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ARTHUR LOVERIDGE—A LIFE IN RETROSPECT

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On February 16, 1980, at the age of almost eighty-nine, Arthur Loveridge, former Curator of Reptiles and Amphibians at the Museum of Comparative Zoology, died on the island of St. Helena in the South Atlantic after a short illness.

In 1924 A. Lawrence Lowell, then President of Harvard, wrote to the Immigration Department in Boston in these terms:

"This is to inform you that Arthur Loveridge, Esq., formerly of the Manchester University Museum, National Museum of Wales, and latterly Director of the British East African Museum in Nairobi, a gentleman standing high in his chosen field, is due on the steamer Laconia, arriving in Boston on or about May 1st.

"On March 14th of this year Mr. Loveridge was appointed by the Faculty of the Museum of Comparative Zoology in Harvard University to the position of Associate in Zoology in the Harvard University Museum, where he will exercise his profession during the coming years as an officer of Harvard University.

"Since I am informed that the British quota is full, I am anxious that you should know in advance that Mr. Loveridge is a teacher, scientist and author of high professional standing, and that he comes here already appointed to a University position in Harvard.

"Any kindness you may show him in expediting his entry will be very greatly appreciated by me."

It is obvious that President Lowell's plea was effective. It is known that Glover Allen, then Curator of Mammals, met Loveridge

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at the boat and drove him to Cambridge, where he was to spend thirty-three years (till 1957). At first he was Thomas Barbour's assistant, reorganizing the Museum's herpetological collection and then, when Barbour was appointed Director of the Museum, continuing to supervise with surpassing care the expansion of one of the world's great collections of reptiles and amphibians. From 1931 he had the volunteer assistance of Benjamin Shreve.

Thomas Barbour brought Loveridge to the New World, but Loveridge's heart remained in the continent of Africa where he had spent almost ten years. There he had made the reputation that brought the Harvard appointment. There he had met his wife, and there he had indulged to the full his passion for collecting and for general natural history that had been his since childhood—indulged it despite (or by means of) service with the East African Mounted Rifles, the Nairobi Museum, and the Game Department in Tanganyika (now Tanzania).

Loveridge's association with Harvard was no bolt from the blue; it was a tie that had gradually strengthened. In the Museum Report for 1919–1920, there is a mention of a first gift from Loveridge. His name recurs in 1921–1922, and then, in 1923–1924, there is Barbour's comment: "This year has been eventful in that during its course the Arthur Loveridge African collection was received and Mr. Loveridge arrived to assist in a general overhauling of the study series."

Harvard got a bargain in Loveridge. Harvard bought Loveridge's collection, but with it came a Curator—one the collection desperately needed. The other side of Loveridge's passion for collecting was a passion for order and for tidiness: what he brought back or had brought back to him had to be as perfectly classified, ticketed, and put away as human power could manage.

For a while he surely had the best of his two worlds. On the one hand, he was in charge of a major but crowded, ill-labeled, ill-organized gathering of collections. He was able to transform it into a model of collections as he felt they should be—taking frogs, snakes, and lizards out of tanks and putting them in fine glass-stoppered bottles with labels written in hard pencil in his own neat hand and carefully arranging them within trays, each with neatly typed labels. *His* collection, when he finished, was a thing of beauty (and fiercely kept so).

For the other part, in the first years he was repeatedly able to go back to Africa and, doing what he most wanted to do, simultaneously enrich the Harvard collections and provide for himself the study material he needed. Clearly this had been part of the understanding that went with the Harvard appointment. He did general collecting, not only herpetological collecting. He had always done so, and museum workers in that day were always, whatever their specialty, general collectors. He did sometimes collect large mammals, but this, I am told, was not to his preference. He did get to Africa and to parts of it he had not seen before. In the years between 1924 and 1940 he was away from Cambridge four times (1925–1926, 1928–1929, 1933–1934, and 1938–1939). On each occasion he was away a full year. In terms of his additions to the Harvard collections, this was his prime time.

The first years were active years in many ways. These were years of affluence for the Museum. Barbour's money immensely augmented collections that Louis Agassiz had been at feverish pains to acquire. Although Loveridge's African expeditions were undoubtedly the greatest source of additions to the herpetological collections during these years, Barbour did not cease, so long as he was able, to encourage and directly finance every sort of acquisition from any part of the world. This flood of material was certainly Loveridge's joy.

Loveridge was something of a public figure in the first years. He routinely gave lectures, wrote articles for "Fauna," "Frontiers," and "Natural History" and in 1928 gave a series of twenty lectures for the Boston Society of Natural History on Boston's WBET entitled "Tales from Tanganyika." He made "Who's Who" in 1938.

There is much to indicate that the world changed for Loveridge after the 30s. The Depression had come; if its impact was not immediate, it was fundamental. The concomitant diminution of Barbour's fortune meant that the flood of specimens began to come to an end. (Loveridge once showed me how plainly this change was demonstrated on our species cards.) It was later in this period of diminished affluence that Loveridge refused to take more than two of a series, offered by Vanzolini, of a species not represented in the MCZ collections; "Bottles," he is reported to have said, "are precious." For some time the momentum of previous activity continued. By 1942, the number of species and subspecies in the

collection surpassed 6,000. The Department had to be enlarged, and a new room (the old Aquarium) was taken over for snakes.

But already in the previous year (1941), Barbour's report as Director had begun to take a mournful tone: "Increased taxes are going to make it difficult or impossible for the Museum to expect to receive the private assistance which it has received in the past."

In 1942 Shreve left for the army. In 1942–1943 only 400 specimens were catalogued; 140 of these were exchanges. Loveridge's own collecting suffered also. There was to be only one more African trip.

Decreased curating and collecting did not impair Loveridge's productivity, however. His previous work had been primarily reports of collections and faunal studies. He now began revisions, and in a popular vein began the series of books that gave him wider fame. "Many Happy Days I've Squandered" (1944) was the first. "Tomorrow's a Holiday" succeeded it in 1947, then "I Drank the Zambesi" (1953), and "Forest Safari" (1956). All included accounts, highly entertaining, of his African experiences.

The end of the Second World War had brought some bonuses. Shreve came back. W. H. Stickel, Sergeant Beck, Captain Jarvo, an Australian, Gunner Tovell, and others sent to Loveridge material from the Pacific area collected during their service. Loveridge had written a little book, "Reptiles of the Pacific World" (100,000 copies were printed for the Armed Forces, and it has recently been reprinted), and these collections were its rewards. Loveridge dutifully reported on the collections and on similar material obtained by the National Museum.

(It is curious that the most massive of all the acquisitions since Loveridge were the result of these activities peripheral to Loveridge's major interest. Correspondence with Fred Parker in 1960 was initiated by a request for Loveridge's Australian and New Guinean papers and has resulted in the MCZ's now huge Solomons and New Guinea collections.)

Loveridge remained in charge of the collections for almost ten years more. He made the last African expedition of his Harvard career, that to Nyassaland and Tete in 1948–1949. Thereafter, the entire period was devoted to his intended summary of East African herpetology, most of it to the series of revisions that he had begun earlier, in 1940, with some snake genera, and that culminated with the East African Check List published in the year of his retirement, 1957. One paper on "The Cryptodira of Africa" was in collaboration

with the man who was to succeed him—myself—published again in 1957.

Loveridge left Cambridge in 1957, immediately after his retirement, for the island of St. Helena in the South Atlantic. Although he did visit England, and I once saw him in the British Museum, and although we maintained a correspondence and he even published on material he sent to the Museum, he never returned to the United States. It is not known why—perhaps because the collection was no longer *his* in the special sense that it had been for thirty-three years.

The *Boston Globe* of July 21, 1957 headed its four column account of Loveridge's retirement with the statement: "Retiring Curator to Avoid Work Temptation." If that was genuinely Loveridge's intention, it did not turn out that way. He did make his retirement home at Varney's on St. Helena, but it often seemed that he was only a little less active in these final years than he had been in the MCZ.

He kept up an intense interest in both African herpetology and the Museum and in collecting: his letters of 1958 are full of impatience to get the tubes to collect St. Helena spiders. His correspondence, in fact, began on the boat to the island, and he was soon to start numbering his letters. There were already 2,472 in early 1965, and they were nearing 7,000 at the time of his death. (He was a punctilious writer, always answering a letter, but always insisting also that his letters be answered before he would write again.)

He travelled also, not infrequently to England, and at least once collected again in Africa—a small collection—*Chamaeleo, Mabuya,* and frogs from Mau Narok at 9,000 ft. in Kenya, donated to the MCZ. He received specimens from correspondents also and published on some of them, reporting *Hemidactylus mercatorius* as new to Ascension Island and describing new amphisbaenids collected by Ionides in Tanganyika. His most interesting paper from his "exile" on St. Helena may be unique in herpetology: his own report, published at his own expense, on "The status of new vertebrates described or collected by Loveridge."

His wife died suddenly on St. Helena in 1972. His son Brian joined him on the island four years later. In another four years Loveridge himself was dead.

What of the man behind the Curator? He was, of course, a very special individual in his own right, but he was also one of a breed that is now extinct because the times have made its life style no longer viable.

Born in Penarth, Glamorgan, Wales, 28 May 1891, Loveridge was thirty-three when he came to the Harvard Museum. He had already been Curator in Nairobi and served in museums in Wales and England. As he reports in "Many Happy Days I've Squandered," he had decided to become a Museum Curator at the age of ten. He tells in the preface of that book of "the acquiescence of a kindly father." However, the Harvard Archives contains his application in 1914 for the newly created post of Curator at the Nairobi Museum. This reveals that he had to "serve time" for two years as apprentice in the family business of ship furnishing, and that only then was he allowed to take a year's course in Zoology and Botany in the University College of South Wales on the way to appointments first at the Manchester University Museum and then in the Temporary Museum in Cardiff.

It was while he was in the latter post, and, in addition to his regular duties, making a card index of the whole British Fauna (about, he reports, 23,000 cards), that he serendipitously received knowledge of an open position in Africa. Although he already had a private collection of "nearly 250 jars of preserved reptiles and over 300 glass topped drawers containing birds' eggs, insects and other specimens," he was always avid for more. When he heard about a civil engineer from British East Africa due home on leave who "had in his youth shown a fondness for snakes," he tried to inveigle the man into collecting for him. Utilizing a joint interest in stamps and bribing him with duplicates of these, Loveridge extorted a promise to pickle lizards and snakes. An inquiry six months later produced an apologetic reply which included the news that the East Africa and Uganda Natural History Society needed a curator for a new museum that would have government support. "Why don't you apply for the post and then you can collect your own bally snakes" was the advice. Loveridge applied at once, was accepted, and arrived in Nairobi in mid-1914.

The first World War very soon cast its shadow over Africa; it did not interrupt Loveridge's career as a naturalist. Although he joined the local forces shortly after his arrival and after six months' training was on active duty, it is often difficult, from his account of the next four years, to be conscious that a war was on. The occasional moment of danger was memorable for him because of the capture of a rare animal. His story of the capture of his first *Boulengerula boulengeri* is characteristic: "This rare Caecilian was

obtained under rather unusual circumstances during the East African campaign. We were busily engaged in 'digging in' under an unpleasant shellfire, when it was unearthed by one of my fellow troopers in the Mounted Rifles. He humourously called out that one of my snakes had escaped and that, if I did not come over and take charge of it at once, he would run his bayonet through it. Needless to say, when I saw what it was, I very gladly took charge of it." The same total devotion to natural history made him—as he himself recounts—badger first his sergeant and then the general in the midst of his staff for permission to obtain bottles of pickled snakes from an abandoned German house.

He got the snakes; this was no isolated incident. One of his periodical summaries of his activities preserved in the Harvard Archives mentions: "Travelling through German East Africa from north to south provided exceptional opportunities for collecting . . . All necessary preservatives and pickling jars were 'found' in captured German towns." (The 'found' is in quotation marks in his own typescript.)

We have here the image of a man wholly devoted to an avocation that he made his vocation and who found his life "one long holiday. Gratefully I confess to being one of the favored few whose waking thoughts in the morning consist of the pleasant planning of the day's work." It was he who also wrote: "Probably only a zoologist can look at an uncaught cobra and feel the joy a child feels on Christmas morning."

It is this spirit of Loveridge that is well-caught in the cartoon that I have chosen to illustrate this memorial of a life. It is a man I would have liked to have known. It is not, I think, the man I knew.

I came into Loveridge's ambience late, in 1947, after the Second World War, and while I was working on my thesis. Visiting the Museum, I was able to re-identify one or two turtles and so gained his confidence. This began a cordial relationship. Eventually, after I came to Harvard, I was able to call him "Arthur." (The first level of intimacy was "Loveridge" rather than "Mr. Loveridge.")

The man I knew was stiffish. Some called him "Sir Arthur." This was probaby mere Englishness plus a firm insistence on standards that he did not allow to be relaxed, not for himself, not for anyone. Romer called him the "Demon Curator," and this was the aspect that most of us knew, who knew him late in his career.

He could be kind and very helpful. Many of his correspondents,

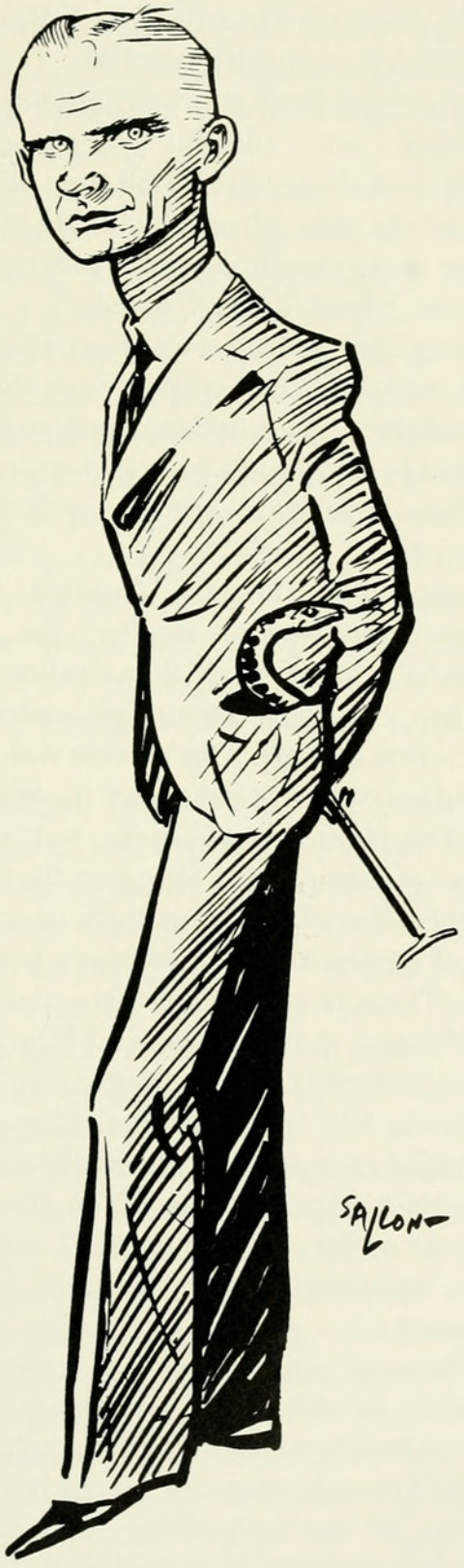
the visitors to the Department, the young questioner, and even some of the anatomists in search of specimens for study knew his kindness and assistance well. The more demanding might get short shrift, and for poseurs and frauds—so he regarded Ivan Sanderson—he had no kindness at all. His review of a book of Sanderson's, and of its gentler reviewers, is classic vitriol.

His tidiness extended to classification. He preferred clarity, was unhappy with complication, was impatient of subtlety. He wanted problems solved cleanly, once and for all. Therefore he was very much a lumper. He was so much a lumper that many of our species cards record the species name with an interval between the genus and species name—an interval for the eventual insertion of the species name of which Loveridge was sure the taxon in question could only be a subspecies. (He was very insistent also that subspecies be readily recognizable from museum material. He reportedly gave K. P. Schmidt the chance to sort out unlabelled MCZ specimens into subspecies that K. P. was describing: K. P. flunked. It is known that he gave a similar test to Vanzolini on the subspecies of *Amphisbaena fuliginosa* that Vanzolini passed handsomely. Vanzolini is now not certain that one of his subspecies is valid.)

This fervor for lumping and tidiness sometimes caused disagreements. I was invited into collaboration with him on the Cryptodira of Africa. As he told me, this was partly because I knew turtles, but also because I could read German and translate type descriptions. That the collaboration succeeded is evidenced by a thickish volume, but there were moments of discord. My discussions were too theoretical and too verbose, and my taxonomy too splitting. Loveridge told me that he had lost a year of his scheduled program because of me, and a well-known footnote (softened at the advice of his wife) testifies to our taxonomic disagreement. (It was characteristic of him that this did not impair a good relationship.)

I, and others of my time, knew Loveridge only in the Curator-facet of his life. We knew him after his last field trip. That part of his life had ended.

But more, I think, was gone by then than just the opportunity for year-long field trips. The world had changed. The British Empire was diminished if not extinct. Africa had changed, Harvard had changed. His chosen profession as naturalist-curator was no longer highly regarded at Harvard, or elsewhere. Africa was not the same



Cartoon of Arthur Loveridge from the newspaper *East Africa*.

land in which Salimu, his favorite No. 1 Boy, had chosen to be naturalist-servant to a naturalist-master.

It is notable that he did not choose to go back to Africa upon his retirement. There is a story that his wife chose isolated St. Helena because they had once stopped there on their way to Africa in one of the two months of the year when the climate is pleasant. But surely, even if that were true, the choice involved more than that. Africa was no longer the Africa he had loved.

The man of the later years was not, at least on the surface, the man one would expect to write a book with the title "Many Happy Days I've Squandered." The man seemed sterner and more prim, more *New England*—as though he had acquired the characteristics of the New England breed for whom the verb "to squander" borders on obscenity.

Loveridge's aspect as Demon Curator provoked as much astonishment as appreciation. Romer, the new Director after Barbour, regarded Loveridge with a respect not unmixed with amusement. Their psychologies were nearly antithetical, and Romer's appreciation of Loveridge's value was very incomplete. It is true that Loveridge could not have been quite happy with Barbour's exuberant and insouciant carelessness, but at least Barbour and Loveridge were of one mind about collecting and collections. Romer marked the first of the transitions to another museum style.

The element of fanaticism in Loveridge's neatness quite naturally evoked legends. There is a tale that there was in the Department a drawer labelled "string too short to use." Neatness and routine were at times extreme. Shreve's work counter had to be cleared at 4:30 when he left. Books had to be put back. Loveridge told both Carl Gans and Vanzolini that gaps on the book shelves were to him like teeth that had been knocked out. Even the chairs had to be in correct positions under the counter. I was reprimanded one Monday, when, working over a weekend, I left all three chairs improperly aligned.

Loveridge's fanatic passion for his collection astonished his colleagues; clearly he did not fit too well in the new world at Harvard. But fanatic attention to detail is a good thing in a curator, and certainly the Museum was well served by Loveridge's devotion. The organization of the herpetology collection was his and his alone; the task that confronted him when he first arrived must have been fabulous, and the order he achieved remains an achievement as

great as his African contributions. When I took over the collection, all was in perfect shape. There were few curatorial tasks to do: only the one collection from the Riu-Kiu Islands that had not yet been wholly identified and put away.

Loveridge served in a University Museum, but he was in no sense an academic. He belonged to another generation and another life style—he was pre-eminently a collector-naturalist. It is interesting to put him in context in the succession of herpetological curators at the MCZ. Agassiz must be counted here, but he was clearly unique—a European emigre, professor, builder and acquirer of collections, intellectual parent to whole generations of natural historians in the United States, he is not at all comparable to anyone else.

Of Garman, the next in line, we know too little, not much beyond Barbour's unsympathetic remarks and some plaintive autobiographical notes of his own. Before the MCZ, he apparently had an irregular career; at the MCZ, *fide* Barbour, he remained isolated and apart. Clearly in his day he was useful and respected. He began the MCZ's West Indian interest which Barbour so much cultivated after him.

Barbour had, in contrast, the full academic panoply, a doctoral degree, and, at least late in life, professorial status. For all that, he was throughout his life the Wealthy Amateur, never quite willing to go very deep, never quite serious enough to be professional. He could be pontifical and very disparaging of others, but many of the criticisms could have been turned against him. He had notable protegés—G. K. Noble and E. R. Dunn—and was, within American herpetology, for a while something of a father figure with equal colleagues but no admitted superior.

Loveridge was very different. British always and a Briton of the Empire, he was a man who, without inherited wealth, had chosen, very stubbornly, a poorly remunerative career—the career of Bates and Wallace, the naturalist-collector. He had chosen also a continent. His eyes and his interests turned eastward toward Africa; he was hardly part of American herpetology. For all that in Cambridge he was physically close to his American colleagues, it was hardly different from what it might have been had he been across the sea. If ever he was further west than New York, I have no record or report of it.

In a sense that Barbour was not, Loveridge was a professional. Without interest in theory or in biology beyond field and museum

natural history, he was totally professional in what he did—completely dedicated to competence in that rather narrow area. He never formally taught, and his own formal instruction was limited. In herpetology, like his predecessors (and like myself), he was self-taught. (The new curator at MCZ is the first to have had formal specific instruction in herpetology.) What he chose to be, he was *par excellence*—Curator-Collector-Naturalist.

With Loveridge's departure—and his literal departure from Cambridge for St. Helena came only a few weeks after his formal retirement as Curator—the Department settled into quite another style. I was the first curator to be fully a product of Academia—not only the holder of the conventional degrees, but one who needed them for a living. The world has changed post-Loveridge; the pure naturalist-collector is, when he exists at all, an anachronism.

Arthur and Mary Loveridge's one son, Brian, was schooled at Harvard, and had early gone to England for his career. Apart most of their lives, Brian joined his father on St. Helena and was building a home there near Varney's when his father died. Brian has said of his father that his work was his life. That is an affirmation that is also a tribute, and the tribute that Arthur Loveridge would have most wanted.

In one of the entryways to the MCZ there is a plaque on the wall honoring Alexander Agassiz and with the Latin motto, "Omnia quae hic vides monumentum." The Herpetology Department might very reasonably display a similar motto in Loveridge's honor. The collection's order and style have his imprint. I have added somewhat to that collection, but he provided the solid base.

His taxonomic work is now history; his revisions are now revised. It would disappoint him bitterly that this is true, but his passion for simplicity is now judged to have gone too far. He was concerned in his "Status" paper to learn—certainly with a twinge of heart—which of his species had been synonymized. He would view with dismay, if not distaste, the sibling species that are now commonplace. He would not understand the concerns and disputes of modern taxonomists, nor care to. In this sense time has passed him by, but his own collections and the collections he so diligently curated are his enduring monument.