Antiquity

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Editorial

PLATE XIII

We are happy to include in this issue a photograph of Dr and Mrs George Grant MacCurdy (PL. XIII). In so doing we help to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the American School of Prehistoric Research. The Editor and Production Editor were fortunate to be in Harvard last November and to attend the splendid dinner in the Faculty Club organized by Dr Hugh Hencken, the present Director of 'the School', as part of the 50th birthday celebrations. The Editor sat next to Mrs MacCurdy and was as appreciative of and fascinated by the remarkable speech she made on that occasion as was the rest of the company. It is not often that one has the opportunity of talking to a lady whose husband was born in 1863—the year in which Lyell published his *The Geological Evidences of the Antiquity of Man*, Kemble his *Horae Ferales*, Huxley his *Man's Place in Nature*, and Daniel Wilson his *Prehistoric Man: Researches into the Origin of Civilisation in the Old and New Worlds*. That was the year in which Lartet and Christy began their excavations in the caves of the Vézère, Napoleon III created the Musée des Antiquités Nationales at St-Germain-en-Laye, and an evilly minded workman at Moulin Quignon planted a modern jaw in Boucher de Perthes' excavations.

MacCurdy was killed in his 85th year in November 1947. He and Mrs MacCurdy were driving south to Florida: he got out of his own car to ask the way and was knocked down by a passing car. He was a Harvard student and was trained as a geologist and biologist. He went to the International Zoological Congress at Leyden in 1896 and was so excited and stimulated by Du Bois' exhibition of the bones of *Pithecanthropus erectus* that he decided to devote himself to anthropology and prehistoric archaeology. He became curator of the archaeological and anthropological collections of the Peabody Museum at Yale, where he was made Professor Emeritus in 1931.

Ten years before, together with Mrs MacCurdy and Dr Charles Peabody, he founded the American School of Prehistoric Research. The school first focused its interest on France, then moved to the whole of Europe and finally took on the whole of the Old World. For their first eight years, Dr and Mrs MacCurdy conducted summer trips of students from America to museums and sites in Europe. Their first base was in the lovely village of St-Léon-sur-Vézère, and from here they excavated the Mousterian site of Abri des Merveilles. From 1930 onwards he turned over to others most of the work abroad—in Czechoslovakia, the Danube Valley, and the Near East, and what a distinguished band of students these were: Hugh Hencken, Robert Ehrich, Dorothy Garrod, Theodore McCown, Hallam Movius—to mention only a few.

In 1945 he relinquished the Directorship of the School as well as the Editorship of the *Bulletin* which he had founded in 1926. The *Bulletin*'s first number was a four-page leaflet largely devoted to stating the aims, organization and hopes of the new institution. Under his editorship it grew to a sizeable yearly issue with articles of importance in the field of prehistory and early man. MacCurdy's travels in Europe brought him into contact with such people as Hoernes, the de Mortillets, Montelius, Sophus Muller, Obermaier, Breuil, Arthur Keith, John and Arthur Evans, Boule, Penck,

and Sergi. He was part of the heroic age of modern archaeology, and his two-volume work *Human Origins*, published in 1924, set out with clarity and detail the position of our knowledge of prehistory at that time. It was not the first big manual of prehistory to appear in America: Osborn's *Men of the Old Stone Age* had appeared seven years before. Dr Hugh Hencken, the present Director of the American School of Prehistoric Research, made a very proper evaluation of *Human Origins* when he said, at the time of MacCurdy's death, that it 'is still an invaluable mine of information about discoveries made up to 1924, and it remains a great monument on the long road that scholarship has travelled in the search for Man's beginnings'.

Long may the American School encourage and foster travel along that road, and may its next 50 years be as fruitful and distinguished as its first half-century.

The stories of the raping and faking of archaeological material to which we have already referred, continue and get worse, and Professor Stephen Williams, Director of the Peabody Museum at Harvard, has recently published an article entitled 'Death and destruction in the name of art' (in the March issue of *Harvard Today* and an April issue of the *Saturday Review of Literature*) from which we are allowed to quote. The illicit activities of looters and robbers—the pot-hunters of the United States, the *tombaroli* of Italy, the *huaqueros* of Peru and the *lossous el kabour* of Egypt, have been known for very long. In 1968–9 several scholars and museum curators began to make their voices heard against this wicked trade. Among the first to decry this illicit plunder were two Harvard women, Clemency Coggins of the Department of Fine Art, and Agnes Mongan, then Director of the Fogg Museum. In 1970 the University Museum of Philadelphia and its Director, Dr Froelich Rainey, put forward the statement that the Museum would not acquire materials which did not have a proper pedigree and we have published it (*Antiquity*, 1970, 171–2).

In the spring of 1970 Harvard set up a committee to study the whole problem of the acquisition of materials for the museums at Harvard. It was under the chairmanship of Professor William H. Bond, Librarian of the Houghton Library. In November 1971 the recommendations of the Bond Committee were accepted as operative for all the Harvard museums and collections, and we print here extracts from the policy statement adopted by the President and Fellows of Harvard College:

The collections in the museums and libraries of Harvard University have been formed and are augmented and maintained primarily to promote teaching and research. In recent years a flourishing international black market has grown up in the kinds of objects that are the proper concern of our collections, and this threatens the work of the University in various ways . . .

In response to this situation many countries have developed legislation designed to regulate the collection and export of antiquities, art objects, and natural specimens found within their borders. But without the co-operation of the ultimate consumer—the collecting institute or individual—such legislation has often proved inadequate to control abuses . . .

What is needed is a firm, united stand, publicly taken, by leading institutional and private collectors against illicit commerce in these materials. We believe that Harvard has a generally good record in the policies that have been privately and independently developed by its several collecting agencies. But it is now highly desirable that our informal and private code be formalized and made public, and that Harvard join with other responsible institutions and private collectors in an effort to eliminate or at least diminish the power of the black market . . .

To a great extent the proposed rules reflect practices long observed by the collecting agencies of the University. It will be noted, however, that the rules are largely forward-looking. In view of the tangle of international legislation, the complications arising from trusteeship, the probability of conflicting claims, and the extreme difficulty or impossibility in many cases of establishing a clear and unbroken line of provenance for past acquisitions, something resembling a statute of limitations must apply—as, in fact, it does among museum collections throughout the world. By taking a public stand along the lines we suggest, we hope

that the University will play a significant role in the attempt to curb the abuses that have aroused so much public concern.

We therefore recommend that the President and Fellows adopt the following general principles to govern the University with respect to the acquisition (whether by gift, bequest, or purchase, or through the activities of scientific or archaeological expeditions) of works of art and antiquities:

1. The museum director, librarian, curator, or other University officer (hereinafter to be referred to as 'Curator') responsible for making an acquisition or who will have custody of the acquisition should assure himself that the University can acquire valid title to the object in question. This means that the circumstances of the transaction and/or his knowledge of the object's provenance must be such as to give him adequate assurance that the seller or donor has valid title to convey.

2. In making a significant acquisition, the Curator should have reasonable assurance under the circumstances that the object has not, within a recent time, been exported from its country of origin (and/or the country where it was last legally owned) in violation of that country's laws.

3. In any event, the Curator should have reasonable assurance under the circumstances that the object was not exported after July 1, 1971, in violation of the laws of the country of origin and/or the country where it was last legally owned.

4. In cases of doubt in making the relevant determinations under paragraph 1–3, the Curator should consult as widely as possible. Particular care should be taken to consult colleagues in other parts of the University whose collecting, research, or other activities may be affected by a decision to acquire an object. The Curator should also consult the General Counsel to the University where appropriate; and, where helpful, a special panel should be created to help pass on the questions raised.

5. The University will not acquire (by purchase, bequest, or gift) objects that do not meet the foregoing tests. If appropriate and feasible, the same tests should be taken into account in determining whether to accept loans for exhibitions or other purposes.

6. Curators will be responsible to the President and Fellows for the observance of these rules. All information obtained about the provenance of an acquisition must be preserved, and unless in the opinion of the relevant Curator and the General Counsel to the University special circumstances exist in a specific instance, all such information shall be available as a public record. Prospective vendors and donors should be informed of this policy.

7. If the University should in the future come into the possession of an object that can be demonstrated to have been exported in violation of the principles expressed in Rules 1–3 above, the University should, if legally free to do so, seek to return the object to the donor or vendor. Further, if with respect to such an object, a public museum or collection or agency of a foreign country seeks its return and demonstrates that it is a part of that country's national patrimony, the University should, if legally free to do so, take responsible steps to co-operate in the return of the object to that country.

It is against this fine policy declaration that we must see the awful tales recounted by Professor Stephen Williams in his article. The true facts of the illicit trade in Guatemalan antiquities have been largely brought to light by Ian Graham, a Research Fellow in the Peabody Museum, who has for years been planning a corpus of Maya hieroglyphic inscriptions. We quote from Professor Williams's article:

Most of the Maya stelae in major American and European museums came out of the initial explorations of Maya archaeology in the late 19th century. However, during the post-World War II boom of 'primitive' art and as a consequence of the opening up of once-remote jungle areas through new modes of transportation such as helicopters, these stela fragments began to appear on the international art market. Because of their rarity and also their intrinsic beauty, they commanded very high prices, equivalent to the prices of major works of art from the 19th century and from the Ancient World. Many American museums began to collect these pieces of sculpture, and private collectors with adequate means also went into the marketplace. The result was a real catastrophe for students of the Maya civilization.

Sites were laid waste by looters whose technology was not equal to bringing out these often huge pieces of stone sculpture intact. Chainsaws were used to cut the relatively soft rock and many of the larger pieces were smashed into fragments small enough to transport . . .

There were some attempts by local authorities in Mexico and Guatemala to stem the tide of destruction, and occasionally people were caught trying to export pieces . . . It is one thing to protect the major sites, although even they can be despoiled. For example, Piedras Negras, an excavated site and national monument in Guatemala, was robbed of several pieces which later turned up in American institutions. However, in the smaller sites not yet known to archaeologists this destruction is even more crucial, since their treasures have not yet been photographed and drawn . . .

Ian Graham heard about one small site in Guatemala called La Naya some time after it had been attacked by looters. In order to get to a site in a virtually trackless jungle, an archaeologist usually must go with someone who has already been there. When Graham set out for La Naya last March (1971) he took three Guatemalan helpers. One of these, his guide, Pedro Sierra, a forest guard from Tikal, was a Guatemalan official who had helped send several looters to prison for their plundering of La Naya. Graham and his companions arrived in the late afternoon, hung their hammocks, and were preparing dinner as it was getting dark. Then two shots rang out and Sierra fell dead at Graham's feet. There followed a desperate night made almost unbearable by a sudden cloud-burst. Later, when Graham returned to the site with police, it was discovered that looters had indeed camped there, had obviously watched the archaeologists arrive, and had singled out the Guatemalan guard for death. They were in fact continuing their devastation.

Not only outsiders are subjected to this kind of intimidation. A group of Lacandone Indians, one of the most isolated of the remaining groups of Maya speakers in Mexico, were recently involved in an even more bloody affair . . . They were hunting with bows and arrows near an archaeological site in Chiapas in south-eastern Mexico, and apparently disturbed looters at work; whereupon three of the Lacandones were murdered in cold blood and two were wounded . . . A Mexican government archaeologist, Jorge Angulo, who was excavating at the site of Oaxtepec, was stopped at gunpoint and told that he could not continue his fieldwork there until the looters had finished theirs . . .

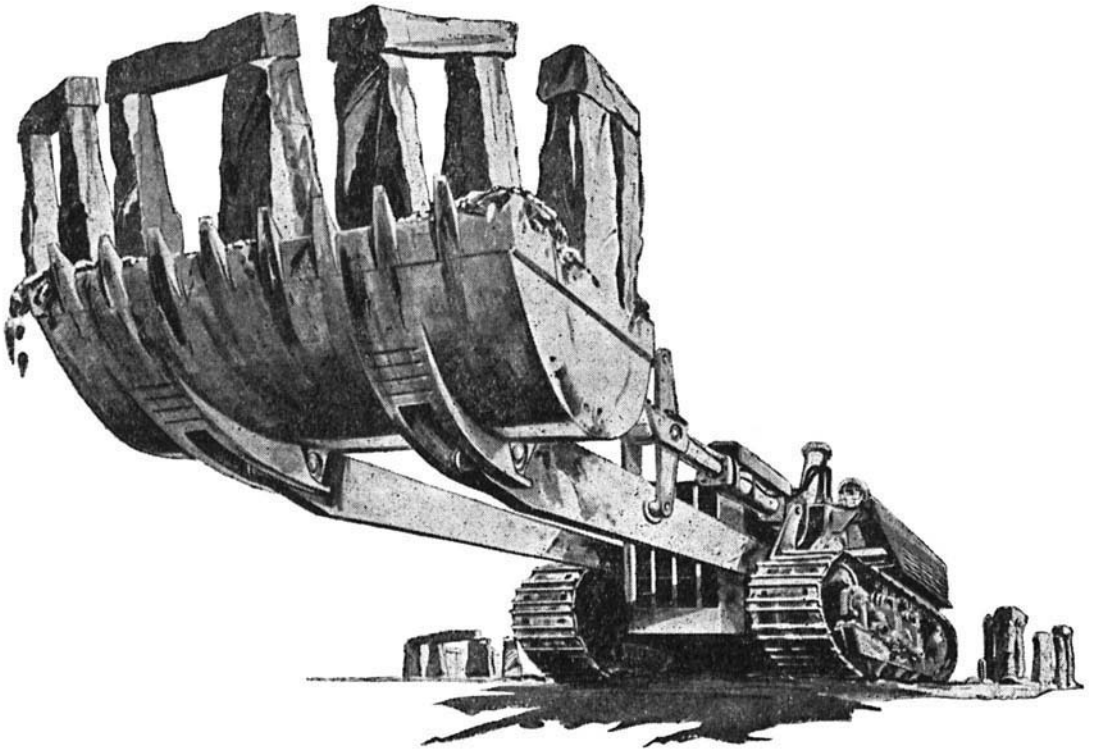
Some time last year several large stelae from the remote site of Machaquila in central Guatemala were stolen from their original position by some enterprising looters. One large stela was broken into ten or more pieces and presumably taken out on muleback to an ocean port. The fragments were shipped via a shrimp boat, coming ashore somewhere in southeastern United States. The stela was then transported to a number of major cities where the looters attempted to sell it unsuccessfully. Late last fall it arrived on the West Coast in the hands of a dealer who put it on the market after cementing the pieces back together. The asking price was in the range of $350,000. Because it had entered the country without benefit of customs notice and was stolen property valued in excess of $5,000 it was of interest to both the US Treasury Department and the Federal Bureau of Investigation. In late January it was seized by FBI agents in southern California. Court action is anticipated and the government of Guatemala can be reasonably certain that the piece will be returned.

This particular incident marks one of the first times that a seizure by law enforcement agents has taken place in such a straightforward way. The specimen was first published by Ian Graham following his work at the site in 1964 . . . and it was he who identified this particular piece as having last been seen *in situ* in Guatemala . . . A second Machaquila stela was in pieces when recorded by Graham. It too was taken out by looters and apparently went direct to Arkansas. There, it has now been seized by the FBI, and presumably will be returned to Guatemala following legal proceedings.

These excerpts from Professor Williams's article show the hideous state of looting and robbing in America and remind us of the looting, robbing, and faking that has been going on in Turkey and Cyprus (*Antiquity*, 1971, 247–8). An extraordinary story has recently been revealed regarding a private museum in Madrid, the Instituto Valencia de Don Juan. It was robbed in February of 1971 by two thieves posing as students: they removed 70 precious objects and were trying to sell them through art dealers when some of the well-known objects were identified by experts.

Eventually the entire group of stolen objects was recovered in Germany, though the robbers, by then wanted for murder, had perished in a gun battle with the German police.

We, in England, do not, as yet, fear the destruction of our ancient monuments in this dramatic way, but the drawing produced by *Rescue* which we reproduce here, puts in a practical way the threat to our material heritage. *Rescue: A Trust for British Archaeology*, has already been referred to in these pages (*Antiquity*, 1971, 144, 271, 299). Its second big meeting was held in the Senate House of the University of London on 15 January 1972, and approved the rules of *Rescue* which has now become a registered charity. It was reported that *Rescue*'s subscription list numbers over 2,300 people. It was suggested at the meeting by Mr Rook that the Council of *Rescue* should be the Executive Committee of the Council for British Archaeology. Professor Charles Thomas, President of the CBA, said that there was a definite need for two separate organizations, and that the CBA 'was not equipped and never would be equipped to undertake the responsibility of British rescue archaeology'. And may we direct everyone who has not already seen it to read Hester A. Davis's article 'Is there a future for the past?' in a recent issue of *Archaeology* (1971, 300–7). Hester Davis took her B.A. in history in Rollins College in Florida and her M.A. in anthropology in the University of North Carolina. In 1959 she



went to the University of Arkansas Museum as Preparator and in 1963 was made the Assistant Director. With the formation of the Arkansas Archaeological Survey in 1967, she became State Archaeologist, and is at present Chairman of the Committee on the Public Understanding of Archaeology of the Society of American Archaeology. Her article has, as a sub-title, 'The rampant destruction of archaeological sites in the United States is rapidly wiping out evidence of our Indian and historic heritage', and there are devastatingly sad pictures of 'fox-hole archaeology' and two pictures which the motorway archaeologists of this country should look at: they are labelled, very appropriately, 'This isn't archaeology—this is ridiculous.' *Rescue* and other state organizations may stop us getting into the conditions described in America; and even without us having a Committee on the Public Understanding of Archaeology. Indeed our media do very well at present: *The Times* archaeological reporting is good, and *The Daily Telegraph* hardly ever misses an item of important archaeological news. *The Illustrated London News* is, alas, no longer the weekly purveyor of archaeological excitement that it was to those of us who grew up in the twenties and thirties. And we are particularly fortunate in our broadcasting, both sound and visual: some of the ITV programmes like *Who Were the British?* and *The Lost Centuries* have been admirable, and BBC2 with its *Chronicle* series maintains a standard of archaeological information and comment without parallel anywhere in the world. We recently showed two of the *Chronicle* programmes to academic and general audiences in Cambridge, England, and Cambridge, Massachusetts. Both were attentive and interested, but the American audiences were flabbergasted: nothing like this happens in American television and the well-remembered CBS programme on Stonehenge was a poor substitute for well-informed television.

☞ Our stringent comments on the search for traces of pre-Columbian America in our last editorial, and our outspoken criticism of Professor Cyrus Gordon, were in proof when we read the issue of *The New Yorker* for 5 February 1972. That issue contains an article entitled 'U.S. Journal: Maine: Runes' which is so good and so funny that we begged permission to reproduce part of it. This was readily granted, but, please, dear readers, go and read the whole of this article. Here is a small excerpt, reported with the kind permission of *The New Yorker*, and the author, Calvin Trillin:

> There are no trained runologists in Maine, but a lot of people have been trying to make do . . . In Bath, Maine, last June, Walter Elliott, a part-time carpenter who had grown up in the area, walked into the Bath Marine Museum to show Harold E. Brown, the museum's curator, some stones . . . Two of the stones were covered with symbols, and another had a drawing that seemed to be a map . . . Brown, a retired high-school mathematics teacher, happens to be an amateur archaeologist. 'I recognized them for what they probably were', he said later. 'There was only one thing in my mind they *could* be.' Rune stones . . . A month after the stones were found, Elliott wrote Brown, 'The more I read about the Vikings, the more I'm convinced that Maine is Vinland.'
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> Elliott and the Peabody never *got together*. Elliott has said that he went to the Peabody with the stones, failed to find anyone who would pay any attention to him, and finally walked out in disgust . . . Elliott eventually got an opinion of the stones from someone outside the Peabody. He sent them to Dr O. G. Landsverk . . . Landsverk wrote Elliott that the stones were undoubtedly authentic . . .
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> Their belief in the stones did not seem greatly affected by the discovery that Dr Landsverk himself is an amateur. His doctorate is in physics. His career was in manufacturing. The Landsverk Foundation and the Norseman Press, the publishing house that issued his books on runes, are both his own creations—part of a crusade to prove that America was Vinland long before Columbus saw it. If a scholar of Old Norse is told that Landsverk has declared a runic inscription authentic, the look that is likely to cross his face is similar to the look that crosses the face of a Shakespeare scholar who has just been told that some retired merchant banker has absolute proof that *Macbeth* could have been written by nobody except Edward de

Vere, the seventeenth Earl of Oxford. Runologists are in general agreement that none of the purported rune stones that has turned up in the United States is authentic. Landsverk contends that virtually all of them are authentic . . . He says that the professional scholars, whom he ordinarily refers to as 'a few sceptics who still insist on putting on the blinders', have merely failed to understand that the Vinland stones are written in a code—a code that Landsverk's colleague, a cryptanalyst named Alf Mongé, has finally broken . . .

After Landsverk returned the stones . . . Elliott took them to Cyrus Gordon . . . he is convinced that Mongé 'is one of the great discoverers of our time'. Like Mongé, Gordon believes that what appear to be the kind of mistakes in runic inscriptions that indicate inauthenticity to scholars—misspellings, for instance—are actually purposeful errors that make the code come out right. (Runologists speak of Mongé's method as a game that can be used to produce secret messages in the preface of one of Landsverk's own books.) Gordon believes that the Kensington Stone—which was found in Kensington, Minnesota, in 1898, and is universally dismissed by specialists as a hoax—is 'one-hundred-per-cent genuine, without a shadow of a doubt'. . .

Virtually all scholars of the subject believe that Norsemen did land in North America in the Middle Ages, and that no rune stones are needed to prove it . . . But artifacts have always had great appeal as tangible proof of who was here first—and who was here first has always been important to Americans. A lot of the fervour surrounding the Kensington Stone early in the century came from the desire of Scandinavians in the upper Midwest, who were looked down on as ignorant newcomers, to prove that they were legitimate Americans. Years later, Scandinavians were still lobbying for public recognition of Leif Ericson's presence in North America, in the same way that black Americans now lobby for public recognition of Crispus Attucks' presence at the Boston Massacre—partly to teach their children that they are not here on sufferance. The arguments between Italians and Scandinavians that were started by Yale's publication of a Vinland map several years ago were treated as a joke, but the question of who arrived first is not really a joke in an immigrant society in which disliked newcomers have traditionally been told 'Go back where you came from.'

Advocates of various rune stones are interested in proving not merely that the Vikings were in North America but that they were in a specific part of North America. Among the most active supporters of the Kensington Stone are the citizens of Alexandria, Minnesota, the closest large town to Kensington, who have erected a huge replica of the stone to symbolize Alexandria's role as 'the Birthplace of America'. A woman in Heavener, Oklahoma, the site of what is known as the Heavener Rune Stone, has published a newspaper called *The Vikings Were Here*—complete with advertisements like 'Yes, the Vikings WERE here! Richardson Oil Co., Howe, Oklahoma. To explore the Viking trails, buy your gasoline at one of the following stations . . .'. In the last century, a former Harvard chemistry professor who had become rich in the baking-powder business decided that Leif Ericson's headquarters had been in Cambridge, and erected plaques to mark the spot. . . .

Thank you, Calvin Trillin. Thank you, *New Yorker*. Yes, perhaps America does need a Committee on the Public Understanding of Archaeology. And perhaps we could charter an aircraft, and fill it with our British lunatic-fringers—our straight-trackers, and new diffusionists, and black-horse hunters, and Glastonbury Tor men. And if the Committee did not get them into a proper understanding of the reasonable and possible interpretations of the past, they could set up a factory—perhaps in Maine—producing rune stones, passage graves, brochs, Phoenician inscriptions, mock-Newport towers, and early maps. Fringe Archaeological Enterprises Inc. might be a good name. Myth America would sell: indeed our advice is—Buy your rune stone NOW!

☞ We are delighted that there has been set up at last an Archaeology Abroad Service in this country. Its address is *c/o Institute of Archaeology, 31–4 Gordon Square, London WC1*. In November 1970 a Committee was formed to examine the need for the creation of such a service, and now that service exists and has published its first bulletin in February: a second bulletin may have been distributed by the time these words are read. The service will provide information about opportunities

for British archaeologists and others based in this country to take part in excavation and fieldwork abroad. The service has also decided to enrol persons who wish to be considered available for archaeological work abroad. We should stress that the service is not an employment agency and will only provide the names of suitable persons if asked to do so by the organizers of expeditions. All enquiries should be addressed to the Secretary, Mrs E. Glover. At present only written communications can be dealt with. Full membership, including a copy of all publications, is at present £1 for individuals and £2 for institutions. Enrolment forms are available from the Secretary. The annual subscription for *Archaeology Abroad* is 50p. The Editor of ANTIQUITY is constantly being asked for information about digs at home and abroad. The CBA *Calendar of Excavations* deals admirably with the home front: now this welcome new organization will deal with our overseas queries.

In this issue (pp. 117–23) we publish some recent aerial research in Picardy and Artois by M. Roger Agache. We are happy to draw attention here to an excellent series of air photographs produced by the Centre Regional de Documentation Pédagogique of the Académie d'Amiens, entitled *Notre Picardie: Archéologie Aérienne de la Picardie.* This publication, which consists of twenty-four 35 mm. lantern slides and a text and illustrated written commentary (with plans), is a model of its kind, as one might expect when one realizes it is the work of M. Roger Agache, who is Directeur de la Circonscription Préhistorique du Nord de la France et de la Picardie, and whose *Détection aérienne de vestiges protohistoriques Gallo-Romains et Médiévaux* was recently reviewed in these pages (*Antiquity*, 1971, 321). This publication of slides and text can be obtained from the *CRDP, 33 rue des Minimes, 80 Amiens, France*, and the price is Frs. 22. This is the way to help schools to teach archaeology and history: we should have, for all regions of Great Britain and Ireland, comparable series.

Dr A. C. Renfrew, Senior Lecturer in Archaeology in the University of Sheffield, has been appointed Professor of Archaeology in the University of Southampton to replace Professor Barry Cunliffe (*Antiquity*, 1971, 250). This news will give much pleasure to many, but not, we fear, to Messrs Joel and Kraus, who produce, every quarter, that crabbed journal *The New Diffusionist*, and who recently wrote to the Trustees of *Antiquity* to say what a scandalous man the Editor was in setting out honestly his views and refusing advertisements for their journal (which he had told them he regarded as a load of old rubbish). Now they have, temporarily we hope, abandoned their vilification of ourselves and turned to Colin Renfrew. His ideas are described as 'a relapse into flat-earth mentality in European Prehistory', and this impudent, ignorant and totally inappropriate phrase will give him as much amusement as it gives all of us who eagerly await the next issue of this deliciously irrelevant and ill-informed journal, in which the attack on the flat-earth Renfrew will be continued.

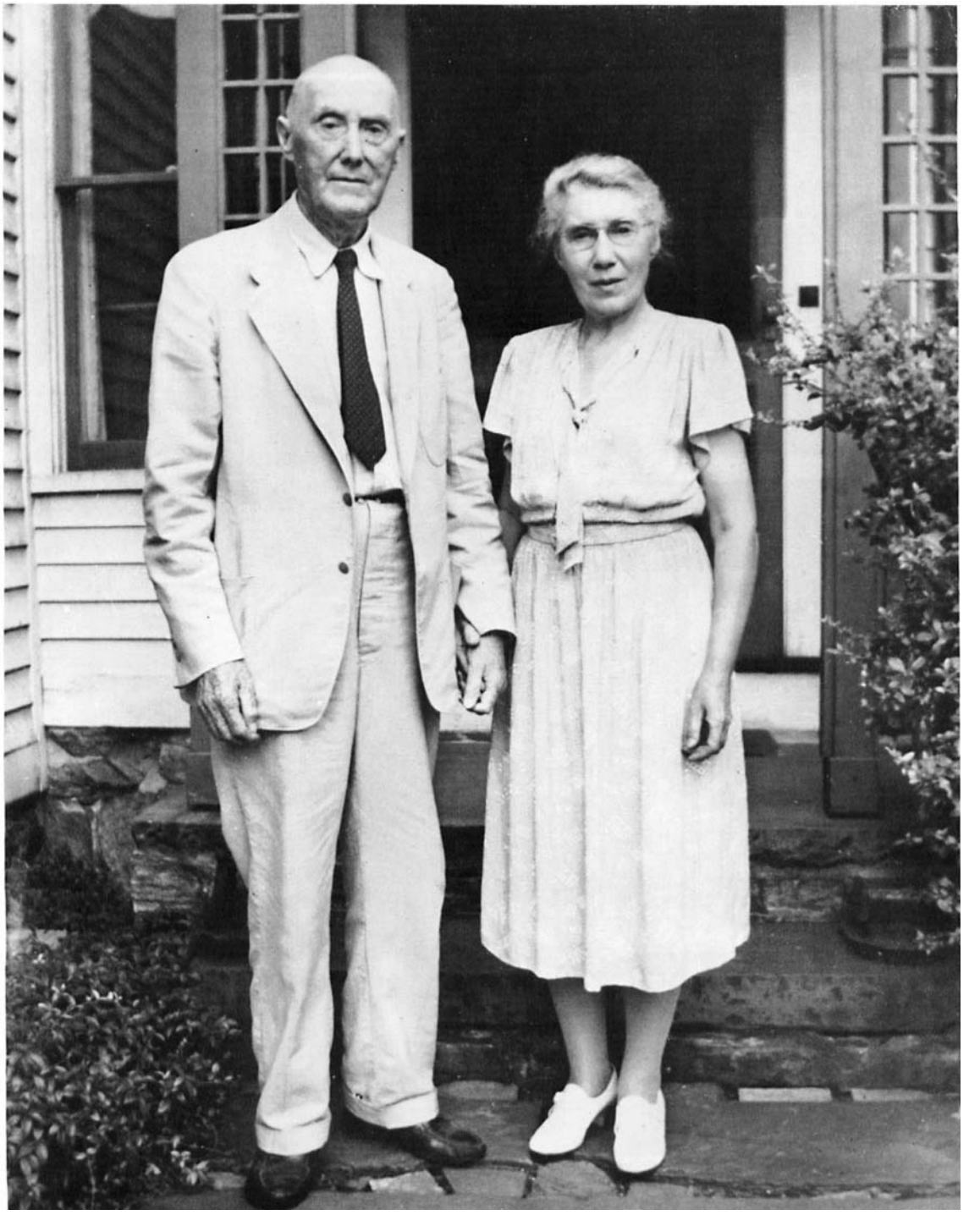

PLATE XIII: EDITORIAL

Mr and Mrs George Grant MacCurdy at Salisbury House, Old Lyme, Connecticut. Photograph taken by Ali Absolon-Black in 1947

See p. 89

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