

begin but he showed up just in time. I was also nervous about my paper which came first. In it I attacked the inappropriate application to African archaeology of archaeological terminology deriving from Europe. I was therefore particularly grateful to my former Cambridge student, Susan McIntosh, when she immediately jumped into the discussion, as soon as I had finished speaking, with general approval and with a comparison I had never thought of! She noted that it would have been a disaster for North American archaeology if archaeologists there had tried to force European terminology onto it.

At the final plenary session of the Southampton meeting, a new organisation was born, the World Archaeological Congress, and I served for a number of years on its Executive Committee.

At the UISPP congress in Mainz the next year there was a public debate on the issue of whether the Southampton congress had violated the sacred principle of academic freedom, with Peter and myself the chief speakers on one side, and, sadly, my old friend Jacques Nenquin on the other and another Africanist colleague, Philip Tobias speaking against me from the audience.

There remained the publication of the papers from the African Prehistory section of the Southampton congress which I had undertaken to be responsible for and to edit for the series of twenty volumes of post-congress papers that it had been envisaged the Congress would generate. From the start, Peter had been insistent that the congress should result in a series of books which would be of real scientific and scholarly value and he remained the dynamic general editor of the series.

One day Peter asked me for a name for the whole series. Something popped into my head. What about “One World Archaeology” I suggested. The name stuck.

It had been decided that the papers from the two African sections should be put together to form one book, and by November 1986 I had sufficiently bullied my contributors to have gathered all of their material together, but John Alexander had only managed to get four papers from his group. So Peter decided to bring in Paul Sinclair to help edit that section; we also decided to think in terms of producing a volume on African Archaeology, not merely reproducing the papers of the Southampton congress, but commissioning new articles and filling in gaps. That, of course, caused a delay in publication but I think the final result, *The Archaeology of Africa: Foods, Metals, and Towns* (1993) justified it. But it meant a very great deal of work over the next five years.

Through all the tribulations we suffered over the World Archaeological Congress, through all the battles and disappointments, through all the anxieties and grinding hard work, I received one inestimable gain: a friend in the person of Peter Ucko, for whom I grew to have an almost boundless admiration and affection.”

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## Introducing T. C. Lethbridge

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I first became aware of the work of Thomas Charles Lethbridge (1901–1971) in 1986 after reading Colin Wilson’s mighty tome *Mysteries* (1978). What initially began as a passing interest was further fuelled by my own discovery, two years later, of the prehistoric landscape around the village of Avebury in Wiltshire. This awakening sparked two decades of ongoing research and investigation into the mysteries of prehistoric Britain. It is a journey that has resulted in the visitation of well over a thousand ancient sites across both Britain and the Irish Republic. Throughout my enquiry, the pragmatic and imaginative approach of T. C. Lethbridge has always been at the forefront of my investigations.

Tom Lethbridge was born in 1901 and during his formative years, he lived out a privileged existence with his family in the West Country of Britain. After completing his secondary education at Wellington College in 1919, he went on to study geology at Cambridge University. His attitude to further education was, to say the least, indifferent, but he successfully graduated and as a consequence of his achievement, accepted the post of Keeper of Anglo-Saxon Antiquities at the Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology at Cambridge, while continuing to work on his Masters of Arts degree. The post, offered to him by Louis Clark, was purely an honorary position, and this freedom enabled him to pursue his own agendas. This 'no-strings' approach to archaeology caused him to be perceived by the other members of the establishment as a radical and somewhat controversial figure.

Tom however, did not see himself as a revolutionary, in fact quite the opposite, for his approach was simply fuelled by an enquiring mind, unhindered by dogma and preconceived ideas. His fresh approach was applauded by many of the dons and he became close friends with Sir Cyril and Lady Fox – both eminences in the field of archaeology. However, others like Charles W. Phillips and Miles Burkitt perceived Tom's approach to be both amateurish and slap-dash and were often alarmed by Tom's unconventional approach to their profession. It is clear that Tom's curiosity often got the better of him and in his endeavour to 'find things out' the fundamentals of his profession often fell by the wayside. But find things out he did, and the results of this enquiring mind are captured in a plethora of reports and three insightful books, *Merlins Island – Essays on Britain in the Dark Ages* (1948), *Herdsman and Hermits – Celtic Seafarers in the Northern Seas* (1950) and *The Painted Men – A History of the Picts* (1954). Dr. Pamela Jane Smith's remarkable thesis 'A Splendid Idiosyncrasy: Prehistory at Cambridge, 1915–50' provides a valuable cultural insight into the world that Tom found himself during the 'Golden Age of Archaeology' at Cambridge.

Tom was an astute observer and through his own experiences he was able to bring to life the lives of the people he chose to study. All of his books all have a strong personal flavour, and he was unafraid to challenge generally accepted notions. Often his approach was often to throw off dozens of fresh ideas and possibilities, leaving it to less original minds to prove him wrong. When the latter occasionally happened, he was always the first to acknowledge any misjudgement. He found the trade unionism of the academic world stifling and seized upon every opportunity to stretch the boundaries of his profession. He believed that without this kind of challenging enquiry, the intellectual evolution of the human race was doomed.

Throughout his work, Tom demonstrated shrewdness and a canny understanding of his subjects and delivered his discourses with dry wit and humour. His vast general knowledge, combined with an enquiring mind, enabled him to perceive the world, not as a specialist, but as a champion of commonsense. He believed that to fully comprehend, one had to rid oneself of preconceived barriers and agendas. He believed in the middleman, the 'Jack-of-all-trades' approach, for he considered this position advantageous in his desire to test the waters of the learned hinterland. Unshackled by the dogma often associated with profession and academia, he believed that individuals who had a grounding in commonsense were better placed to facilitate and piece together the anthropological jigsaw that confronted them.

Tom's love affair with Cambridge eventually grew cold during the mid nineteen-fifties. This was as a result of the controversial 'discovery' on the banks of Wandlebury Hill Fort – an Iron Age enclosure to the south of Cambridge. By using unconventional methodology – probing the hillside with an iron bar – he claimed to have uncovered what appeared to be evidence of turf-cut figures contemporary with the giant earthwork. To the dismay and fury of many of his peers, Tom published his findings in *Gogmagog – The Buried Gods* (1956). The work demonstrated Tom's ongoing fascination with the old gods of Albion and his alignment with Dr. Margaret Murray's controversial theories on 'wicca' made him an easy target for those who questioned his approach and methodology. As a result of the fallout from the Gogmagog affair, Tom and his second wife Mina moved away from Cambridge, back to the peace and quiet of the West Country.

At Hole House in the Devonshire village of Branscombe, Tom began the most controversial phase of his career. Here he pursued his study of the old gods of England and began experimenting with dowsing. By using a pendulum as a tool for divination, he developed a theory: every inanimate object had the ability to store information, and somehow capture its history within itself. By using the pendulum as an instrument of detection, he believed he could unlock information ‘recorded’ within any given object. His explanation of ghosts and ghouls was based on a similar theory, in that rooms, places or atmospheres, could, in the right given conditions, somehow ‘record’ events onto the ether. For these ‘recordings’ to be replayed, it would of course, require the right person and appropriate conditions to be present. His enquiry into occult phenomenon continued up until his untimely death in September 1971. During his time in Devon, he produced eight remarkable books documenting his ongoing experiments concerning ghost and ghoulish phenomenon, dreams, ESP and evolution.

Tom was a natural writer and his books are best perceived collectively, for they demonstrate the workings of an enquiring mind unhindered by dogma, or preconceived ideas. Colin Wilson once remarked:

I have heard his books criticised on the grounds that they are repetitive and inconclusive. But this is necessarily so. They are a kind of working journal into which he poured his fresh discoveries and insights year by year; if they are chaotic, they share that fault with the notebooks of Leonardo and the daily journals of every important discoverer.

Wilson also remarks on Tom’s personal qualities that are crucial to his writing: ‘...kindliness, a child-like humour, and a mind that bubbled with ideas like a glass of champagne’. In fact he went as far as likening his style to that of G. K. Chesterton and recognised him a classic, not just of parapsychology, but also of English literature.

There are many who judge Tom Lethbridge by the furore that resulted from the Gogmagog affair, or heap criticism on him for his later studies in occult phenomenon. There were however, many strings to Tom Lethbridge’s bow and that is why I considered it pertinent to write his biography, in the hope that a reappraisal of his work will enable scholars to put aside preconceived prejudices and embrace his unique contribution to British history.

**Note from Pamela Jane Smith:** Mina Lethbridge and I were successful in getting a portion of Tom’s autobiography published in *Antiquity* Vol 71:273, 1997 pp. 721–728 – T. C. Lethbridge – “The Mildenhall Treasure: a first-hand account”. Other portions will soon be published in the *Proceedings of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society* once I edit it. If anyone would like a copy of the unpublished version, they can contact me at [pjs1011@cam.ac.uk](mailto:pjs1011@cam.ac.uk).

## IV. Publications suggested by subscribers

From **Daniel Schavelzon**:

D. G. Roberts and D. G. Orr (eds) 2007. *Witness to the Past: The Life and Works of John L. Cotter*, Society of American Archaeology.

López Luján, L. 2008. ‘El Tajín en el siglo XVIII: dos exploraciones pioneras en Veracruz’. *Arqueología mexicana*. México: INAH/Editorial Raíces, vol. XV, nr. 90, pp. 74–81.

Fauvet-Berthelolt, M.-F., López Luján, L. y S. Guimarães, 2007. ‘Six personnages en quête d’objets: histoire de la collection archéologique de la Real Expedición Anticuaria en Nouvelle Espagne’. *Gradhiva, Revue d’anthropologie et de muséologie*. Paris: Musée du quai Branly, n. 6, 2007, pp. 104–126.