



RICHARD WRIGHT  
1908–1992

**R**ICHARD PEARSON WRIGHT was born in 1908 in Yorkshire, the son of an Anglican clergyman. He was educated at Marlborough and Clare College, Cambridge, where he was Foundation Scholar. He read the Classical Tripos, after which he stayed on a further year to read History.

In 1932 Richard Wright was appointed lecturer in Classics at University College, Durham, where he was to spend the rest of his academic life and his retirement. In fact, until he married he lived in Castle, so that at the time of his death he was the oldest surviving Castleman.

Originally, Richard Wright had intended to study the plays of Seneca, but having a keen interest in the countryside, and under the influence of Ian Richmond in Newcastle and Eric Birley in Durham, he was encouraged to carry out important excavations on roads in the Wall area. A little later he became interested in the work of R. G. Collingwood and Roman British epigraphy.

So involved in this field did he become that on Collingwood's premature death, early in the Second World War, he took over the production of the Oxford-based corpus of inscriptions of Roman Britain. This is the British successor to volume VII of the Berlin-produced *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*, the collection of Roman inscriptions from the whole Empire, volume VII of which, published in 1873, covered Britain.

In this task of collection, cataloguing and editing he was helped not only by Collingwood's work, but by his wife, Ella, who was Deputy Librarian of the Durham Colleges, and whose skill and knowledge of publication, cataloguing and indexing, in particular, was of the very greatest assistance. Richard Wright's text, when presented to the Oxford University Press was in longhand, but so clear and precise was his calligraphy and setting out that this was, remembering that the individual inscriptions had to be separately inset into the page text, an advantage to the compositors, it was said. In all

of this his bench-mark was, and remained; absolute accuracy, a demanding standard, but, it must be admitted, one which some found over cautious in a field where inspired reconstruction and some interpretation are allowed, if not preferred.

Richard Wright was promoted Senior Lecturer in 1946 and elected a fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of London in 1942. In 1965 the first volume of *The Roman Inscriptions of Britain* appeared, a considerable work of scholarship, nearly 800 pages in length and containing some 2400 items. This contribution to Roman epigraphy was acknowledged the next year by the bestowal on him of a personal Readership in the Epigraphy of Roman Britain.

Richard Wright was President of our Society 1968 to 1969, and those who were on the Pilgrimage of Hadrian's Wall in 1969 will remember him and Dorothy Charlesworth, President of our sister Society, posing together for an official photograph by the Wall Ditch at Limestone Corner. Later he was elected an honorary member of our Society.

Other works, primarily, but by no means

exclusively, on inscriptions, were published in *Archaeologia Aeliana* and the Society's *Proceedings* and as the annual review of inscriptions in the Current work in Roman Britain section of, first, *The Journal of Roman Studies* and, then, *Britannia*. He was also an active member of the Durham Civic Trust. All these activities continued up to and beyond his retirement in 1973. In fact it was not until a major illness, some years later, that he really had to hand over the annual inscriptions report, and work on further fascicules of *RIB*, to other scholars.

Richard Wright was a conscientious and regular attender at both the Society's monthly meetings and Council, right up to recent times when he had become too house-bound to attend. Here, again, the role of his wife was highly supportive, in bringing him from Durham to Newcastle and back again when he wished to attend a meeting.

Richard Wright died on 12 October 1992, leaving Ella, his wife and two daughters, Clare and Bridget.

Charles Daniels