

Rowse, A. L.

A. L. Rowse: 1903-1997

Alfred Leslie Rowse was a prolific British historian, with over a hundred published books to his name. He is best known for his extensive work on Elizabethan England and his poetry about Cornwall, and was also a Shakespearean scholar and biographer. Born and raised in Cornwall, Rowse unsuccessfully stood for a parliamentary seat before choosing a life of academia, and went on to develop a reputation for academic brilliance, devotion to precise language and a refreshing candour about his homosexuality.

An Emeritus Professor of All Souls College, Rowse was a Fellow of the British Academy and Benson Medallist of the Royal Society of Literature, and held many other academic awards and honorary degrees. His first published work was a selection of verse, and he continued to write poetry throughout his life. He contributed to T.S. Eliot's quarterly review *The Criterion* in the 1930s, edited a number of essays collections, and established a reputation through his early writing. He consolidated this reputation with a one-volume history of England, *The Spirit of English History* (1943), and his books about his native Cornwall, including the definitive *Tudor Cornwall* (1941), are well-loved and reprinted to this day. Amongst his most important work is the trilogy *The Elizabethan Age*, which consists of *The England of Elizabeth* (1950), *The Expansion of Elizabethan England* (1955), and *The Elizabethan Renaissance* (1972). He published many popular articles in newspapers and magazines in England and the United States, and his brilliance was widely recognised, as were his knack for the sensational statement and sustained reputation for academic boldness.

His body of work contains a number of volumes of autobiography, as well as books on sexuality, work on a broad range of historical subjects, and literary history and biography. His last book was *Historians I Have Known* (1995), a collection of opinionated reminiscences of famous figures he had known throughout his life, including Hugh Trevor-Roper and former friend A.J.P. Taylor. Upon his death, he bequeathed his extensive collection of books to the University of Exeter, along with his personal archive of manuscripts, diaries, and correspondence.