

Archæologia Cantiana

FRANK CHARLES ELLISTON-ERWOOD, F.S.A.

31st MAY, 1883-7th NOVEMBER, 1968

I KNEW Frank Elliston-Erwood from my childhood days. He lived at the top of Shooters Hill, I at the bottom. My mother was a student of his when he was a pupil teacher at Mulgrave Place School, Woolwich, and from her I gained my earliest impressions of one who was to become a very good friend.

For many years his name has appeared in *Archæologia Cantiana* as the local secretary for London. More accurately, it should have been South-East London or the Hundred of Blackheath.¹ It was in this area that he was reared and it was the place he cared for more than anywhere. Another great pride was his direct descent from Robert William Elliston (1774-1831), lessee at Drury Lane Theatre in 1822 and an actor² competent enough to meet with the approval of Charles Lamb and to be mentioned in *The Last Essays of Elia*.³ Elliston-Erwood's father was a racket-maker and made rackets for the Royal Military Academy, Woolwich. He was also connected in some capacity with the racket court at Tod Brown Hall in the same town. Elliston-Erwood said of himself that he 'strove for inclusion in that famous family of racket players who were all "very pretty players" and who numbered among themselves one Champion of England'.

Mr. John Logan, who succeeded Elliston-Erwood as President of the Woolwich and District Antiquarian Society, has told how Elliston-

¹ He became local secretary for 'Blackheath' in 1927. 'Blackheath' was later changed to 'London'.

² George Raymond, *Life and Enterprises of Robert William Elliston, Comedian*, 1857.

³ I am indebted to Miss Anne Roper, F.S.A., for reminding me of the *Elia* reference. I have consulted Macdonald's edition because of the excellent notes therein. I cannot resist quoting from *Ellistoniana* where Lamb recounts the circumstances of his first meeting with Elliston. 'With what an air did he reach down the volume, dispassionately giving his opinion of the worth of the work in question, and launching out into a dissertation on its merits with those of certain publications of a similar stamp, its rivals! his enchanted customers fairly hanging on his lips, subdued to their authoritative sentence.' Surely this could be a description of F.C.E.-E.

Erwood first became acquainted with that Society in February 1899, when he was aged fifteen.⁴ His father and mother, both members, took him to a lecture by Major-General J. Maurice on 'Forgotten Worthies of Woolwich'. He did not, however, succumb straight away to the delights of History but waited until 1905 to become a member. Once he had succumbed, he became thoroughly committed and was a council member within about a year. In 1907 he gave a lecture on 'Megaliths of the Old Road' (the so-called Pilgrims' Way). In 1908 he joined our Society and from then onwards his research proceeded logically in several categories and was only slightly halted by the 1914-18 War. He himself said that his war service consisted of 'a period as a Sapper, an Ordnance Surveyor and a fragment of an Intelligence Unit which passed the time pleasantly and safely'. In 1915 he became an associate and also a council member of the British Archæological Association.⁵ In the same year he gave the Association's members a lantern lecture on 'Lesnes Abbey and its Recent Excavation'. Here it may be appropriate to tell of his friendship with the late Sir Alfred Clapham with whom he worked on the Lesnes Abbey excavations for several years and for whom he made the excellent drawings which appear in Clapham's *Lesnes Abbey*, 1915. Elliston-Erwood had been trained to be an art master (the training included architectural drawing), and it was probably his facility with pen, brush and pencil which endeared him to one who was a master in the drawing of ecclesiastical plans.

In 1915 Elliston-Erwood, probably influenced by Clapham, took his next steps in excavation—at Charlton Camp, near Woolwich.⁶ This, his first 'dig' on his own, was sponsored by the British Archæological Association. He continued to take an active interest in the site until he was a very old man.

In 1922 he was elected a member of the Royal Archæological Institute. In October of the same year he became a council member. Mr. V. B. Crowther Beynon organized a one-day meeting devoted to the churches of the Dartford district but the members did not hear Elliston-Erwood speak.⁷ He had obviously been occupied elsewhere because on the 31st July, 1923, during the Norwich Meeting, he read a paper on his excavations at Langley Abbey.⁸

He was now becoming known in national archæological circles and on the 5th May, 1927, he was elected a Fellow of the Society of Anti-

⁴ *Proceedings Woolwich Antiquarian Society*, xxxiii.

⁵ He remained a Council member until 1931. He ceased to be an associate in 1931-2 after a change in rules 'requiring the five Senior Members to retire' came into force. He was County Correspondent for Kent during most of the 1930s.

⁶ *J.B.A.A.*, NS., xxi, 58, 76.

⁷ *Arch. Journ.*, lxxix.

⁸ *Ibid.*, lxxx, 356-7.

quaries of London.⁹ However, he did not neglect his old friends. He continued to work hard for the Woolwich and Kent Societies. My task in elucidating the former's indebtedness to him has been considerably lightened by my friend, Mr. John Logan, who wrote an appreciation of Elliston-Erwood after he had resigned in 1966 from the post of Editor of that Society's publications after nearly forty years' service.¹⁰ He was President 1930-47 and 1951-54,¹¹ Secretary 1911-20, Editor 1920 and 1926-66. For the Kent Archæological Society progress was slower. He became a Council member in 1922 but in the previous May he had taken part in excursions and described Minster (Sheppey) Church and Shurland Castle.¹² His first major papers for *Archæologia Cantiana* were also contributed during this period.¹³ From then onwards, although he could not compare with the late Professor Hamilton Thompson for whom there are 413 bibliographical entries, he produced papers and notes regularly. Exactly when he started as excursion secretary is not easy to decide.¹⁴ He is mentioned as such in 1929. He continued for some years. In 1943 he is listed as Honorary Secretary for Excursions for West Kent,¹⁵ in 1946 for the whole of Kent. He gave up this office in 1955.¹⁶ In 1961 he became an honorary member and at the 1966 Annual General Meeting he was made a Vice-President 'in recognition of his long and distinguished service to the Society in the promotion of Archæology in the County'.¹⁷

So far I have said little of his professional life. In Woolwich he is still remembered as a teacher of art at Woolwich Central School. He himself, in a note to me, described how he owed much to a great uncle 'who was Editor, Author, Geologist and Antiquarian', and who strove 'to put his feet on the road he was destined to tread'. 'He took a small lad of seven years or thereabouts to the National Gallery . . . for a time schoolmastering with an historical bias [was] his fate, but assiduous and indeed surreptitious study brought a limited success as an Art Master. This actually resolved itself into an attempt to instruct a number of ham-fisted youths into the mysteries of drawing nuts, bolts, rivets and screw threads with occasional excursions into Ionic

⁹ He was elected to the Council, 23rd April, 1951, and re-elected 1952.

¹⁰ *Proc. W.A.S.*, xxxiii, 3-9. Mr. Logan gives a detailed list of Elliston-Erwood's lectures and papers as far as they concern the Woolwich Society. During the 1930s he was also a Vice-President of the Greenwich and Lewisham Antiquarian Society.

¹¹ On 3rd September, 1955, at the Woolwich and District Antiquarian Society's Sixtieth Birthday dinner a presentation was made to him for twenty-one years' service as President. *Arch. Cant.*, lxxix (1955), 222.

¹² *Arch. Cant.*, xxxvi (1922).

¹³ *Arch. Cant.*, xxxv (1921).

¹⁴ *Arch. Cant.*, xlii (1930), 255.

¹⁵ *Arch. Cant.*, lvi (1943); lvii (1944), p. xxxvii.

¹⁶ *Arch. Cant.*, lxxix (1955), p. xli.

¹⁷ *Arch. Cant.*, lxxxix (1966), p. xliii.

volutés and Gothic tracery.' Although he sometimes exhibited his pictures in art galleries, it was not until September 1963 that he had his first full-scale, one-man exhibition of forty-four works in the Maidstone Museum and Art Gallery. 'These pictures and drawings do not profess to be more than a recreational activity of one whose major interest has always been archæology.'¹⁸

After the end of the 1939-45 War he seemingly found himself with time on his hands in spite of a Leverhulme Research Studentship (for research into the history of turnpike roads) and in spite of the renewal of excavations at Lesnes Abbey.¹⁹ It was then that I was able to repay some of the debt I owed him by placing before him the suggestion that he took over the post of honorary curator and archivist to Hythe Corporation. He agreed to give the job a trial. He found the tasks most congenial and his gifts of fine lettering and lucid lecturing soon made him an asset. But he was fast approaching his eighties and his legs and eyes began to fail him. He gave up his curatorial duties in 1962 when I succeeded him and he was followed by Miss Anne Roper as honorary archivist in 1964.

Few of those who met Elliston-Erwood will forget him. His countenance could be merry and rubicund when all was going well and excursionists were responding smartly to his whistle, but it took on the fierceness of a Chinese Guardian when fools stepped in. I have seen him noisily stump from a church when the parson had irritated him by talking nonsense about the sacred items in his charge.²⁰ His own lectures were noteworthy for their logical simplicity. On the 8th April, 1967, I heard him give what was for me his last open-air talk—within the walls of St. Leonard's Tower, West Malling. He was as clear as I had heard him thirty-five years before.

He was cremated at Falconwood Crematorium on the 13th November, 1968.²¹ It was a bitterly cold day and the small group of family mourners and friends from the Woolwich and District Antiquarian

¹⁸ Notes on Woolwich Artists. *Proc. W.A.S.*, xxv.

¹⁹ *Arch. Cant.*, liv (1941), p. xxxix.

²⁰ Everyone has a *bête noire*. Elliston-Erwood's was the late V. J. Torr. Their quarrel probably started in the late 1920s after the publication of an article on Aldington church (*Arch. Cant.*, xli (1929)). Elliston-Erwood himself commemorated the event in his book of verse *De Lana Caprina*, by publishing M.H.B.'s verse:

'Mr. Erwood has said that the font was poor
This roused the resentment of Mr. Torr.
But of two opinions, the one I'd prefer would
Be the opinion of Mr. Erwood.'

See also *Arch. Cant.*, xlii (1930), 233, and *Antiq. Journ.*, xxxv, 119-20.

²¹ A short note on his name. The first instance I can find of the hyphen between Elliston and Erwood is in 1911 (*Arch. Cant.*, xxix (1911)). In the Woolwich and District Society's *Proceedings* he once appeared as Francis (xxviii, 26).

Society hardly did justice to one who was without doubt the leading Kent antiquary of his time.

'Adieu, pleasant, and thrice pleasant shade! with my parting thanks for many a heavy hour of life lightened by thy harmless extravaganzas, public or domestic.'

(Lamb: *To the Shade of Elliston*)

L. R. A. GROVE

SELECT LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

Books and Booklets:

1. *The Pilgrims' Road*. First edition 1910. Second edition ('revised and largely rewritten'), 1923.
2. *Around Maidstone* (Footpath Guides No. 21), 1947.
3. *De Lana Caprina or Verses on Divers Subjects mainly Kentish*, 1943.
4. *Well Hall, the Story of the House, its Grounds and its famous Occupants*. Several editions, starting in 1936.
5. *Woolwich in 1846—An Early Victorian Guidebook*, Lambarde Press, 1963.
6. *The Hythe Moot Horn and its History*. Hythe Museum Publications, No. 1, 1960.
7. *The Two Sergeant's Maces of Hythe . . . with an account of 'Maces' in general*. Hythe Museum Publications, No. 2.

Prehistory:

The Examination of a Tumulus at Abbey Wood. *Proc. Woolwich A.S.*, xviii, 82-3.

Roman:

Charlton Earthworks: (a) *J.B.A.A.*, NS., xxi, 76-7; (b) *Ibid.*, xxii, 124-91; (c) *Ibid.*, xxix, 227-39; (d) *Arch. Cant.*, lxiii (1950), 144; lxiv (1951), 158-60.

The Identification of Noviomagus with the Earthworks at Charlton. *Proc. W.A.S.*, xxiv, 32-42.

The Roman Antiquities of North-West Kent. *J.B.A.A.*, NS., xxxiv, 165-97.

A Romano-British House at Orpington. *Arch. Cant.*, lxviii (1954), 207-8.

Discoveries on the line of Watling Street at Shooters Hill. *Antiq. Journ.*, v, 174-6.

The Upchurch and Halstow Marshes, Kent, and the alleged Pottery Manufacture carried on therein. *J.B.A.A.*, NS., xxvi, 195-7.

Archæology in War Time—A small Romano-Gaulish Settlement at Albert, Somme, France. *Proc. W.A.S.*, xxi, 39–43.

Monastic:

The Premonstratensian Abbey of Langley, Co. Norfolk. *J.B.A.A.*, NS., xxviii, 49–108 (noteworthy as containing his first use of a quotation from his favourite author, Sir Thomas Browne). With plan.

The Norwich Blackfriars. *Arch. Journ.*, cvi, 90–4. With plan.

The plan of the Abbey Church of the Benedictine Nunnery of Saint Mary, West Malling. *Antiq. Journ.*, xxxiv, 55–63.

Lesnes Abbey—water supply and finds. *Ibid.*, xli, 1–12 (lecture 7. iv, 1960).

The Paving Tiles of Lesnes Abbey. *Proc. W.A.S.*, xv, 162–8.

Two Incised Slabs from Lesnes Abbey. *Arch. Cant.*, lx (1947), 119–21.

A Brief Guide to Lesnes Abbey. *Proc. W.A.S.*, xxix, 1–16. This has been published separately. With plan.

Reports on Lesnes Abbey excavations. *Arch. Cant.*, lxvi (1953) 150–2; lxviii (1954), 208–9; lxxii (1958), 202.

Church of the Cistercian Abbey of St. Mary, Boxley. *Arch. Cant.*, lxvi (1953), 45–51. With plan.

The Present State of Monastic Archæology in Kent. *The South Eastern Naturalist and Antiquary*, lix, 2–14.

Other Ecclesiology:

Architectural History of Appledore Church. *J.B.A.A.*, NS., xxx, 84–90.

Notes on the architecture of Aldington Church, Kent, and the Chapel at Court-at-Street, called 'Bellirica'. *Arch. Cant.*, xli (1929), 143–51.

The Saxon Church of St. Margaret, Darenth. *Invicta Magazine*, iii, 183–7.

Architectural Notes on Kingsdown Church, near Sevenoaks. *Arch. Cant.*, xxxv (1921), 109–16.

The pre-Conquest church at Lydd. *Arch. Journ.*, lxxviii, 216–26.

The Parish Church of Maplescombe. *Invicta Magazine*, iii, 111–14.

History of the Parish Church of S. Botolph, N. Cray. *J.B.A.A.*, NS., xxii, 75–80.

Notes on the Churches of Romney Marsh, 1923. *Arch. Cant.*, xxxvii (1925), 177–208. See also *J.B.A.A.*, NS., xxix, 240.

Architectural Notes on the Church of SS. Peter and Paul, Swanscombe. *Arch. Cant.*, xliii (1931), 241–6.

Teynham Church: architectural Notes. *Arch. Cant.*, xxxv (1921), 145–57.

The Architectural History of St. Margaret, Darenth. *Proc. W.A.S.*, xvii, 83-94.

The Architectural History of St. Botolph, Ruxley. *Ibid.*, 95-7.

The Apse in Kentish Church Architecture. *Arch. Cant.*, xliii (1931), 247-54 (arising out of two papers on The Apse in English Church Architecture, *J.B.A.A.*, NS., xxxvi, 165, and xxxvii, 284).

Plans of, and Brief Architectural Notes on Kent Churches. First and Second Series. *Arch. Cant.*, lix (1946), lx (1947), lxi (1948), lxii (1949), lxiv (1951), lxv (1952), lxvi (1953).

The Church of St. Nicholas, Plumstead. *Arch. Cant.*, lxii (1949), 202; lxxvii (1962), 215-19.

Chapel at Elm House, Hythe. *Arch. Cant.*, lxi (1948), p. xliii.

Plans:

Rochester Cathedral. *Arch. Journ.*, lxxxiii, opposite p. 314.

Rochester Castle. *Ibid.*

Roads and Transport:

The 'Pilgrims' Way', its Antiquity and its alleged Medieval Use. *Arch. Cant.*, xxxvii (1925), 1-20.

An Account of the Road Works on Shooters Hill, 1816. *Proc. W.A.S.*, xxviii, 28-41.

The Turnpike Roads to Woolwich. *Ibid.*, xxx, 1-52.

The Affairs of the Corporation of the Woolwich Ferry Company, 1811-44. *Ibid.*, xxxii, 10-39.

Miscellaneous Notes on some Kent Roads and Allied Matters. *Arch. Cant.*, lxx (1956), 201-20.

The Biddenden and Boundgate Turnpike Road, 1766-1883. *Ibid.*, lxxi (1957), 185-97.

Miscellaneous:

Notes on Local Artists. *Proc. W.A.S.*, xxv. Includes Blackheath, Lewisham and Greenwich artists.

Jew's Harps. *Arch. Cant.*, lvi (1943), 34-40; lx, 107-8; lxxii (1958), 200-2.

The Adventures of a Kentish Spy (Star Chamber Proceedings Henry VII No. 24). *Arch. Cant.*, l (1938), 1-10.

Two Coats of Arms from Kent in London. *Arch. Cant.*, lvii (1944), 44-50.

Two palimpsest Brasses from Orpington Church. *Arch. Cant.*, ix (1947), 118.

Painting of Consecration Cross at Bearsted Church. *Antiq. Journ.*, xxx, 233.

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