



MARGATE'S UNSUNG HERO ARTHUR WALTON ROWE

**Doctor, Surgeon, Physician, Palaeontologist and
Archaeologist**



Arthur Walton Rowe was born in Margate in September 1858. His father, Thomas Rowe, was a doctor in the town and young Arthur was to follow in his father's footsteps. Arthur Rowe studied medicine at St Mary's Hospital, London and at the University of Durham. In 1884, he graduated as a Master of Surgery and Bachelor of Medicine with First Class Honours.

Dr Arthur Rowe declined a position at St Mary's Hospital in order to return to Margate to work alongside his father. In addition to working as a general practitioner, Arthur Rowe also worked as a surgeon at both the Royal Sea Bathing Hospital in Westbrook and the Cottage Hospital in Victoria Road, Margate.

In 1887, Arthur Rowe married Miss Emily Barton and they had two children: a daughter, Daphne and a son, Arthur Sherborn Rowe. Mrs Rowe was a very wealthy woman who inherited a large fortune which allowed Arthur Rowe to retire in 1910 at the early age of 51.

Arthur Rowe's national claim to fame is as a palaeontologist. Indeed, he is still considered as the greatest chalk-fossil expert to this day. His most noted work was on the evolution of the micraster (a heart-shaped sea urchin). He concluded that, by correct fossil identification, it was possible to identify each zone within the chalk strata. His zonal papers were published in the early 1900s and I recall seeing a number of his finds on display at the Natural History Museum in Kensington on a visit to that museum about ten years ago.



In 1901, the Royal Society awarded him the Woollaston Prize for his outstanding work on the micraster species. Ten years later, the Royal Society awarded him the Lydell Medal for his work on the zonal papers.

On his retirement, Dr Rowe had an Arts and Crafts country house built: "Shottendane" (now Shottendane Nursing Home but for many years previously the Railway Convalescent Home) where



he was able to spend time on his fossil collection (which he kept in the attic) and on his other interests of local history and archaeology. During his retirement, he gave many talks and lectures on his hobbies.

Arthur Rowe died on 17th September 1926, aged 68. He had suffered from an infected tooth but refused medical attention. His ashes were laid to rest in Margate Cemetery.

He generously bequeathed his collection of Margate literature and

archaeological remains to the town. That bequest was the source of the Local Collection which for many years was housed in the Reference Library which constituted part of the town's former public library in the old Cottage Hospital building in Victoria Road until 1974.

Today, Arthur Rowe is remembered not only as a distinguished fossil hunter but as someone who took an abiding interest in the town's history. During his time as a general practitioner, he was very highly regarded by the people of Margate, for he had a reputation of always being ready to help. Of course, there was no National Health Service in his day, but he treated both rich and poor alike and he is reported to have been particularly generous to needy patients who were genuinely unable to pay his fees. It is hardly surprising that he was so popular with his patients - many of whom affectionately referred to him as "Dr Arthur".

If anyone would like to know more about Arthur Rowe, there is a file in Margate Museum which contains lots more information on his life and work which can be referred to on request. The Museum also houses a small collection of fossils found locally but, sadly, none found by Dr Arthur Rowe.

This article is based on material in Margate Museum Research Archive where much further detail and many photographs can be seen on request.

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