

# Antiquity

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## Editorial

We published in the July 1979 issue letters from Dr Laila Haglund and Mrs Eve Stewart, prompted by reading *Mallowan's memoirs* in which Sir Max wrote of Gordon Childe in 1957 that he 'felt that life, for all his interests, held but a bleak prospect. . . . There is little doubt in my mind that he committed suicide.' Dr Haglund and Mrs Stewart strenuously deny the view that Childe did take his own life. Professor W. F. Grimes, who succeeded Childe as Director of the Institute of Archaeology in the University of London, wrote to us on 14 August 1979 about this and has readily given us permission to publish his letter:

14.viii.1979

My dear Glyn,

I have only now got round to reading your editorial in the July issue, with the further correspondence on Gordon Childe.

I forbear to comment on the views expressed, beyond saying that of the making of myths there is no end; but there may be need to look at the mental attitudes of those who create or contribute to them. May I offer the following contribution to the subject? A number of people know about it, but it won't have appeared in print, as far as I know.

Shortly after my appointment to succeed him at the Institute Childe and I dined together in Soho. We drove back to NW<sub>3</sub> in his car. In the hundred or so yards between Primrose Hill station and Chalk Farm (where I was to leave him) the following conversation took place:

G: What are you going to do when you retire?

C: I know a 2000-ft cliff in Australia. I intend to jump off it.

G: Good god! Why are you going to do that?

C: I have a horror of a prostate operation.

G: But surely thousands of men have had that and come out of it without difficulty?

He made no further comment and seconds later I got out of the car.

The conversation is *verbatim*. I saw no point in arguing or remonstrating. Childe knew his own mind, though he rarely—very rarely—revealed it in personal matters.

In the light of his statement Childe's subsequent conduct seems to me to be consistent and in some respects shrewd. Though there are disturbing features about it I believe that he did what he wanted—and I happen to think that every man/woman has the right to do what he/she likes with his/her own life.

Yours ever,  
Peter

We recently showed this letter to Professor Estyn Evans in Belfast and he told us that Childe had had virtually the same conversation with Professor Woolridge; and Miss Sally Green, who has written an admirable thesis on Childe for her Sheffield M.A. (it should at once be turned into a book by some enterprising publisher), says that she has heard this story from many people. When we were discussing it with Professor John Evans, who succeeded Professor Grimes as Director of the Institute, he confirmed that Childe had left a letter to his successor which was not to be read or published for ten years after his departure to Australia in 1957. Professor Evans and Professor Grimes now agree that this letter should be published. Here it is. There are really two items: a letter to Grimes, and a memoir. Here is the letter:

THE CARRINGTON  
KATOOMBA  
BLUE MOUNTAINS, N.S.W.  
20/10/57

Dear Grimes,

The enclosed contains matter that may in time be of historical interest to the Institute. But now it may cause pain and even provoke libel actions. After ten years it will be less inflammable. So I earnestly request that it be deposited in the archives and be not opened till January 1968 supposing that year ever arrives.

Yours sincerely,  
V. Gordon Childe

And here is the enclosed essay which deserves

careful reading by all our readers, young, middle-aged, and old, and certainly by everyone who either knew Gordon Childe personally or as the great prehistorian he was. The essay is undated but must, we suppose, have approximately the same date as the letter to Grimes.

THE CARRINGTON  
KATOOMBA  
BLUE MOUNTAINS, N.S.W.

The progress of medical science has burdened society with a horde of parasites—rentiers, pensioners and other retired persons whom society has to support and even to nurse. They exploit the youth which is expected to produce for them and even to tend them. While many are physically fit to work and some do, others are incapable of looking after themselves and have literally to be kept alive by the exertions of younger attendants who might be more profitably employed otherwise. And in so far as they do work, they block the way to promotion against younger and more efficient successors. For all in all persons over 65—there are of course numerous exceptions—are physically less capable than their juniors and psychologically far less alert and adaptable. Their reactions are slowed down; they can only gradually and reluctantly, if at all, adopt new habits and still more rarely assimilate fresh ideas. I am doubtful whether they can ever produce new ideas. Compulsory retirement from academic and judicial posts and from the civil services has of course done something to open the rewards of seniority to younger men, and has rescued students and subordinates from inefficient teachers and incompetent administrative chiefs. In British universities the survival of the old system during my lifetime has provided cautionary examples of distinguished professors mumbling lectures ten years out of date and wasting departmental funds on obsolete equipment. These instances probably outweigh better publicized cases of scientists and scholars who in their colleagues' opinion are 'forced to retire at the height of their powers'. But even when retired, their prestige may be such that they can hinder the spread of progressive ideas and blast the careers of innovators who tactlessly challenge theories and procedures that ten or fifteen years previously had been original and fruitful (I am thinking for instance of Arthur Evans).

In fact if the over-age put 'their knowledge, experience and skill at the service of society' as honorary officers or counsellors of learned societies, public bodies, charitable institutions or political parties, they are liable to become a gerontocracy—the worst possible form of leadership. In a changing world their wisdom and maturity of judgement do

not compensate for their engrained prejudices and stereotyped routines of behaviour. No doubt the over 65s are competent to carry out routine investigations and undertake compilations of information, and may be helped therein by their accumulated knowledge. Yet after 65 memory begins to fail, and even well-systematized information begins to leak away. My personal experience is confirmed by observations on senior colleagues. And new ideas, original combinations of old knowledge, come rarely if at all. Generally old authors go on repeating the same old theses, not always in better chosen language.

I have always considered that a sane society would disembarrass itself of such parasites by offering euthanasia as a crowning honour or even imposing it in bad cases, but certainly not condemning them to misery and starvation by inflation.

For myself I don't believe I can make further useful contributions to prehistory. I am beginning to forget what I laboriously learned—forget not only details (for these I never relied on memory), but even that there is something relevant to look up in my note-book. New ideas very rarely come my way. I see no prospect of settling the problems that interest me most—such as that of the 'Aryan cradle'—on the available data. In a few instances I actually fear that the balance of evidence is against theories that I have espoused or even in favour of those against which I am strongly biased. Yet at the same time I suspect this fear may be due to an equally irrational desire to overcome my own prejudices. (In history one has to make decisions on inadequate evidence, and, whenever I am faced with this necessity, I am conscious of such opposing tendencies.) I have no wish to hang on the fringe of learned societies or university institutions as a venerable counsellor whose authority may slow down progress. I have become too dependent on a lot of creature comforts—even luxuries—to carry through some kinds of work for which I may still be fitted; I just lack the will-power to face the discomforts and anxieties of travel in the USSR or China. And, in fact, though I have never felt in better health, I do get seriously ill absurdly easily; every little cold in the head turns to bronchitis unless I take elaborate precautions and then I am just a burden on the community. I have never saved any money, and, if I had, inflation would have consumed my savings. On my pension I certainly could not maintain the standard without which life would seem to me intolerable and which may be really necessary to prevent me becoming a worse burden on society as an invalid. I have always intended to cease living before that happens.

The British prejudice against suicide is utterly irrational. To end his life deliberately is in fact


something that distinguishes *Homo sapiens* from other animals even better than ceremonial burial of the dead. But I don't intend to hurt my friends by flouting that prejudice. An accident may easily and naturally befall me on a mountain cliff. I have revisited my native land and found I like Australian society much less than European without believing I can do anything to better it; for I have lost faith in all my old ideals. But I have enormously enjoyed revisiting the haunts of my boyhood, above all the Blue Mountains. I have answered to my own satisfaction questions that intrigued me then. Now I have seen the Australian spring; I have smelt the boronia, watched snakes and lizards, listened to the 'locusts'. There is nothing more I want to do here; nothing I feel I ought and could do. I hate the prospect of the summer, but I hate still more the fogs and snows of a British winter. Life ends best when one is happy and strong.

We print this essay and Professor Grimes's letter with sadness and sympathy because we knew and loved Gordon Childe and were sorry that no opportunity came to us or to many other friends and contemporaries to persuade him that 65 was not necessarily the end of things. Nor is it. It is an important moment in the ageing life of academic archaeologists and our universities are wise to have retiring ages at 65 or 67. They should perhaps be 60, and what could be nicer than a system (unlikely to happen in our present university financial crisis in England) whereby dons were retired from teaching duties at 60 and paid for the next five or seven years to do research or to publish their many unpublished archaeological reports and papers? But Childe's essay is not only of interest to readers of *ANTIQUITY* and to students of the history of archaeology and of the development of thought in the western world in the twentieth century—because Gordon Childe was a very formative figure in creating the climate of thought about the past in which most readers of *ANTIQUITY* under 65 live. His essay is of the widest interest to anyone concerned with the aged and with aged scholars in particular. We suspect that this essay will often appear in anthologies. It is a moving document: we have read it with care, and our ageing fingers that strike at the keys of our ageing typewriter remind us that the Editor of *ANTIQUITY* is himself (surely it cannot be ourselves?) over 65 and therefore, according to Gordon Childe, pretty gaga. (Discerning readers may have noticed this already.) Incidentally, it is worth recording that the average age of professors of archaeology in Britain at the

moment is under 50, whereas the average age of the members of the Politburo in the Kremlin is 70. (There is one curiosity in Childe's letter to Grimes: it is dated 20 October 1957; Childe's death has been consistently reported as 19 October 1957 and this is the date in *Who Was Who* and the *Dictionary of National Biography*.)

There may well be in the next few years a number of books about Childe. The first to be published will be Professor Bruce Trigger's *Gordon Childe: revolutions in archaeology* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1980, £12.00).

We have had the pleasure and privilege of reading Bruce Trigger's book before publication. He naturally makes many cogent points and gives an admirable analysis of the development and content of Childe's thought. He makes two special points that we had hitherto missed. First, that Childe felt that his *The Aryans* was too close to the Kossinna master-race theory, and did not much like people referring to the book. Secondly, he was at first much influenced by the Elliot Smith–Perry Manchester school of Egyptocentric hyperdiffusionism. This point was also made to us by Daryll Forde shortly before his death. Forde and Childe were close friends and travelled extensively together in eastern Europe in the twenties. It is to be remembered by historians of archaeology that Forde's first book *Ancient Mariners* (1928) was in the Elliot Smith–Manchester school and diffused Egypt over the world. Two years later his article on 'Early Cultures of Atlantic Europe' in the *American Anthropologist* (1930, 19–100) killed the Egypt-Smith view. It is fascinating to look back on those five years from 1925 to 1930 and see how Childe, Forde, Fleure and Peake rewrote prehistory and produced the model of the past which was to be our paradigm until C14 dating showed it to be an invented past.

 The death of Sir Thomas Kendrick in November of last year, at the age of 84, removed from this world perhaps the last of the great men who dominated the British archaeological scene in the twenties and thirties of this century. What a brilliant group of scholars they were who could be found lunching or dining in the Athenaeum any day: John Myres, O. G. S. Crawford, Gordon Childe, Cyril Fox, Mortimer Wheeler, and Tom Kendrick. He was Keeper of British Antiquities in the British Museum from 1938 to 1950 and Director and Principal Librarian from 1950 until he

retired in 1959. Kendrick was great but not grand. One day in the late thirties we came face to face with him in the British Museum near the Rosetta Stone. 'And since when', he said, 'do my young friends visit the BM without paying their respects to the Director? There is a decanter of dry sherry on the desk in my office. We all need restoration in the mid-morning.'

It was Kendrick's versatility that most impressed us. He wrote on the Vikings and on Anglo-Saxon and Viking Art, and his successor and devoted admirer, the present Director of the British Museum, most ably carries on the Kendrick tradition (and the BM exhibition of the Vikings this year will be a moment to remember Kendrick). His *Druids* (1927) was a remarkable work, unsurpassed until Stuart Piggott re-surveyed the whole problem. His *Archaeology of the Channel Islands* (Vol. I, Guernsey, 1928) was a model monograph. His *British antiquity* (1950) is one of the best books ever written about the history of antiquarianism and we are all sorry that he did not carry out the promise of this book to write a history of antiquarian thought in western Europe as he intended to do. His was a roving mind and he went on to write *The Lisbon earthquake* (1956), *Saint James in Spain* (1960), *Great love for Icarus* (1962), and *Mary of Agreda* (1967).

As his interests changed he ceased to concern himself with what he had written before. The story is told, and it may be part of archaeological mythology, that when a Scandinavian archaeologist came to the British Museum and asked to see the great Kendrick, 'that great authority on the Vikings', he said: 'I will only see him if he doesn't talk to me about the Vikings; my Viking period is over.' His first book was *The axe age* (1925) and we still think it a seminal book of great importance. Nobody now reads it, and Kendrick himself never realized what a good book it was and never listed it in his publications in *Who's Who*. And for that matter he does not list Kendrick and Hawkes: *Archaeology in England and Wales 1914-1931*, surely the best and safest guide to British archaeology ever produced between Rice Holmes and the present day.

Kendrick had a wide sense of humour and a splendid appreciation of the bawdy. Had he lived to see this present issue of ANTIQUITY he would have sent the Editor a card saying how much he enjoyed Leslie Grinsell on the Cerne Abbas Giant. We can see him with difficulty penning (because

his sight was failing at the end of his life) some such Kendrickian phrase as 'It almost revives my fading interest in archaeology and antiquity.' (As we think back on that great and witty man we wonder who could have been responsible for that stuffy obituary in *The Times*.)

We have been planning for some while a series of occasional articles—perhaps two a year—in which distinguished and elderly archaeologists look back on their lives and what archaeology meant to them. We had intended to persuade Tom Kendrick to write such an essay but we left it too late. We have fortunately not left it too late in the case of C. W. Phillips, and his essay, which we have already read with pleasure and profit, will be in the July or November issue.

Publication of *The Times* was suspended on 30 November 1978: it was good to welcome it back on 13 November 1979, 'unchanged but not unchanging' as it described itself, and to find in the first issue for nearly a year an archaeology report on two late Saxon churches found in rescue excavations at Raunds in Northamptonshire, by *The Times* Archaeological Correspondent, Norman Hammond. In August 1979 the gloom that spread over the breakfast-tables of Britain in those *Times*-less nine months was one day relieved by the appearance of a marvellously funny leg-pull called *Not Yet The Times* on the title-page but *Not The Times* in the running-head. This paper, now of course a collector's piece, had no archaeology report, but a note entitled 'Traditional design wins coveted award' by 'Our National Trust Correspondent', accompanied by a delightful photograph captioned 'Evening light over Stonehenge, shows how new construction materials can be made to blend with unspoiled countryside.' The Editor and Publishers of *Not The Times* (Stopeshill Ltd, 24 Petersham Place, London SW7) have kindly given us permission to quote from this piece, which we are delighted to do for the benefit of readers who may have missed it.

The annual Civic Trust award for good design in new buildings has, for the second successive year, gone to a multi-purpose comprehensive development scheme on an out-of-town site. Wessex Durable Druids' recently completed Stonehenge Centre in Wiltshire won the coveted award from a field described by the judges as 'almost supernaturally good'. (Previous winners include last year's White Horse in Berkshire and the similar but perhaps more controversial Cerne Abbas Giant Grass-skiing

complex.) The citation commends the architects—Uther, Sarsen and Pendragon—for ‘the good manners and urbanity’ of the winning entry.

The Architectural Correspondent of *Not The Times* wrote as follows:

The citation refers to ‘the generous architectonic entrances to the interior’ but a dull sky could reduce this piece of visual theatre to a less welcoming entrée, and the very restricted arcading seems an unnecessary economy. . . . The Department of the Environment issued a statement particularly welcoming the revolutionary concept of the Centre, and congratulating the winners for their material selection. It is understood that many of the materials used in the intricate infrastructure were transported vast distances, which, though welcome in itself and creating employment in relatively undeveloped regions such as Pembrokeshire, would become prohibitively expensive financially (and in terms of loss of life) as a consequence of the energy crisis. Future designers, the Department warned, would have to place greater reliance on the use of local, more natural building materials.

¶ We published in our March 1979 issue a note by Dr Ahmad Afshar and Dr Judith Lerner on ‘The horses of the ancient Persian Empire at Persepolis’ (LIII, 44–7); this was criticized by Mrs Mary Aiken Littauer in our November 1979 issue (LIII, 218–9). In correspondence, and in conversation in Harvard, Dr Lerner made it clear that she was not the co-author of the original note and in fairness to her we print her disassociation from the published note (p. 59). Dr Afshar writes: ‘Concerning Dr Lerner’s authorship the story is a long one, and since her collaboration with my study in 1977, distances between England, Iran and America, difficulties in the postal systems, mostly due to political problems in Iran, were impediments towards our communication and correspondence. However, although she contributed to the study of the horses at Persepolis, it is true that she did not see the final manuscript that was sent to ANTIQUITY.’ (*In lit.* 10 October 1979.) When an article or note is by several authors it is not possible or desirable for an Editor to do other than consult the senior author who submitted the manuscript; indeed we had not heard from Dr Lerner or knew her whereabouts until she wrote protesting her non-authorship. We are sorry this curious contretemps occurred: Dr Lerner’s letter and Dr Afshar’s comments set the record straight. We in Cambridge, England, were only too delighted that

at a time of revolution and disorder in Iran, letters and proofs passed quickly back and forth between Dr Afshar and ourselves. And, whatever anyone may say, the photographs of the equids were a joy to see and to publish.

¶ Mr Timothy Ambrose, Assistant Keeper of Archaeology in the City and County Museum, Lincoln, writes (12 March 1979):

I have been meaning to write to you for some time over a matter which I felt might appeal to the readers of your Editorial column in ANTIQUITY. Last year a little medieval bronze pilgrim’s badge was brought into the City and County Museum for identification. The saint referred to on the badge is Saint Barbara, the patron saint of, among others, architects, stone masons, miners and gravediggers, firework makers and artillerymen. My colleague here, Andrew White, wrote a short note on the badge for *Lincolnshire History and Archaeology* (XIII, 1978, 88–9).


It struck us both at the time that British archaeologists lack a patron saint, and we felt, rightly or wrongly, that Saint Barbara was a suitable candidate for such a role. It may well be that some archaeologists would feel that other saints are equally eligible.

What, we ask, do readers think? Our own thoughts are these: did the saintly Barbara ever exist? She is alleged to have lived round about AD 200 and was beheaded by her father, Dioscorus, when she professed Christianity. On returning home from executing her, Dioscorus was, very rightly, struck by lightning and reduced to ashes. Saint Barbara is invoked during thunderstorms, her emblem is a tower (she lived as a hermit in a bath-house for a long time), and her day 4 December. The *Penguin Dictionary of Saints* says ‘there is no evidence that a martyred Saint Barbara ever existed’. The new *Encyclopædia Britannica* describes her authenticity as ‘highly questionable’, and the new *Oxford Dictionary of Saints* (edited by David Hugh Farmer, Oxford, 1978) says ‘the very existence of this supposed virgin-martyr is doubtful’. She was suppressed in the Roman calendar of 1969.

Who is for Saint Barbara, and who for some other saint? We have always thought that Saint Samson would make a very good archaeological saint, especially for those concerned with megaliths. Of his existence there is no doubt. He was born c. AD 490 and was a pupil of St Illtud’s at

Llantwit Major; he migrated to Brittany and was Bishop of Dol where he died *c.* 565. His *Vita* is one of the earliest of any Celtic saint. What we have always found fascinating about him was that on his journey from Wales to Brittany, he discovered in Cornwall people worshipping around a standing stone, told them to mend their evil ways, and Christianized the menhir.

Saint Barbara? Saint Samson? Or another?

 In this issue for the first time ANTIQUITY is using the *Pinyin* system of transliteration from Chinese characters in Modern Standard Chinese pronunciation to phonetic alphabet (pp. 45–6). Exceptions will be made only for certain irregularly transliterated but commonly accepted proper names: for example, Confucius; Peking; Canton. The *Pinyin* system was developed by the National Conference for Reforming the Chinese Written Language, first published in 1956 and revised and

republished in 1958. It was designed to replace existing transliterations, of which world-wide some 50 exist or have existed, and to be used in education, in dictionaries, journals and all other publications in which transliterations were needed. Since its publication in China, it has gradually become accepted outside China itself, in journalism, by international agencies and in learned publications. In ANTIQUITY it replaces the Wade–Giles system, still in use in British and American learned journals. This was first developed by Sir Thomas Wade in a language primer published in 1867 and modified by H. A. Giles in *A Chinese English Dictionary*, 1892. A comprehensive set of conversion tables for the Pinyin and Wade–Giles systems and others in common use, and an introduction to the subject of systems of transliteration, are given in Ireneus László Legeza, *Guide to transliterated Chinese in the modern Peking dialect* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1968).

## Book Chronicle

*We include here books which have been received for review, or books of importance (not received for review) of which we have recently been informed. We welcome information about books, particularly in languages other than English, of interest to readers of ANTIQUITY. The listing of a book in this chronicle does not preclude its review in ANTIQUITY.*

**Aberdeen: the town beneath the city.** A summary report of excavations at 42, St Paul Street, Aberdeen, by J. C. Murray, H. K. Murray & J. A. Stones. *Aberdeen: Aberdeen Art Gallery & Museums*, 1978. 28 pp., frontispiece, 23 figs. £1.00.

**Archeology and a science of man** by Wilfred T. Neill. *New York: Columbia University Press*, 1978. 332 pp., 52 pls. £13.50.

**Romans in North-West England.** Excavations at the Roman forts of Ravenglass, Watercrock and Bowness on Solway by T. W. Potter. Cumberland & Westmorland Antiquarian & Archaeological Society Research Series, Volume 1. *Kendal: Titus Wilson*, 1979. 384 pp., 24 pls., 149 figs. £9.25 to members of the Cumberland & Westmorland Antiquarian & Archaeological Society. Non-members £10.50 plus 80p postage in either case.

**The archaeology of Malton and Norton** by J. F. Robinson. *Leeds: Yorkshire Archaeological Society*, 1978. 52 pp., 10 pls., frontispiece, 6 figs. £2.50.

**The changing landscape of South Etruria** by T. W. Potter. *London: Elek*, 1979. 199 pp., 16 pls., 50 figs. £8.95.

**Excavation at Fengate, Peterborough, England: The Second Report** by Francis Pryor. *Archaeology Monograph 5. Toronto: Royal Ontario Museum*, 1978. 258 pp., 15 pls., 57 figs. (2 pull-out). \$11.50.

**Ainse ii. Results of the Excavations east of the Acropolis 1970–1974.** Fasc. 6. The Post-Geometric periods. Part 1: The graves of the Early Fifth Century BC by Birgitte Rafn. *Stockholm: Swedish Institute of Classical Studies*, 1979. 30 pp., 24 figs. SwK40.

**Debeira West. A mediaeval Nubian town** by P. L. Shinnie & Margaret Shinnie. *Warminster: Aris & Phillips*, 1978. 175 pp., 58 pls., 124 figs. (1 pull-out). £20.00. Distributed in North America by International Scholarly Book Services Inc. P.O. Box 555, Forest Grove, Oregon 97116.

**W. H. R. Rivers** by Richard Slobodin. *New York: Columbia University Press*, 1978. 310 pp., 1 fig. \$25.00.

*continued on p. 28*