

OBITUARY

RAYMOND C. CARLYON-BRITTON, F.S.A.

RAYMOND CARLYON CARLYON-BRITTON was widely known as a collector and student of British coins: his death in April 1960 has deprived the Society of one of its most distinguished members and of the last link with the original generation of numismatists to whom the Society owes its existence. He was the son of Major P. W. P. Carlyon-Britton, who, feeling that British numismatics were inadequately catered for by the Royal Numismatic Society with its classical and continental bias, formed a splinter group of those of his day most interested in British coins, who in 1903 founded the British Numismatic Society. One of the delights of visiting R. C. B. in his later years was to listen to his amusing and sometimes mischievous anecdotes of his father's contemporaries. Since the war he suffered from poor health and never came to meetings in London; but his enthusiasm for coins remained the strongest interest of his life, and those who had the pleasure of his friendly hospitality in Chichester, had also the privilege of seeing one of the richest collections of British hammered silver coins ever systematically put together. His first collection was sold at auction in 1921; his second was dispersed in 1947 because of crippling ill-health; but he recovered in his last years all, and more, of his earlier collections, leaving at his death the finest collection of Irish coins ever formed, and a remarkable series of English medieval, Scots, and Anglo-Gallic coins. For the student, it is unfortunate that no sale catalogue or photographs will record the scope and details of his last collection, which has been disposed of by private arrangement. His Irish coins, however, may be preserved intact: they include his father's Hiberno-Danish, with many additions, and an unparalleled series of Anglo-Irish, which, alone, he never sold when the rest of his earlier collections were dispersed.

We may hope for a Sylloge of his Irish coins as a basis for the future study of that neglected subject. R. C. B. himself was one of the few serious students of them, and an important paper in the *Numismatic Chronicle* on the harp groats of Henry VIII was his last published work. His provocative attributions to Edward V and Lambert Simnel deserve attention, and have never been answered; and his work on Edward IV, unfinished at his death, will prove of value.

Though the work of some others of his generation has been somewhat discredited by recent research, R. C. B.'s numismatics were more scientific and objective; he was awarded the Sanford Saltus gold medal in 1935, largely for a magnificent paper on the last coinage of Henry VII, which set new standards and made sense of a problem which had defeated Lawrence and Brooke. After the war his interest was principally focused on the coinage of Henry VIII, Edward VI, Elizabeth, and Charles I; unfortunately he published little of his important findings in this field, though his classification of base coinages of Henry VIII and Edward VI, serialized in the *Numismatic Circular* in 1949-50, is fundamental.

His collection of these series was as complete as it could be made. He had a rare combination of the enthusiasms of the student and of the collector, diligent in gathering complete runs of coins for study, yet cherishing fine coins for their own sake and gloating with almost miserly satisfaction over the rarities in his trays. This pride of possession, inherited from his father and his circle, did not distort the perspective of his scholarly work in the same way as it did theirs. He was not personally well known to many recent members of the Society, but will be remembered not only for his kindness and generosity by those who knew him, but by all who collect and study British coins for the wonderful collection of them which he amassed, and for the notable contributions which he made to numismatic knowledge.

B. H. I. H. S.