

Recollections of C. Leonard Woolley

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¹ Woolley and Hamoudi, his trusted foreman through many years.

On the grounds that I am one of the living survivors of the early seasons at Ur, (1922-1934) the Editor of *Expedition* has kindly invited me to open these Proceedings, and a feeling of nostalgia comes over me as I do so, more than fifty years on. My 'Memories of Ur', have been recorded in *Iraq XXII*, (1960) which contains a delightful photograph of Woolley and his beloved foreman Hamoudi ibn Shaikh Ibrahim together with a picture of the staff in 1926. As I have also written about my experiences at Ur in *Mallowan's Memoirs*, published by Collins, September 1977, I feel justified in indulging in brevity here.

Among the other survivors of those living ancient monuments of Ur are G. M. FitzGerald 1923-24, aged 97, Sidney Smith who served during the first season, 1922-23, aged 88, A. W. Lawrence 1922-23, aged 77 and A. S. Whitburn 1925-27 and 1930, now an octogenarian, who served as Architect during the time when I was Field Assistant. Of the nineteen who served at Ur there are to the best of my knowledge eight still living in 1977, not a bad witness to gerontology. Many who served at Ur subsequently embarked on distinguished careers. A. W. Lawrence for example became Professor of Classical Archaeology at Cambridge. I conclude that in spite of the violent sandstorms, Ur has been something of a health resort and that the open air life which we enjoyed there, sometimes, for five months on end, has done the participants nothing but good. Woolley himself when he died was but two months short of his eightieth birthday.

I remember Leonard Woolley as of slight build, perhaps about 5'8" in height, wiry and possessed of great stamina. During all the years of his active life as a digger he was, as far as I know, never ill; an indefatigable worker.

There is no doubt that this great leader



of all the Ur Expeditions would be highly gratified if he could witness the impact of his work, fifty years on, for the scientific bearing of his finds, artistic, architectural, epigraphic, and the wide repertoire of objects discovered on the site is still being actively developed. We now appreciate the broad scope of Sumerian civilisation and can study the impact of the Early Dynastic Period as far afield as Tepe Yahya in the district of Kerman on the route to India, also at Shahr-i Sokhta in the same district. It is indeed possible that one day sites once involved in the overland trade from Ur will be found in Iran, further east, on the route to the Indus Valley and that we shall witness further evidence of the ramifications of Sumer in the Orient. The essays that follow



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 In 1955, the University Museum awarded its highest honor, the Lucy Wharton Drexel Medal, to Sir Leonard Woolley. He is seen here with Froelich Rainey, Director of the Museum, and Percy C. Madeira, Jr., President of its Board of Managers.

this one will doubtless throw light on this topic.

At this point it is relevant to mention recent discoveries of trading centres in Arabia, not far distant from the Gulf, where traces have been found, in the shape of 'Ubaid' pottery, of those who had occasion to visit these remote places. It would appear that the pottery is of genuine Ubaid provenance, made either at Ubaid itself, or in Sumerian centres such as Ur and Eridu, and is thus a witness to sea-faring in the sixth millennium by early merchants who may perhaps be described as Sumerian or proto-Sumerian. It appears that in Arabia most of the pottery originated from Ur, some from Ubaid and Eridu (Joan Oates in *Antiquity* 1977). There is still much to be gained through the analysis of Woolley's discoveries, notably the metal. Indeed it is astonishing to see recent illustrations of the implements discovered in the Royal Cemetery of Ur and still bearing the caption 'Copper or Bronze'. Analysis of the metallurgy should be a requirement demanding the highest priority.

It would not be out of place for me here to indulge in a few personal reminiscences. I remember that on my first journey to Ur in the autumn of 1925 I crossed the desert between Beirut and Baghdad together with

Woolley in a Nairn Cadillac and when we found the *wadi* at Rutbah in full spate, volunteered to carry the baggage across on my shoulders, as the drivers feared that loaded cars might be bogged down. I recall that when later at Ur we were talking about the incident I was, in those days, too shy to admit that I was the one who had performed that service, which however our Architect, Whitburn, had not forgotten.

Woolley's work at Ur was the climax of a long and distinguished archaeological career and, not excepting Flinders Petrie in Egypt and Palestine and Arthur Evans in Crete, he must have been the world's most prolific digger. The lesson he left us is that not to publish is a crime, and that we should brand others who have not lived up to these expectations as criminals.

We do well to honour him in these pages and to remember that what Arthur Evans did for the Minoans, Woolley did for the Sumerians.

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