

RUNES AT EMMANUEL

It would perhaps have been in character if I had contrived to include in the pamphlet of inscriptions from Emmanuel published in 2001 the already non-existent graffito in Anglo-Saxon runic script which is the subject of this present article. Recent television coverage of the distinguished Attenborough family prompts me to recall that though none of the brothers Richard, David and John was an Emmanuel man, their father was. Frederick Levi Attenborough (1887–1973) came to Emmanuel in 1915, having already worked for some years as a teacher. He took his BA in 1918 with a first in Medieval and Modern Languages. A research studentship in English philology followed (1918–20), and a Junior Fellowship for three years from January 1920. College records show that from Michaelmas Term 1918 he occupied a first-floor room on B staircase, the right-hand small room in B3.

It must have been at some time in the early 1920s that some friend or pupil supplemented the officially painted names at the foot of B staircase with a runic version of the surname, Attenbro, lightly scratched on the wall facing Front Court by the entrance to B. It remained legible to anyone who knew his *futhork* (the runic alphabet) for 60 or so years, and disappeared only in the 1984 quatercentenary stone-cleaning.



The light scratchings have been exaggerated in white to make them more visible.

Attenborough never took a Cambridge PhD (the degree was not yet invented), but his research dissertation on *The Laws of the Earliest English Kings* achieved the by no means automatic recognition of printed publication in 1922. After leaving Emmanuel, he continued a successful academic career as Principal of Borough Road Training College, Isleworth (1924–32) and of University College, Leicester (1932–51).

The original of the photograph published here was a 35 mm colour slide. Deplorably, I seem not to have recorded the scale; but from memory I should say that the scratched characters were not above 10 cms tall. I am much indebted to Janet Morris, our Archivist, for help in tracing references and materials for this article.

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