

Kenneth St Joseph (1912–1994)

Vice-President 1975–1994

The potential of aerial photography to reveal hitherto unrecorded sites and to enlarge understanding of known ones had been demonstrated in the pre-War years by such pioneers as O.G.S. Crawford and Major G.W.G. Allen; but its full exploitation on a nation-wide scale was the great achievement of St Joseph during 35 years of flying. Between 1945 and 1958 facilities were largely supplied by the generosity of the RAF during training flights; in 1948 Cambridge University appointed him Curator, and in 1962 Director, in Aerial Photography, responsible to a Committee for Aerial Photography, and in 1973 awarded him a personal professorship. By 1960 the gradual withdrawal of slow-flying RAF training aircraft had caused the Committee to purchase its own Auster and to employ its own gifted pilot, Squadron-Leader A.G. Douglass. From this moment flowed a great liberation of activity; aerial surveys were conducted all over Great Britain each year throughout the year whenever the weather was suitable. No other activity was allowed to take priority. In addition, he found time for important surveys in Ireland, Denmark, and Holland.

His early training in geology and his wide interests in geography and history informed all St Joseph's work, in which he developed close ties with various teaching departments at Cambridge and with outside bodies such as the Nature Conservancy Council. Important photographic archives were built up covering geological, botanical, pedological, and architectural as well as archaeological interests.

Perhaps his central concern, however, lay in Romano-British archaeology, and here his nine papers in *JRS*, describing and discussing his discoveries in this field, not only form an immensely influential contribution to the development of the subject, but were epoch-making in their record of new military sites. This can be illustrated by a tabulation of such sites recorded on the 1931, 1956, and 1978 editions of the OS *Map of Roman Britain*.

	WALES		NORTHERN BRITAIN	
	Forts	Camps	Forts	Camps
1931 Edition	29	2	21	26
1956 Edition	29	4	45	51
1978 Edition	56	38	61	127

Almost all this growth was his work, and perhaps represents his greatest achievement, for in the present state of knowledge the discovery of new forts, camps, or villas bears directly on historical interpretation in a way that new Deserted Medieval Villages, Neolithic cursuses, photographs of hillforts, castles, and country houses, or those of geological features, however illuminating, are unable to do.

Publication of his photographs was a major problem for one whose activities in the air and in the Department left little leisure for writing but whose perfectionism could not contemplate mere uncaptioned picture-books; nor was he by temperament a facile writer. Wisely he called in the help of specialist scholars to write a text while he himself provided the illustrations and collaborated in revising the final version. This resulted in a series of important books on *Monastic Sites* (1952), *Medieval England* (1958, 1979), *The Uses of*

Aerial Photography (1966), *The Early Development of Irish Society* (1969), and *Roman Britain from the Air* (1983).

By temperament, like Richmond, St Joseph preferred to work alone or with few colleagues, and wisely avoided large-scale excavation unless with a partner with time for the task of publication. The one exception to this rule, the fort at Loudon Hill (1946–8), remains alas unpublished although the plans exist. As early as 1938 he was engaged in a lone large-scale survey of Roman roads and sites in south-west Scotland in preparation for Crawford's third edition of the OS Map; the results were published in *The Roman Occupation of South-western Scotland* (ed. Miller, 1952). As his aerial surveys developed he was not content with photographs alone, but enlisted the help of friends with cars to visit and map the sites on the ground. Measurements were often confirmed by digging small trenches to locate and check the size of ditches, and he developed an impressive skill in placing them at exactly the correct spot. Planning was carried out with prismatic compass, tapes, and ranging-rods, and the final drawings were produced at first by D.R. Wilson, his research assistant, and later by professional draughtsmen employed by his expanding department. The accuracy of his surveys may be assessed by comparing his plan of the marching-camp at Esgairperfedd (*JRS* lix (1969), 125) with that by another hand previously published in *BBCS* xxii (1967), 274–6.

Although he carried out important work in Roman Wales and all over England, undoubtedly his chief interest lay in Roman Scotland. Between 1952 and 1965 he collaborated with Richmond in excavating Agricola's legionary fortress at Inchtuthil on the River Tay below Dunkeld. Aided by aerial photographs, each season of digging in the late summer yielded new discoveries that were to create a memorable image of symmetry in Roman military planning. Twenty years after Richmond's death, a publication of the excavation was prepared by Lynn Pitts in collaboration with St Joseph as a volume in the Society's Britannia Monograph series (1985).

His ambition was to produce a great book in the tradition of General Roy, and to this end he devoted his leisure, even after retirement, to field-work and excavation in Scotland. It is a tragedy that this book was never written when its appearance would have had maximum impact. Instead he continued his field-work, even beyond the age of 80, into a period when a spate of new discoveries were being made by others. However, an enormously significant collection of drawings exists at Cambridge, which it must be a first priority to publish in honour of his memory.

Although to the archaeological world at large he sometimes seemed a somewhat forbidding figure (for before their quantity become overwhelming it was difficult to rid himself of an understandable feeling of proprietorship in his own discoveries, and in the early days he sometimes proved unhelpful to enquirers), to his friends he was ever helpful and a fascinating companion, full of humour and an amusing store of anecdotes. The scope of his learning and experience made him a valuable member of committees such as the English Royal Commission and Ancient Monuments Board, for it was supplemented not only by great wisdom of judgement but also by an extensive knowledge of topography and sites of all periods. As a member of the Air Photography Committee of the Council for British Archaeology he drew willingly on his long experience of aerial survey to assist in the monumental task of extending the practice of aerial archaeology more uniformly across the country as whole, as well as in enhancing the appreciation of its results. Almost to the end he had actively involved himself in the prolonged attempt to save the site of Newstead from damage by a projected new road.

In the practice of his craft he was a master at choosing the correct view and angle for low-level photography, and the quality of his results continually improved as the Committee became able to purchase more expensive cameras. In later years vertical

photography also became possible, and greatly facilitated the mapping of sites from photographs of known scale.

Early practitioners had been content to take single photographs of striking cropmarks; St Joseph learnt the value of repeated annual inspection of sites under differing conditions and rotations of crops, and was able to build up plans of features extending over many fields, few of which might display themselves in any one year.

His retirement in 1980 was followed by a period of retrenchment in University expenditure; the work of the Committee became restricted and tied to commercial considerations. New work by others has become regional and often sporadic. An epoch has ended with his passing, leaving his achievements as a beacon for the future when support of basic research will once more become a priority.

S.S. FRERE