

PROCEEDINGS
OF THE
CAMBRIDGE ANTIQUARIAN
SOCIETY

(INCORPORATING THE CAMBS & HUNTS ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY)



VOLUME LV

JANUARY 1961 TO DECEMBER 1961

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DEIGHTON BELL

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*Published for the Cambridge Antiquarian Society (incorporating the Cambs and Hunts
Archaeological Society) by Deighton Bell, 13 Trinity Street, Cambridge*

*Printed in Great Britain at the University Press, Cambridge
(Brooke Crutchley, University Printer)*

CONTENTS

<i>Officers and Council of the Society 1961-62</i>	<i>page vi</i>
<i>Report of the Council for the Year 1960</i>	vii
<i>Summary of Accounts for the Year 1960</i>	viii
Obituary Notes: L. C. G. Clarke, LL.D., F.S.A. <i>By M. HUTTON and G. H. S. BUSHNELL</i>	I
A Bronze Bowl and Other Vessels from Icklingham, Suffolk <i>By JOAN LIVERSIDGE, F.S.A.</i>	6
Pagan Saxon Burials at Little Paxton, Huntingdonshire <i>By C. F. TEBBUTT, F.S.A. and T. C. LETHBRIDGE, F.S.A.</i>	8
An Eleventh-century 'Boat-shaped' Building at Buckden, Huntingdonshire <i>By C. F. TEBBUTT, F.S.A.</i>	13
The 'Boat-shaped' House in Northern Europe <i>By BRIAN HOPE-TAYLOR, PH.D., F.S.A.</i>	16
The Building of the Sixteenth-century Corpus Christi College Chapel <i>By E. R. SANDEEN</i>	23
Peter Gunning, 1613-1684: Churchman, Scholar, Controversialist <i>By The Rev. H. A. L. JUKES, M.A., F.R.HIST.S.</i>	36
The Significance of the Cambridgeshire Hearth Tax <i>By H. M. SPUFFORD</i>	53
Archaeological Notes <i>By M. D. CRA'STER, GRACE BRISCOE, C. F. TEBBUTT and D. F. RENN</i>	65

OBITUARY NOTES

MAUREEN HUTTON AND G. H. S. BUSHNELL

L. C. G. CLARKE, LL.D., F.S.A.

1881-1960

I

DR BUSHNELL'S obituary notice in *Man* (November 1961) must have warmed the hearts of many of Louis Clarke's friends and admirers who felt that the obituary in *The Times* at the time of his death hardly did justice to his remarkable character and gifts. Dr Bushnell leaves, in fact, little to be said, yet there were so many sides to Louis' life that it may be worth while for some of us to add a few recollections of those aspects of him that they knew best. Many people knew him far more intimately as a friend and colleague than I did, yet working as his assistant in the Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology for nearly fifteen years I could not fail to have a special opportunity of knowing and admiring some of his qualities.

He was not altogether an easy man to work for. He liked people to have brilliance and ambition, and did not suffer fools gladly, and I often exasperated him by slowness and ineptitude. His preference for giving instructions indirectly or only in the vaguest terms, and particularly his habits of seldom completing a sentence, and of dropping his voice from the macaw-like tones that issued so surprisingly from that small frame to an almost inaudible whisper, were alarming to a nervous beginner in the Museum. But one got used to these peculiarities, and I remember with satisfaction how, at a Faculty Board meeting many years later when the appointment of a new Lecturer in Anthropology was being discussed, and Louis said 'I think it would be very nice if we could have that boy that married that girl', I was able to fill in unhesitatingly and correctly 'You mean H. . . . F. . . .'. It was this difficulty with formal speech that made him, so brilliant as conversationalist and raconteur, so disappointing as a lecturer; and there was the same contrast between the ease of his amusing and characteristic letters, written in the flowing hand of an older generation (and usually spelling, for instance, Mifs with a long f), and his painful difficulty in writing any kind of article or report—one reason why so little of his extraordinary knowledge was ever committed to paper. Though even if he had been the most fluent of writers his work as Curator would scarcely have left him time for such work, any more than Baron von Hügel, in the forty years of his Curatorship, ever found time to write up his Fijian journals of the 'seventies.

It is partly of this extraordinary hard work that I most want to write. No one who was not constantly in the Museum could realize how long and how hard he worked, or how laboriously, since much of it was office and routine work which would in these more ample days be done by assistant staff and helped by mechanical aids—but in those days the typewriter and the telephone were hardly regarded as the mode of communication between gentlemen. He was exacting with the small staff he had, but more so with himself; if he kept us working until seven o'clock he himself would probably stay on till eight. It was the more striking in a man not educated for a profession, who until he was forty had led a life always full of activity, but never tied by routine or regularity of hours. As Dr Bushnell has noticed, Louis Clarke's appointment to succeed Baron von Hügel in 1922 was 'somewhat unexpected' by those in Cambridge who thought academic qualifications essential for such a post, but it was equally surprising to some of his friends in the world outside Cambridge who could never understand why Louis, with all his gifts and means of enjoying life should, as they saw it, bury himself for good in a not very famous museum in Cambridge. Not that he by any means gave up the habits of his former life; he was often away from the Museum on social as well as on official occasions, so much so that some of his colleagues criticized him for it, not realizing that the Museum and its interests were seldom out of his mind. He would go off (he always used this compound in preference to the mere 'go') to a country house weekend or a party in London, and come back having met someone who had Bronze Age barrows on his land, or who would like to finance an expedition, or who had some special knowledge or aptitude or influence which would sooner or later be pressed into the Museum's service.

Another aspect of his life which was most fully realized by those who worked with him was his constant struggle with ill health. I think he very seldom felt really well, as a normal person expects to feel at his work; habitual insomnia, severe headaches and a very poor digestion wore him down continually. He had been a delicate child, the youngest of thirteen, and brought up in a regime of Victorian austerity better suited to the tough than to the frail, and he retained the Victorian belief that to fail to fulfil a social or official obligation through mere physical pain or discomfort was a deplorable weakness.

There was in fact more of the Victorian in him than one realized at first. He kept not only the strict self-discipline and sense of duty but also some of the prejudices, such as dislike of the metaphysical or what he would call superstitious nonsense. 'My dear, he's gone all Celtic Twilight', he said to me of a young worker in the Museum for whom he had hitherto had nothing but praise, but who thenceforth could do nothing right. It was only a part of him. It contrasted with the strain of seventeenth-century cavalier, of which his special devotion to Charles I was a symbol, and with a strong dash of the Edwardian Young-Man-About-Town. He was indeed a mass of contradictions. Violently anti-feminist in theory, he was in fact—as I am sure Dr Caton-Thompson, Dr Lindgren, Dr Margaret Murray, to name but a few, would confirm—a far more encouraging and practical supporter of

women's work, especially field-work, in archaeology and anthropology than many of the professed feminists. 'Louis, he is such a snob', said one of his uninhibited Hungarian friends, and there was a certain amount of truth in it, yet I have heard him at his wittiest and most delightful at tea in the Museum on a dark, wet afternoon with a modest audience of Mr Bird, Sammy Cowles and myself. He lived in luxurious surroundings, amidst furniture and pictures and using daily china and glass and silver that most people would have put into a museum—and who can forget the *soigné* figure, the handmade pastel silk shirts or invariable black tie, the velvet smoking suit in the evening—yet he worked as hard and disciplined himself as severely as a monk in a cell.

Of his great work in the Museum it is not for me to add to what Dr Bushnell and others have written; but I must say, not only for myself but for all of us who were with him in those years, that I don't think there can ever have been a happier or better place to work than Louis Clarke's Museum.

M. H.

II

(Reprinted by courtesy of the Editor of *Man*.)

LOUIS COLVILLE GRAY CLARKE died on 13 December 1960 at the age of 79, leaving many friends to mourn his loss. Much of what has already been written about him in *The Times* and elsewhere is concerned with what he did for the fine arts and particularly with his Directorship of the Fitzwilliam Museum, but it is appropriate here to remember rather his interest in anthropology, using the word in its broadest sense as the Americans happily do.

As a young man of sufficient means he extended his education, after taking his degree in 1903, by travelling, and in his case the Grand Tour embraced Abyssinia, Central America and Peru, at a time when travel in those countries was nowhere near as easy and comfortable as it is now. He also spent some time in the Pitt Rivers Museum at Oxford, learning from Henry Balfour something of that great man's knowledge of the works of man all over the world. When in 1922 Baron Anatole von Hügel retired from the curatorship of the University Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology at Cambridge, Louis was somewhat unexpectedly chosen to be the second incumbent of that post, owing, I believe, to the wisdom and dominating personality of Sir William Ridgeway, then Disney Professor of Archaeology. The choice was abundantly justified by the results. It was a formative period in the life of what is now the Faculty of Archaeology and Anthropology, and the Curator both built up the collections and enabled the Museum to keep its place as the heart, home and servant of the growing Faculty amid a welter of conflicting interests.

His wide knowledge enabled him to see the main gaps in the collections, his appreciation of quality resulted in many of them being filled with material of the first importance, his generosity provided funds for purchase when none were forth-

coming from University sources, and his gift for making friends provided agents in many lands. My own experience is typical. I first met him a few years after his appointment, when he had recently returned from taking part in the excavations at Kechipaun, near Zuni, New Mexico, which he and Mr G. G. Heye paid for between them. A fortuitous connection with the Museum resulted in an invitation to dine with him, a memorable experience to any undergraduate. When a year or so later I went to Ecuador on very different business and found some quite unexpected archaeological material, I remembered his interest in America and sent him some samples. The result was an enthusiastic letter, painting the importance of the material in the most vivid terms and imploring me to get some more, which was of the greatest encouragement to a young man ploughing a lonely furrow far away. Over the years that followed, the collection at Cambridge was slowly built up, and as each batch arrived, I received a long and appreciative letter, full of shrewd observations, helpful hints and news of Cambridge, written in his own hand before the days of typists in small university departments. When I came back to England on leave, he asked me to stay with him, made me feel that the things I had sent really mattered in the Museum, and introduced me to many friends. He was doing the same sort of thing for many others and he greatly assisted several expeditions by buying their collections for the Museum from his own resources. I know of one case where he sent a friend to America at his own expense to collect material which he knew would be unobtainable in a few years' time.

The Kechipaun excavations brought important material, which was of great help to a specialist on the American South-west only last year, and Louis also took part in excavations at Toszeg in Hungary, thus getting a collection which is not only most valuable to students but also helped the Hungarians, through Professor Childe, to sort out the chaos produced in their own material by the war. The mention of Hungary reminds me of one of those apocryphal stories which throw more light than the truth on the character of the subject. His enthusiasm for beads was proverbial, and it is related that he once chartered an aeroplane to take him to Budapest to secure one bead! Among the Museum's possessions is a rubber stamp saying 'Clarke gift', and it is interesting to speculate on how much time has been saved by its use in the accessions books and catalogue cards. There is hardly a show case in the building which does not contain some gifts from him, and some have many.

He published very little, only a few short papers, for the sustained attention to a subject which publication demands was not for him. Few men could have a wide enough range of interests to move effectively, as he did, from the Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology to the Fitzwilliam and his knowledge was not superficial, but his mind leapt rapidly from branch to branch like the birds he loved. A tour of the Museum with him gave a similar impression, as he rushed from case to case, alternately shouting and whispering anecdotes about the objects displayed. His memory was prodigious, and was doubtless improved by early training, whence the story, which I do not think that I can have imagined, that his mother made him learn the coats of arms of all the Papal families before he was five years old! He well

deserved the recognition which the University gave him by conferring on him the honorary degree of LL.D. in 1959.

His splendid hospitality did much for our subject by bringing people of varying interests together in surroundings littered with beautiful things. When in 1952 the XXXth International Congress of Americanists met at Cambridge, and he offered to give a party in his house, I put it on the first evening because I knew that this was the best possible way to break the ice, and I believe that members will remember it when they have forgotten everything else about the Congress. He was an active Fellow of the Institute until hindered by the burden of the Fitzwilliam in the war years and just before, and he served several times on the Council between 1918 and 1942, sometimes as Vice-President. Finally, I am glad to record that he had the very great pleasure of a visit from his old friend Sam Lothrop, our Huxley Lecturer, who had directed the Kechipaun excavations forty years before, less than a month before he died.

G. H. S. B.

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<i>Summary of Accounts for the Year 1960</i>	viii
Obituary Notes:	i
By M. HUTTON and G. H. S. BUSHNELL	
A Bronze Bowl and Other Vessels from Icklingham, Suffolk By JOAN LIVERSIDGE, F.S.A.	6
Pagan Saxon Burials at Little Paxton, Huntingdonshire By C. F. TEBBUTT, F.S.A. and T. C. LETHBRIDGE, F.S.A.	8
An Eleventh-century 'Boat-shaped' Building at Buckden, Huntingdonshire By C. F. TEBBUTT, F.S.A.	13
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