaired under his supervision; the exact limits of the city during the Roman occupation were accurately determined, and the mediæval crypts under the ancient houses explored, measured up, and delineated. But all this is insignificant in comparison to his great work of founding, equipping, and arranging the Eastgate Museum. This was a really great work, and on this we think that his reputation will ultimately rest. He was well supported by the citizens of Rochester, who responded generously to his appeals for help, but the scheme was primarily and throughout his own; and the result of his unremitting efforts has been that Rochester possesses to-day one of the best local museums in the kingdom. The debt the City owes to George Payne has been recognized by placing a tablet to his memory in the porch of Eastgate House, bearing the following inscription:—

“This Tablet is erected by the citizens of Rochester and by his friends, in grateful memory of George Payne, F.S.A., born 1848, died 1920; an eminent antiquary and a famous discoverer of Roman and Saxon remains in this county. He was the first Director of this Museum which was chiefly by his labours founded, equipped and arranged, and for over twenty years in his zeal for this ancient city he splendidly magnified his office.”

Mr. Payne had been a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of London since 1880, and on many occasions exhibited the result of his discoveries at Burlington House. Several short papers from his pen are published in the Proceedings of that Society, but only one appears in “Archæologia,” namely, his Archæological Survey of Kent, which is a most valuable record of antiquarian discoveries in the county down to the year 1888. A copy of the map illustrative of this survey is kept in the library of the Kent Archæological Society at Maidstone, and all subsequent discoveries, as they occur, are marked thereon by Mr. H. Elgar, the Curator.

In 1898 Mr. Payne published his *Collectanea Cantiana*, which contains an epitome of his principal discoveries and

researches in the county, and a short treatise on the old roads of Kent.

To *Archæologia Cantiana* Mr. Payne was a constant contributor for over half a century, and as the value and extent of his work as an archæologist may to some extent be gauged by a perusal of the titles of these articles, we append a list of them to this memoir.

C. E. W.

ARTICLES BY THE LATE GEORGE PAYNE PUBLISHED IN
Archæologia Cantiana.

- Roman Coffins of lead from Bex Hill, Milton next Sittingbourne. Vol. IX., 164.
- Remains of Roman interments from East Hall near Sittingbourne. X., 178.
- Roman interment at Bayford, Sittingbourne. XI., 47.
- On Roman remains in the Churchyard at Milton next Sittingbourne. XII., 428.
- Celtic remains at Grovehurst in Milton next Sittingbourne. XIII., 122.
- Roman remains found at Chatham and at Barming. XIII., 168.
- Roman buildings and other remains at Boxted in Lower Halstow. XV., 104.
- On a Roman Cemetery at Westbere. XV., 318.
- Romano-British interments at Bayford near Sittingbourne. XVI., 1.
- Roman leaden Coffin and other remains discovered near Sittingbourne. XVI., 9.
- On a Roman Coffin found at Plumstead. XVII., liv.
- Potters' Names and Marks on pseudo-Samian ware found in Kent. XVII., 153.
- On a Roman statue and other remains in the Dover Museum. XVIII., 202.
- On a Bronze Ligula found at Dartford. XVIII., 206.
- On a Roman Ring found at Milton next Sittingbourne. XVIII., 207.
- Researches and Discoveries in Kent. XXI., xlvii.
- Roman Rochester. XXI., 1.
- The Iron Industry of the Weald. XXI., 308.

- The Roman Villa at Darent. XXII., 49.
 Roman Discoveries in the neighbourhood of Rochester. XXIII., 1.
 On a Roman coin found at Doddington. XXIII., 21. Traces
 of a Roman Pottery at Higham. XXIII., 22.
 Celtic Interments discovered at Shorne. XXIV., 86.
 Mediæval Crypts at Rochester. XXIV., 220.
 Researches and Discoveries in Kent 1899-1900. XXIV., li.
 " " " 1900-1901. XXV., lix.
 " " " 1902-1904. XXVII., lxxv.
 The Reparation of Rochester Castle. XXVII., 177.
 Researches and Discoveries in Kent 1905-1907. XXVIII., lxxxviii.
 " " " 1908-1910. XXIX., lxxvi.
 " " " 1912-1915. XXXI., 275.
 " " " 1915-1919. XXXIV., 155.