

Professor A. L. F. Rivet
1915–1993

When I first met 'Leo' Rivet in the late fifties, he was the Assistant Archaeology Officer of the Scottish Section of the Ordnance Survey. Since we were both located in Edinburgh and since I was at that time an official adviser to the O.S. on Scottish place-names, there were frequent opportunities for both official meetings and casual encounters, especially as a result of our shared interest in matters toponymic. In our many discussions and conversations, his range of expertise, articulateness, and never-absent humorous touches were not only stimulating and informative but also impressive and fascinating to the younger man. It struck me at that time how fortunate the Ordnance Survey was to have a person of such learning, indeed erudition, on its staff, and it did not surprise me at all when, in 1964, he was appointed lecturer in Classics at Keele University, at the age of 49. Academia's gain was our loss, and his rise through the academic 'ranks' was expectedly rapid: Reader in Romano-British Studies 1967–74, Professor of Roman Provincial Studies 1974–81.

Leo Rivet was born in Streatham, London, on 30 November 1915, obtained his secondary education at Felsted School in South London, and then entered Oriel College in Oxford. From Oxford he moved to the Institute of Archaeology in the University of London. After six years of war service in East Africa (during which time he rose to the rank of Chief Signals Officer, East African Command, Nairobi), he tried his hand at academic book-selling before joining the Ordnance Survey in 1951. As Assistant Archaeology Officer, he oversaw the production of the Third Edition of the *Map of Roman Britain* (1956) and of the *Map of Southern Britain in the Iron Age* (1962). Most importantly, however, that time also saw the publication of his seminal volume on *Town and Country in Roman Britain* (1958) in Hutchinson's University Library, a book which revolutionised scholars' thinking on the subject and established Rivet as a leading expert in the study of Roman Britain. His interest in this area of research never diminished, and in 1969 he edited a collection of papers under the title *The Roman Villa in Britain*. In the eighties, there followed his editions of the two British sheets of the international map

of the Roman Empire (*Tabula Imperii Romani*, 1983 and 1987), and his full-scale study of Provence in the Roman era: *Gallia Narbonensis* (1988). He served as a member of the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments (England) from 1979 to 1985, was elected a Fellow of the British Academy in 1981, and served as President of the Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies. These, however, were just the high points of his service in many professional organisations, including the Council for Name Studies in Great Britain and Ireland, for which he organised the 1980 annual conference at Keele. Leo Rivet died on 6 September 1993.

Of particular interest to name-scholars is his monumental compendium, published jointly with Colin Smith, on *The Place-Names of Roman Britain* (Batsford, 1979; published in America by Princeton University Press), a volume which displays a felicitous mixture of meticulous scholarship and imaginative insights. Specialists may quibble over some of the analyses and interpretations, but such minor criticism cannot at all detract from the immensity of the achievement, which not only makes the relevant source material available in an accessible and systematic fashion but also puts it in its historical and cultural context. It is difficult to imagine how we ever did without it. It will ensure that Leo Rivet's influence on name studies in Britain will be justifiably felt for a long time to come.

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