

Albany F. Major, O.B.E., F.S.A.

OWING to the death of Mr. Albany Featherstonehaugh Major we have lost a well-known field-archæologist, whose services as Honorary Secretary of the Earthworks Committee—connected with the Congress of Archæological Societies—extended over a period of fourteen years; he was appointed to succeed Mr. A. G. Chater on July 5th, 1911. In that year he published, with his friend and collaborator, the late Rev. C. W. Whistler, three articles on "The Saxon Conquest of Somerset" (*The Antiquary*, XLVII, 376-383, 425-428, 460-463).

He joined the Somersetshire Archæological Society in 1907, and became a life member in 1920. Of the Viking Club (later the Viking Society) Mr. Major was one of the original members, Hon. Secretary from 1894 to 1904, and subsequently Editor until 1909, when he became a Vice-President. He was President of the Croydon Natural History Society for the year 1919-20.

Besides being a recognized authority on ancient earthworks, Mr. Major's knowledge of Scandinavian antiquities and lore was very considerable, as one finds from a perusal of his contributions to the *Saga-Book of the Viking Society*, and by his early writings such as "Sagas and Songs of the Norsemen," and "Stories from the Northern Sagas" (of which he was joint author in 1899).

Mr. Major was one of the promoters and was keenly interested in the excavations at Wick Barrow, near Stogursey, which the writer directed on behalf of the Somersetshire Archæological Society and the Viking Club in 1908, and to the full report on this subject Mr. Major contributed an appendix (*Proc.*, LIV, ii, 68-70).

In the following year he contributed, jointly with Mr. A. G. Chater, a paper on "Excavations at Downend, near Bridgwater" (*Proc.*, LV, ii, 162-169); and in 1911 a paper on "Excavation Work at Brinscombe, near Weare" (*Proc.*, LVII, ii, 110-113).

Mr. Major attended several of the Society's annual meetings. At Bath in 1914 he described Wansdyke at Englishcombe (*Proc.*, LX, i, 62-67); at Bridgwater in 1920, Cannington Park Camp and the Mump at Boroughbridge; and at Clevedon in 1922, Wansdyke in

the neighbourhood of Portbury. On this subject he reserved some of his material pending further investigations on the ground, which eventually culminated in his paper on "The Course of Wansdyke through Somerset: with an Itinerary," published in *Proceedings*, LXX (1924), 22-37. Previously his paper on "Wansdyke, its Course through E. and S.E. Wiltshire" had been published in the *Wilts Archæol. Mag.*, XLI (1922), 396-406. He had, during these investigations, been commissioned by the Ordnance Survey and our own Society to map as far as possible the correct line of Wansdyke on the 25-inch Ordnance sheets. At the time of his death Mr. Major had practically drafted the whole of his monograph on Wansdyke, which will shortly be published by Mr. E. J. Burrow who will be chief illustrator of the work.

But Mr. Major's chief work, written in collaboration with Mr. Whistler, was "Early Wars of Wessex," published by the Cambridge University Press in 1913. Their study of the subject, which handles with equal boldness and caution a series of thorny historical problems is divided into three parts—I, The Founding and Rise of Wessex; II, Wessex and the Danes; III, The Wessex Campaigns of 876-8 A.D. Mr. Major before writing this book had gained an intimate knowledge of West-country topography, and had a rare faculty for reconstructing the features of a bygone primitive landscape.

By the editors of several journals Mr. Major's loss as a reviewer will be keenly felt. He was on the clerical staff of the War Office for many years, eventually as a principal. He died on December 7th, aged 68 years.

H. ST. GEORGE GRAY.