

O'NEIL, BRYAN HUGH ST. JOHN (1905 - 1954), archaeologist

Name: Bryan Hugh St. John O'neil
Date of birth: 1905
Date of death: 1954
Spouse: Helen Evangeline O'Neill (née Donovan)
Parent: Mabel Meliora O'Neill (née Rowe)
Parent: Charles Valentine O'Neill
Gender: Male
Occupation: archaeologist
Area of activity: History and Culture
Author: Donald Moore

Born 7 August 1905 in London, son of Charles Valentine O'Neil and Mabel Meliora (née Rowe). He was educated at Merchant Taylor's School and St. John's College, Oxford (M.A.); elected F.S.A. in 1935. He married in 1939 Helen Evangeline Donovan of Bourton-on-the-water, Gloucestershire, who was also an archaeologist.

He was appointed to the Office of Works in 1930 as Assistant Inspector of Ancient Monuments and assigned to Wales in succession to C.A. Raleigh Radford, a post which he occupied until 1945, when he was made Chief Inspector of Ancient Monuments for England and Wales. He was responsible for advising on the conservation and presentation of ancient monuments in the guardianship of the State and of the scheduling of those worthy of preservation, by whomever owned. His office was in London, and in his fifteen years of Welsh duties he had no permanent residence in Wales. He joined the Cambrian Archaeological Association in 1931 and later served on its General Committee. Of his 200 listed publications, one third had to do with Welsh archaeology, and appeared mainly in *Archaeologia Cambrensis*, *The Montgomeryshire Collections* and publications of H.M.S.O. As inspector he had to write or commission authoritative guide books to ancient monuments of all periods. He specialised in mediaeval castles. He was an energetic excavator and is remembered in Wales for his work on the prehistoric hill-forts of Breiddin and Ffridd Faldwyn, Montgomeryshire, and Titterstone Clew, Salop.

O'Neil had a life-long interest in coins and was a Fellow of the Royal Numismatic Society. He travelled widely and produced an officially-sponsored report on the coastal castles of the Gold Coast (now Ghana). He was secretary and editor of the Congress of Archaeological Societies. He was an industrious and conscientious worker, a zealous churchman and a keen follower of rugby. He died 24 October 1954 in Edinburgh.

Author

Donald Moore

Sources

E. M. Jope, 'Bryan H. St. John O'Neil: a memoir', 'The published works of B.H. St. J. O'Neil', and portrait in *Studies in building history Essays in recognition of the work of B. H. St. J. O'Neil* (London 1961), ed. E. M. Jope

The Antiquaries Journal, 35 (1955), nos. 3,4, pp. 285-6

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Further Reading

Wikipedia Article: [B. H. St. John O'Neill](#)

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