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Editorial

PLATE IX

The London Sunday papers of 27 January and the daily papers of 28 January were filled by excited headlines exposing the Vinland Map as a forgery. 'Forged map that fooled the world' declared *The Observer*, 'British Agent's Part in Fake Map Deal' said *The Sunday Telegraph*, while *The Daily Telegraph* was more specific: 'Vinland Map exposed by 54 specks'. It was revealed that 'chemical analysis of 54 specks of ink, so tiny that put together they would still be smaller than a pinhead, lead to the claim that the Vinland Map, purporting to show that Vikings discovered America long before Columbus, is a fake'. The Royal Geographical Society held a special symposium on the Vinland Map on 4 February, and a huge crowd filling its large lecture hall in Kensington heard half-a-dozen speakers discuss the problem. The discussion was introduced by Dr Helen Wallis, Keeper of the Map Room in the British Museum, and concluded with Mr Walter McCrone of the Chicago firm of Walter C. McCrone Associates who had done the small-particle analysis. The text of all the speeches is being printed in the June number of *The Geographical Journal* and will make good reading.

Most of the speakers accepted that the map was false, but George Painter, Assistant Keeper in charge of fifteenth-century printed books in the British Museum, stoutly defended the authenticity of the map and the view that it was drawn by a Swiss monk about 1440, 52 years before Columbus left Spain. What is not in dispute is that the Vikings did get to America before Columbus: the Sagas tell us this and so surely does excavation at L'Anse aux Meadows in Newfoundland. The only dispute is whether the map adds further proof of this historical

fact, and shows that the Vikings had a far greater and more accurate knowledge of the topography of Greenland than would have seemed likely. What is also apparently not in dispute is that the 11 in. by 16 in. (c. 28 cm. by 40 cm.) map, which we were able to study two years ago in Yale University Library, was drawn on paper made in the Upper Rhineland about 1440. Walter McCrone Associates claim that the brownish-yellow ink used contains a titanium dioxide pigment not developed until 1920. Walter McCrone said: 'The likelihood of a pigment of the crystalline size and shape of that found in the Vinland Map ink being used in a map of AD 1400 can be compared with the likelihood that Admiral Nelson's flagship at Trafalgar was a hovercraft.'

The apparent physical evidence incriminating the map did not move Mr Painter. 'I am not shaken', he said, 'I would regard this as just another episode in the dialogue between scholars and investigators. . . . Little is known about the medieval use of inks. There were many different types even on the same manuscript. A monk might well lean across and borrow some different ink from his chum's inkwell' (*The Sunday Times*, 27 January). We are indebted to Dr Wallis for drawing our attention to a most amusing pamphlet produced by Scandinavian Airlines entitled *What every Scandinavian school-child knows. . . .* (Alas, SAS tell us there are no more copies of this brochure available.) It is a collection of Vinland Map cartoons produced, they say, 'as a contribution to the lighter side of Scandinavian scholarship'. The two Stevenson cartoons from *The New Yorker* are particularly amusing, the first in which two Vikings in their ship are saying

'Let's take another look at that damn map', and the second in which an American Indian is sitting down for a drink with some Puritan Fathers and saying 'Skool'. Another amusing cartoon is that of two monks seated at their desks in a scriptorium: one, his pen poised over an inkwell, says to the other, 'I think I'll throw in a couple of extra islands on this map, just for laughs.'

It was only a few weeks before the RGS Vinland meeting that the BBC broadcast a programme which finally debunked the Minnesota runestone. The programme was called 'The Riddle of the Runestone'; it went out on 23 December 1973 in the series *The World About Us* and it was produced by Brian Branston, who has himself already done much original work on early Scandinavia. It was a notable contribution to the controversy about the presence of Norsemen in America, and we are grateful to Mr Branston and the BBC for allowing us to quote from the programme. Professor Erik Wahlgren (whose book *The Kensington Stone, a mystery solved* was reviewed in these pages, 1958, 264–7) appeared in the programme saying firmly: 'The Kensington Stone is a fake. The stone is a genuine stone from Kensington, Minnesota—it is not a man-made block of cement. It is the inscription that is phoney. The Kensington inscription is a preposterous fraud. The language is definitely modern, mixed Scandinavian, Norwegian, Swedish, possibly even a bit of English.'

The central figures in the perpetuation of the Kensington forgery were Olof Ohman, Fogelblad and Anderson, but as Branston said dramatically at the end of the programme: 'A country churchyard near Kensington holds the last word—a report of a death-bed confession. Besides Ohman, Fogelblad and Anderson as hoaxers there was at least one other. A few months ago died a man whose voice in a secret recording comes literally from the grave—Frank Walter Cran.' This is the text of the recording of Walter Cran's statement:

I was up in Canada and my Dad got really sick so then of course they sent a telegram to say that if I wanted to see him I should hurry up


and come down, which I did. I never mentioned anything about the runestone to him. He says (something in Swedish) that it was false, he says. Yeh, I am saying. That's all I am answering. Then again he would turn around and say, 'You are going to get after Ohman', he says. 'What if he should die all of a sudden?' he said. 'You know it's going to be pretty hard to prove how we made this thing.' How we made it. Why should he say *we* then? They worked together and then Dad says: 'Well sometimes on Sundays when we ain't doing nothing . . . he gets his knife out and we carved them letters now and then. Then a big kick and a laugh you know.' Dad says, 'Yeh it would be fun to make some scripts', he said, 'that would bluff the people around the country, especially the educated ones', he says, 'that think you are dumb.' Do you know what, they had a sculptor examine this stone and they found out that there had been two men that worked on the stone—one was a left-handed man and one was a right-handed man. Well that fitted in and I thought, 'By God my Dad has been saying that the stone was false and you have been one of them that has been chiselling left handed and helping him.' John Ohman was sick on his dying bed too when I talked about this. I said, 'Dad told me that I should talk to your Dad and he would tell you how we made the stone, and I says that must be my father and your father who chiselled out the stone.' He laughed and then he says, 'Well I guess you are right.' 'I don't care', I says, 'who made it, I figure it is a hell of a good joke, and I will bet if your father or my father could come alive', I says, 'and listen to all the talk, they would get together and they would have the biggest haha they had ever had in their life.'

Well, there it is, and Cran's phrase is a good one to describe the forgery, 'the biggest haha'. As Russell Fridley said in concluding the programme, 'The Kensington runestone should be viewed for what it is—as a great monument to American/Scandinavian humour.' But obviously this is not the view shared by the Smithsonian Institution who put it on show to the nation in 1948 and for a whole year, nor of those who had it displayed at the 1965 New York World's Fair. And without doubt the people of Alexandria where a giant 22-ton granite replica was solemnly dedicated do not regard it as a big haha.

EDITORIAL

In a letter to us, Mr Brian Branston writes: Like you, I have also been interested in the story for many years, and like you for most of the time I have believed it to be a hoax. When I got the opportunity of actually digging round on the spot, I found that all the evidence to prove the stone a hoax had been there, mostly in the morgues of local newspapers and in the archives of the Minnesota Historical Society from within a few months of perpetration. It just demonstrates that you can't accept statements from no matter how august a pulpit without going back to check sources.

The one thing that worried me in my search was the number of likeable, worthy people in Alexandria who had been sold on the stone by Holand. They have taken him almost entirely on his face value, and no evidence from the archives of the Minnesota Historical Society will ever change their beliefs.

 We published in the December edition of *ANTIQUITY* a review by Professor Fagan of Peter Garlake's book *Great Zimbabwe* (1973, 330) in which the reviewer wrote: 'This is a splendid and forthright book by a scholar of courage and integrity. *Great Zimbabwe* should be read by anyone interested in history and archaeology if only for its firm denunciations of what one might call "settler archaeology", where emotional conjecture has taken on the attributes of racial theory and become government policy and propaganda.' We received the following comment dated 30 January 1974 on this review from C. K. Cooke, Curator of Monuments and Senior Keeper of Antiquities, The National Museums and Monuments of Rhodesia:

I was astounded to read Professor Fagan's review of Peter Garlake's book *Great Zimbabwe* in the December 1973 edition of *ANTIQUITY*.

The book, which is a beautifully produced one, is spoilt for archaeologists working in Rhodesia by its political connotations. This aspect is taken very much further when Fagan makes wide and mistaken statements such as 'Presumably it will be banned in Rhodesia, which, perhaps, might be the highest compliment of all. If it is not, then Garlake has struck a significant blow for African history and the dispassionate study of the African past.' The book is freely available in all bookshops.


The feeling that archaeologists are being

hampered in their work by Government policy or instruction is entirely wrong. This misrepresentation was undoubtedly brought about by a statement made by a member in the House (Hansard) deploring the fact that a publicity pamphlet was wrong in that it said that Zimbabwe was built by the Africans. If all loose statements made in Houses of Parliament were taken as gospel the world would be in an even sordid shape than it is today.

I can assure you that no instruction to suppress scientific evidence has ever been issued to me or any member of my staff, including Garlake, by the Government or anyone else. It must also be remembered that Garlake was paid by the Rhodesian Government; most of his papers published were paid for by it, and never were they sent to the Censors for ratification. In fact, his paper on using imported ceramics as a dating method at Zimbabwe was published in the *Zimbabwe Guide Book* after he had left for Nigeria (reprinted *Guide Book* published 1971). This firmly puts the ruins within the 'bantu' period.

Anyone is entitled to his own opinion, but to use archaeology as a political platform is not only non-scientific, but immoral.

We showed this letter to Professor Fagan who comments: 'I think that Cooke's letter speaks for itself, and I am delighted and relieved to see such a forthright statement. There seems no point in adding any comment, for it is excellent and speaks for Cooke's integrity.'

 We print as our first plate (PL. IXa) a photograph of the reconstruction of a sunken hut or *grubenhäus* which has been built at West Stow near Bury St Edmunds in Suffolk. The West Stow site was excavated during the last eight years by Stanley West who is now Archaeology Officer of the county of Suffolk. It is some 13 km. from Bury St Edmunds and occupied an area of more than 7 acres (2.8 ha.). It lies on a low, sandy knoll on the north bank of the river Lark on the edge of the Breckland. The whole area was stripped, and it was revealed that the first groups were mesolithic hunter-fishers: then there was a major occupation in the Early Iron Age with circular huts, ditched enclosures and hand-made pottery. The

site was then deserted until shortly after the Claudian period when it became the site of a small Romano-British pottery industry. The site was deserted by about AD 150 and then re-occupied in Anglo-Saxon times. A small Anglo-Saxon cemetery was found nearby in 1860. The West Stow Anglo-Saxon settlement can best be set out in the words of the excavator:

The discovery of faceted, angled pottery of the type well known in the Elbe-Weser region in north-west Germany and there dated to before AD 400 points to a very early date indeed for the foundation of the settlement, well before the collapse of Roman rule in Britain. The site is close to the large, sprawling, Romano-British rural settlement at Icklingham, which has produced a coin-hoard of c. 410–420. There is here the evidence of the deliberate settlement of Anglo-Saxons in the vicinity of a large, late Roman settlement of the kind suspected elsewhere. The Anglo-Saxon settlement lasted for some 250 years, coming to an end in the first half of the seventh century for reasons that are not readily apparent.

There were 68 *grubenhäuser* at West Stow. It was thought that it might be a good thing to reconstruct one of them. A group of undergraduates from Cambridge formed themselves into the West Stow Environmental Archaeology Group and with generous grants from local authorities and Anglia Television, they spent last summer reconstructing one house. An original hut site was used, the pit re-excavated and the posts of the reconstructed hut placed in the original postholes. As analysis of the timber from the burnt huts showed oak had been used, the reconstruction was made of oak. The only tools used were those available to Anglo-Saxons, viz. axes, wedges, mallets and adzes.

Stanley West has described the experiment in *The Illustrated London News* for February 1974, and we quote from his account:

None of the party had previous experience in wood-working on this scale and the techniques of splitting oak-logs and adzing them into planks had to be learnt by trial and error, with some instruction from local woodsmen. Consultations were held with John Smith of the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments (England) to ensure that the method of construction could be

contained within the general historical knowledge of contemporary practice, so that no nails or pegs were used and the whole structure was held together with the simplest joints. The floor of the hut is supported on joists extending beyond the ends of the pit and by further joists along the sides. The walls, of vertical planks, are not supported on sills but are bedded into a shallow trench, 4 in. (10 cm.) deep, beside the outer joists and lashed to the lower purlin of the roof. The roof is of straw thatch on a woven framework of hazel. The rafters are, in turn, supported on purlins. There is no wall plate.

The West Stow *grubenhäuser* should be visited by those who can travel in East Anglia. The first impression of it is that it is large and roomy, and the floor space is 19 ft. by 16 ft. (5.80 m. by 4.90 m.) with ample headroom and no problems of damp floors that might be subject to flooding. If, as it appears, these buildings were the workshops, weaving sheds, storehouses and sleeping quarters of a Saxon family, grouped around the central hall or living room, they are both practical and large enough to justify the labour expended on them.

The initial West Stow experiment has clearly been markedly successful both in terms of the building standing on the site and in terms of the effort and enthusiasm devoted to it. The project is being developed by an enlightened body of citizens in Suffolk. A West Stow Trust is being formed (and we know this because we have been asked to be one of the Trustees) and endowed, and in a few years time we may have a living museum of history to which East Anglians can come. There will be pottery-making and weaving, a small field system, and animal husbandry. In a word, the past in the present: the understood past for the interested and informed present.

🏛️ We have already referred on several occasions to the fading of the paintings at Lascaux and the growth of fungus over them, which has been successfully halted. Readers will know that Lascaux has apparently been closed to the public in perpetuity, although small groups of specialist visitors are allowed in from time to time. A replica of the site is being constructed nearby. We now learn that


EDITORIAL

the same trouble has been discovered in other caves and that Font de Gaume and Les Combarelles will be closed to the public at the end of this summer. We learnt recently from a press report that Altamira is also being closed and we wrote to Professor Almagro for his views. He writes as follows:

You need not be alarmed by the closing of the Altamira cave. It is being closed to test the reaction of the interior to a two-month sealing off period from the outside. Then it will be open again as usual.

We had to close the cave of S. Roman de Candamo because it was developing fungus like Lascaux. After being closed for 18 months the cave is now free of fungus and again open to the public.

This sort of operation is just part of the responsibility that devolves upon those of us who have charge of any part of the artistic and archaeological patrimony of mankind. We have all the time to watch the effects on these early paintings of contact with the outside atmosphere and the effects caused on them by their being visited by large numbers of people.

 We have for some time been recommending our readers to visit the exhibits prepared by the Ethnography Department of the British Museum at the new Museum of Mankind, 6 Burlington Gardens, in London. These exhibits are for a short period only and are then changed. No one should miss the current exhibitions and most especially the two devoted to the Maya. The main Maya exhibition is excellent, but—and this may be because we are so historiographically oriented to archaeology—the exhibition entitled ‘The British and the Maya’ is of remarkable fascination. It tells the story of British Mayanists from Viscount Kingsborough to Norman Hammond and the guide to the exhibition, written by Elizabeth Carmichael, is a delightful production which ought to be enlarged and reissued as a book. We publish from this guide (PL. IXb) a photograph of Eric Thompson at Tulum in 1972.

The exhibition and this photograph made us read again that delightful autobiography of Thompson’s, *Maya archaeologist*, published in 1963, and we warmly recommend it to those

who have not already read it. Eric Thompson does not disguise the difficulties of fieldwork in Yucatan—and how much more difficult they must have been in the times of Kingsborough, Galindon, Caddy, Catherwood and Maudsley! We print one short passage:


We reached La Gloria railhead about an hour before sunset. La Gloria, ‘Glory’ is synonymous with heaven, but if the real thing bears any resemblance to this earthly prototype, I would just as soon be in the other place; there, at least, the fleas of La Gloria would be fried to a frazzle. It was a miserable collection of five huts and a large storeroom, one corner of which we occupied. . . . I got the first symptoms of an attack of dysentery which was to make life miserable for several days. Neither opium pills nor kaolin, of which I took enough to convert my inside into a miniature pottery, did much good.

And he has a very interesting reflexion on the development of archaeology:

I had the fortune to belong—although only by the skin of my teeth—to the last generation of archaeologists who were able to have extended interests. Now, with the enormous increase of knowledge, fields of specialization are so narrow that archaeologists are in mortal danger of becoming technicians.

These are words to be pondered on, as also Miss Carmichael’s comment in her guide:

There has never been much encouragement for people living in the British Isles to take up Maya studies. Although the collections of Maya material in museums are adequate, and by diligent search in various libraries most of the background literature can be found, there has been until recently no university teaching of American archaeology and precious little general literature of the right sort readily available to start the student on his way. Perhaps the high quality of the work produced by those few who were enterprising enough to continue in spite of the difficulties is partly, at least, the product of this adversity.

 But it is not only in the field of American archaeology that scant provision is given for teaching and research in British universities. The teaching of the archaeology and ancient history of southern and eastern Asia is not

adequate. There is no professor of Indian archaeology in any British university, and the teaching of Chinese archaeology is restricted to two or three posts. We reprint from *The Times* of 28 February a letter dealing with the study of oriental art and archaeology:

The outstanding success of the Chinese Exhibition, recently on view at Burlington House, stimulated uncomfortable thoughts about the slender provision made for the academic study and teaching of Oriental art and archaeology in Britain.

Much can be, and still is, being done by interested amateurs and connoisseurs, but there is an obvious need for a cadre of whole time professional scholars, both to pursue specialized research and above all to ensure an adequate flow of trained men and women. At the present time the burden rests on a handful of scholars. There is, for instance, only one chair of Chinese art and archaeology in this country, that at London University, and none of Indian archaeology. What makes matters worse is that when rare vacancies at a junior level do occur it is not easy to find adequately qualified replacements.

We are, indeed, in a vicious circle. Without adequate prospects for employment we cannot retain even the few mature scholars we do produce, and so long as prospects are so restricted it is hardly possible to expect a flow of young entrants.

To ensure an adequate career structure we need senior academic posts in Chinese art and archaeology in at least three universities to complement the London chair. It is essential for a number of reasons that these posts be established where adequate collections exist and where Chinese language and history are already studied as they are, for example, at Oxford, Cambridge and Durham. If we are to have a reasonable hope of attracting scholars of the required

standing, it is desirable that at least two of the three new posts should be at a senior, preferably at a professorial level.

In emphasizing the need to reinforce and amplify the provision for Oriental art and archaeology in the universities, we would not wish to weaken in any way the case for strengthening the literary aspects of Oriental studies in this country. On the contrary, what we are now urging is the importance of complementing these by developing an understanding of those material embodiments of culture which by reason of the difficulty of the language provide, as the recent Chinese Exhibition so well showed, a main avenue of communication between ourselves and our Oriental friends.

It is not merely the learned community and lovers of art who will benefit from bridging the cultural gap between Britain and the Far East. The process can greatly help understanding of essential elements of contemporary Eastern civilization, and the importance of this for a nation as dependent on international trade as Britain is sufficiently evident. We can think of few ways in which men of affairs could seal their successes in the Far East more productive of public esteem, and at the same time likely to improve communication between ourselves and the peoples of the region, than the endowment of named chairs or readerships in our universities. Again, those who have gained private delight in owning Oriental antiquities might feel moved to endow in perpetuity the kind of sustained scholarship on which true connoisseurship must in the long run be founded.

The signatories of this letter were Derek Allen (Treasurer of the British Academy), Grahame Clark, Edmund Leach, Joseph Needham, Sir Duncan Wilson, and myself. We hope this letter will stimulate discussion and action.

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PLATE IX: EDITORIAL

(a) *The reconstructed 'grubenhause' at West Stow, Suffolk.* (b) *Eric Thompson at Tulum, 1972*

See pp. 81-6

Photos: a: Stanley West; b: Joya Hairs

b

