

Editorial

PLATES I-II

We print as our first plate two views of the Dunstable Swan Jewel found by the Manshead Archaeological Society in 1965 during their excavation of a Dominican Friary at Dunstable. The Dominican Friary was a very small, poor house in existence between 1259 and 1538. The Jewel is of gold decorated with enamel and has been dated approximately to 1400 AD by examination of the workmanship involved.

It was put up for auction at Sotheby's in March 1966 and sold to the Metropolitan Museum of New York for £4,800. An export licence was refused, and thanks to grants from the National Art-Collections Fund, the Pilgrim Trust, and the Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths, it was subsequently bought by the British Museum, where it is currently on display. For further information read John Cherry, 'The Dunstable Swan Jewel', *Journal of the British Archaeological Association*, 1969, 38-53, and A. R. Wagner, 'The Swan Badge and the Swan Knight', *Archaeologia*, 1959, 127-38. The Dunstable Museum Trust, a limited company and registered charity, has produced a small booklet *The Dunstable Swan Jewel*, edited by Vivienne Evans, which can be obtained from the Trust (*Albion House, Albion Street, Dunstable, Beds*), price 60p (80p by post).

Our second plate records some aspects of a visit to the United States in September 1983 to study some of the alleged antiquities which many now claim to prove that America was not discovered by Columbus in 1492 but that, long before, it had been visited and perhaps colonized by Vikings, Irish, Welsh, Phoenicians, Etruscans, some of the lost tribes of Israel, Egyptians, Libyans, Berbers. To these may be added the inhabitants of lost continents, such as Atlantis or Mu, or visitors from outer space on package tours by von Däniken Travel Unlimited—you take your choice, we will provide

you with appropriate inscriptions decipherable only by the aficionados of these uncertain immigrants, and some tendentious literature by non-scholars, woefully ignorant of the prehistory and protohistory of Europe and America, such as Elliot Smith, Cyrus Gordon, Barry Fell, and Ivan Van Sertima.

Our steps took us to Minnesota and we drove through the lovely middlewest of America from Minneapolis to Alexandria, passing some of the many lakes which have given Minnesota the name 'state of 10,000 lakes'. Alexandria is 93 miles (150 km) NW of Minneapolis: in 1898, shortly after New Year's Day, the University of Minnesota was informed that a stone, containing a long inscription in unknown characters, had been found by a farmer called Olaf Olsen near Kensington, Douglas County.

This stone now occupies a place of honour in the Runestone Museum, in the Chamber of Commerce Building at Alexandria, Minnesota, which now proudly, but dottily, proclaims itself *The Birthplace of America*. Outside the Museum (itself an excellent example of what a provincial museum should be, with everything from local birds and beasts to early-20th-century typewriters and dentist's chairs), is a 20ft-high statue of a Viking—'Big Ole'—bearing mistakenly on his shield the rubric *Birthplace of America* (PL. 11a). On the outskirts of this quiet, undistinguished, but self-deluded town is Runestone Park, with a very large replica of the Kensington Stone and one of the so-called Viking mooring stones: PL. 11b shows the Editor and Production Editor gazing spellbound at this bogus artifact.

Let us make no mistake here: the Vikings got to America and have left archaeological proof of their presence, notably at L'Anse-aux-Meadows in Newfoundland and on Ellesmere Island, and in the shell-midden in Penobscot Bay (*Antiquity*, LIV, 1980, 172-4). But they didn't get to Minnesota or

leave any runic inscriptions anywhere (we suspect that there is a factory somewhere in America making runic inscriptions!). Of course there are many people, in and out of the Chamber of Commerce at Alexandria, who firmly believe in the authenticity of the Kensington Stone, but the weight of informed archaeological and linguistic opinion has no doubts but that it is a crude fake. Yet it was exhibited in the Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC, in 1948–9, and Dr M. W. Stirling, Director of the Bureau of American Ethnology in that great institution, declared 'that it was probably the most important archaeological object yet found in N. America'. It is, in our view, probably one of the most important archaeological frauds found in North America.

One of the most consistent and continuing advocates of its authenticity was the late Hjalmar R. Holand, and the last of his many books,* *A Holy Mission to Minnesota 600 years ago*, is for sale in the Runestone Museum. This should be read in conjunction with Professor Erik Wahlgren's *The Kensington Stone: a mystery solved*, published in 1958, and reviewed in these pages (*Antiquity*, xxxii, 1958, 264–7). In 1982 an eminent Italianist and Professor Emeritus of Linguistics at Cornell, Robert A. Hall, published his book *The Kensington Rune-Stone is genuine*, in which he proclaims a '98 per cent certainty' that the inscription is authentic: his book was reviewed by Erik Wahlgren in our July 1983 issue (*Antiquity*, lvii, 1983, 152–3), and found wanting.

But the battle goes on, and if anyone wants to see the faith and fury of the Viking protagonists in the post-Holand period they should read the May–June 1975 issue of *Popular Archaeology* (the bi-monthly American magazine published by *Life and Letters [sic] Publishers, Box 4211, Arlington, Virginia 22204, USA*, not to be confused with the monthly British magazine of the same title (obtainable from *24 Barton Street, Bath*). All the old Viking follies are set out here—runestones, mooring stones, the Newport Tower, the Vinland map, the Spirit Pond Stones (described as to be 'counted among the most important relics of American history!'). The treatment of the Yale Vinland Map by the Viking protagonists is a fascinating example of chicanery, trickery, sophistry, subterfuge, and deception. 'Of course,' they say, and this was said to us on several

* Those with good eyesight and a strong glass may divine that Holand's book *Explorations in America before Columbus* is quoted as evidence on the 'mooring stone' (PL. 11b).

occasions in September 1983 in America, 'the Yale Vinland map is a forgery. The critical ink ingredient of titanium dioxide could not have been used before 1900. The map is a copy of an original map kept in the secret archives of the Vatican which is extremely reluctant to permit pre-Columbian research.' To quote W. R. Anderson, 'The Catholic Church is between a rock and a hard place, to use an expression common in the south. It must take care not to offend the powerful Knights of Columbus, yet acknowledge that Leif Ericson was, indeed, the first Catholic missionary to the New World' (*Popular Archaeology*, 1975, May–June, 6–7).

Those who want to hear what seems to us the real story of the Spirit Pond affair should read Erik Wahlgren's admirable article 'American Runes: from Kensington to Spirit Pond' in the *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, Vol. LXXXI, 1982, 157–85. This periodical is published quarterly by the University of Illinois Press, and for those of our readers who have no easy access to *JEGP* we quote Professor Wahlgren's conclusions:

The Spirit Pond 'cryptogram' may well have been a fraternity house joke that managed to stir up ripples in the adult world. Conceived and carried out with spontaneity and humor rather than with wrinkled brow and importful intent, it could not hope to re-write history or philology . . . the petroglyphs are in the aggregate a witty commentary on the perennial struggle between reason and credulity, between our respect for evidence and our desire to shape a flattering past. . . . Meanwhile would the real Jack Runemaster care to stand up?

It is good to know that Professor Wahlgren, in his retirement, is planning to write a book on *The Vikings in America* in which he will, with his usual scholarship, impartiality, and great sense of humour and appreciation of the ridiculous, put this whole controversy in its proper perspective.

The reason for our own holy (?) mission to Minnesota was to film this notorious runestone as part of a TV programme provisionally entitled *Myth America*, directed by Paul Jordan, archaeological and historical programme producer of Anglia Television, which will be shown by the British Channel 4 in the first half of 1984, and later in America. We visited and filmed many other pseudo-artifacts of alleged antiquity: the Newport Tower in Rhode Island, the many strangely placed glacial rocks which superficially resemble European megalithic chambers, and of course Mystery Hill, North Salem, New Hampshire, which has now been proudly, pompously, and wickedly called

America's Stonehenge. The green state signposts point unquestionably to Stonehenge.

AMERICA'S STONEHENGE 1 mile from Route 111, N. Salem. Open April 1-Dec. 1, wknds in Apr. and Nov., weather permitting. Hours 10:30-4:00 p.m. spring and fall 9:30-5:00 p.m. summer. Largest site of its kind in N. America, built and used by ancient culture 4,000 years ago. Research continuing, 3 B.C. carbon dates obtained; ancient inscription of Iberians and Celts deciphered. Trails to astronomical stones, sighting platforms, viewing ramp. Snack bar, gift shop, museum. Adm: \$4.00 adults, \$3.00 students and sr. cits., \$1.25 children 6-12. Tel: 893-8300.

Mr Colin McFadyean has sent me this advertisement from *Summer Week*, a New Hampshire paper, for 22 September 1983, 22. So travellers in search of the American past, as you drive north on Interstate 93 about 10 miles across the boundary between Massachusetts and New Hampshire, take Exit 3 on to Route 111, and soon you will find signs to *America's Stonehenge*. But when you get there you will find a collection of curious colonial buildings of the 17th and 18th centuries claiming to be 'a giant megalithic astronomical complex built over 4,000 years ago'!

The extravagant claims made for pre-Columbian invaders continue to mount in improbability, although we felt that in New York the bookstalls in Grand Central Station and the bookshops on Fifth Avenue (alas, Brentano's no more!) were not displaying so many dotty books of the Fell/von Däniken genre as they did a few years ago; but there were still plenty of them!

And the interpretation of alleged inscriptions carries on apace. We have just been sent the March 1983 issue of the magazine *Wonderful West Virginia*; its cover has a colour photograph captioned, 'Shortly after sunrise on 22 December 1982, the sun illuminated the entire Wyoming County Petroglyph', which looks to an impartial observer (that's the Editor) like natural and/or native American Indian scribings. Professor Barry Fell has, to our continuing astonishment, deciphered these rock-marks and finds that there are, surprisingly, *three* languages represented. The main inscription is in Ogam which, Fell claims, says: 'At the time of sunrise a ray grazes the notch on the left side on Christmas Day. A Feast-day of the Church, the first season of the year. The season of the Blessed

Advent of the Saviour Lord Christ. Behold, he is born of Mary, a woman.'

This is indeed, as Ida Jane Gallagher says, an 'astounding message' to find on a rock surface in West Virginia. Fell also found, near by, an inscription in Algonquian saying, 'Glad Tidings', and an inscription in a third script which says, 'Information for regulating the calendar by observing the reversal of the sun's course.' This, he tells us, is in Tifinag, 'a Scandinavian Bronze Age script that linguists have identified in Canada, Great Britain, Libya and North Africa'.

All my eye and Betty Martin: but worse is to come. The publications of the Epigraphic Society of America have now come our way and include an astonishing decipherment of the Glouzel inscriptions—astonishing or even astounding. Donald Buchanan of Vienna, Virginia, finds some of the inscriptions to deal with problems of sexual potency. We will return to the archaeo-pornography of Glouzel in the next issue, when we may also have news of the excavations which Dr Flouest conducted in a Glouzelian site last summer.

How can we as serious dedicated archaeologists cope with this insidious nonsense? Two ways are by writing books and teaching. For the last few years Professor Stephen Williams has been running a course of lectures at Harvard called 'Fantastic Archaeology'—his class this year is 180, and Cazeau and Scott have been running a comparable course in Buffalo.

This is all admirable, but if we sometimes despair that our efforts in lecturing, writing, broadcasting are not succeeding, what can we do? Take to drink? But what drink? Perhaps the Viking Vodka whose advertisement we print overleaf, free, and un-tasted.

But, having recovered from our bout of Viking-land Birth of America Vodka, let us turn to British domestic matters. Congratulations to John Wachter on his personal professorship at Leicester, although the established Chair of Archaeology held by Charles Thomas and then Vincent Megaw is in abeyance. Congratulations too to Peter Salway on his Chair in the Open University. He tells us that this does not mean there will automatically be a degree course in archaeology in the Open University. There should be, and we warmly commend it to the Vice-Chancellor, our old friend Professor John Horlock. Broadcasting to the public by sound and vision has been instrumental in creating a

climate in which archaeology is not only understandable to the public but necessary and relevant. The Open University should organize a degree course in archaeology.

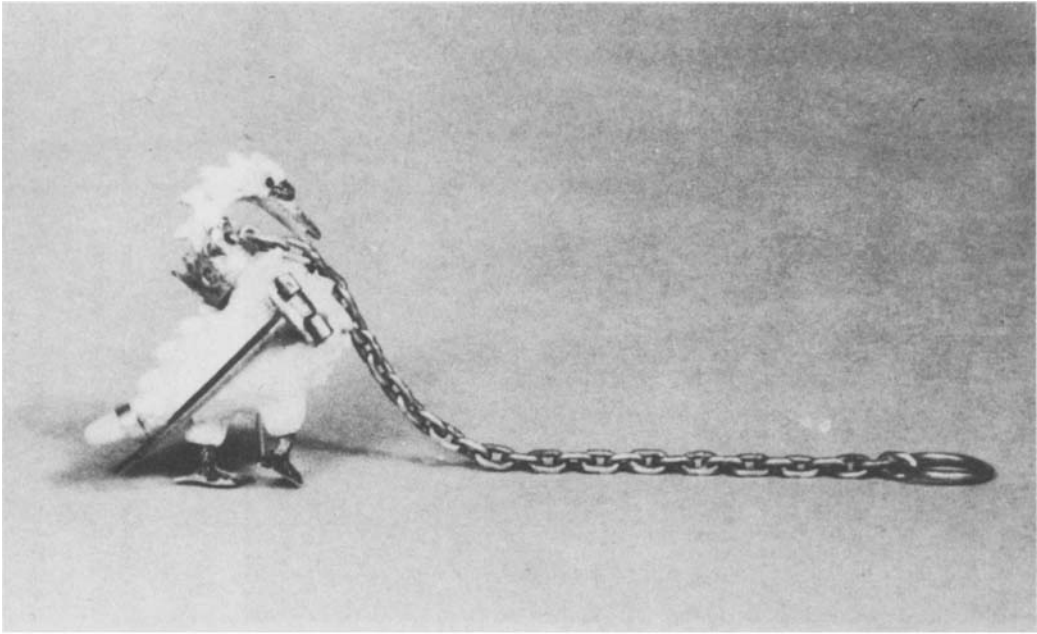
We have already set out the plans and subscriptions for the British C. I. A. P. P. Congress in Britain in 1986 (*Antiquity*, 1983, 85). This Congress will be a very important event in the history of archaeology and will be a great opportunity for us in Britain to show to our colleagues *outré-Manche* some of our antiquities in field and museum. There will be many people who think that as this Congress

is far ahead one should not bother about it now. One should. Write immediately to the office of the National Secretary, *Professor Peter Ucko, University of Southampton, Southampton SO9 5NH*.

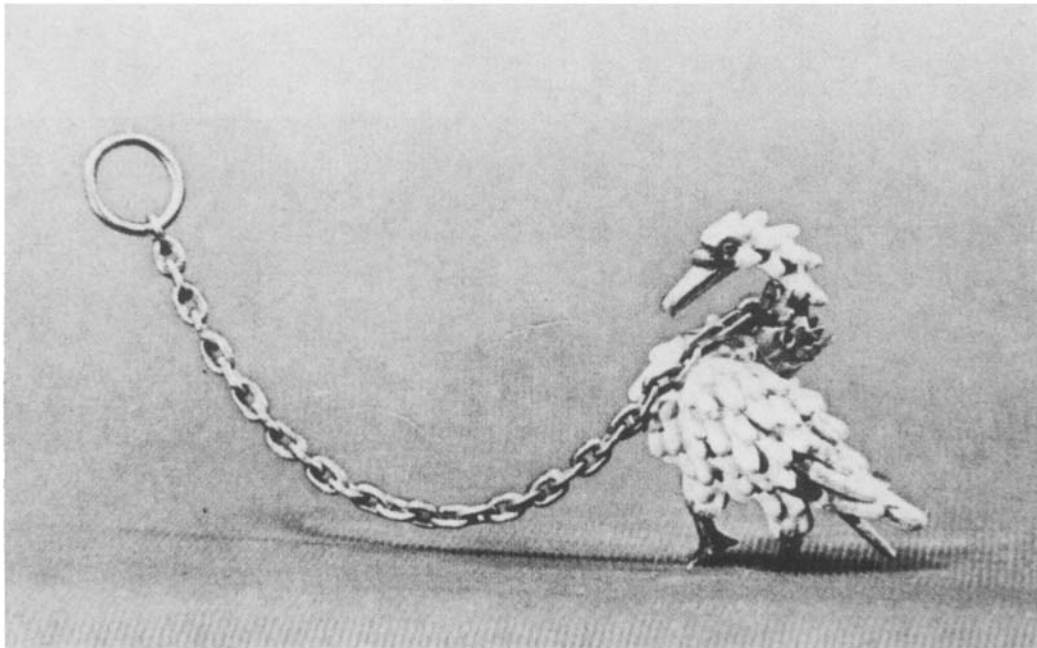
Professor Ucko asks us to make clear the nature of the £200 Congress Registration Fee which may be putting people off. He writes (24 October 1983):

The Registration Fee is based on projected 1986 prices and at the time of calculation was equivalent to £133 at 1983 prices. For this sum, delegates will receive at least a set of pre-circulated papers, for one of the five major themes, lunches, teas, coffees, a half-day excursion, and a free copy of the catalogue of the proposed new exhibition at the British Museum.





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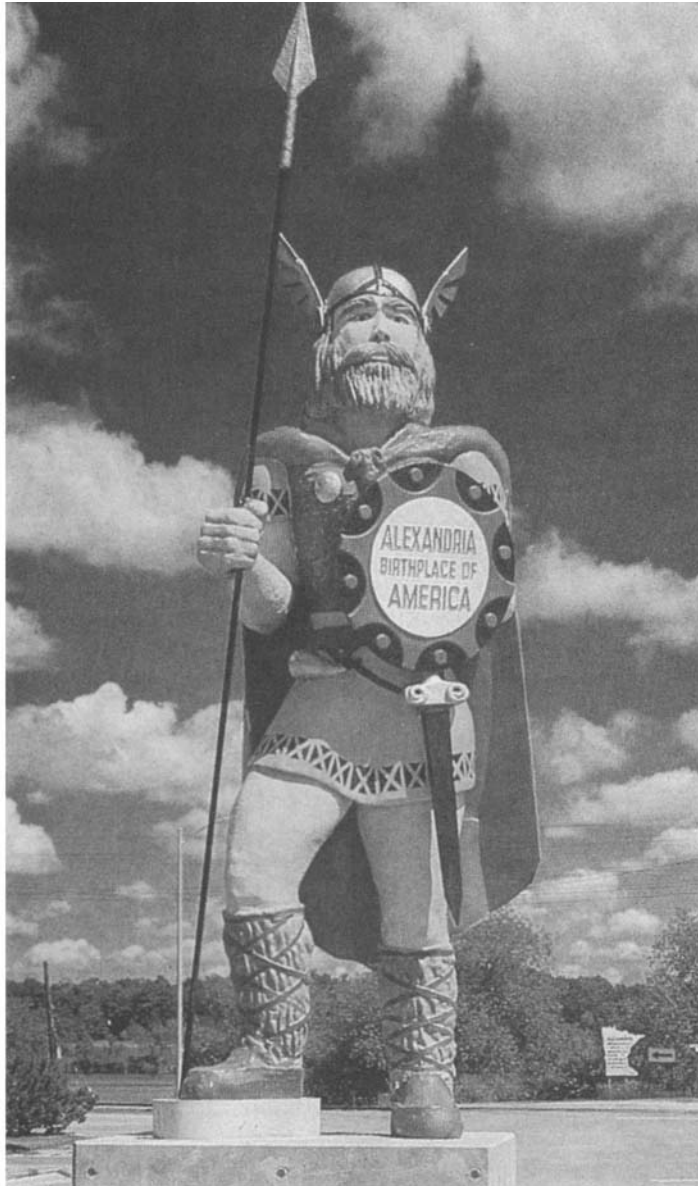
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PLATE I: EDITORIAL

The Dunstable Swan Jewel. (a) Front view (b) rear view

See pp. 1-4

Photos: Omer Roucoux



a



b

PLATE II: EDITORIAL

(a) Statue of Viking 'Big Ole' (brightly painted), outside the Runestone Museum, Alexandria, Minnesota. (b) The Editor and Production Editor closely studying the so-called Viking mooring stone from Jesse Lake, Minnesota, now in the Runestone Park, Alexandria

See pp. 1-4

Photo: b. Paul Jordan