

## OBITUARIES

### CYRIL JOHN GADD

‘Triplici laude hunc nostrum prosequimur. est primum philologus, qui veterum tabulas cuneatis litteris incisas et interpretari potest sicuti nemo et adcuratissima diligentia transcribere.’<sup>1</sup> Cyril John Gadd, an Assyriologist of international renown, will be remembered at the School of Oriental and African Studies, where he held the Chair of Ancient Semitic Languages and Civilizations from 1955 to 1960, as a distinguished scholar, a kind and gentle colleague, and true friend of staff and students alike.

He died at his place of retirement in Bury St. Edmunds, Suffolk, on Monday, 2 December 1969, only four days after he had received his *Festschrift* at a special meeting convened in the rooms of the British Academy.<sup>2</sup> Though frail at the time he was able to express his thanks to the group of philologists, historians, and archaeologists of ancient Mesopotamia among whom he was the acknowledged doyen.

Gadd was born at Bath, Somerset, on 2 July 1893, the second son of Samuel and Elizabeth Caroline (née Meddick). He inherited his father’s love of music.<sup>3</sup> As a baritone he sang in the choir at Christ Church and was a member of the Bath Operatic Society being interested in amateur theatricals. Until late in life he was a regular attender at the Three Choirs’ Festival in the West Country. From Bathforum Boys’ School he won a scholarship to King Edward VI School, Bath in 1905. Even at an early age he was an avaricious reader with an acute memory which enabled him to produce an apt saying for any occasion. In later years quotations ranged from his beloved Classical authors, Sumerian, Babylonian, Greek, or Latin, to his latest reading, be it Balzac or *Alice in Wonderland*.<sup>4</sup> He was fond of walking and gardening. In all he had a great sense of humour but was rather a shy and lonely person.

In his final year at school and while head boy Gadd was placed first in order of merit in the Oxford Senior examinations of 1913 and was awarded a Dyke Exhibition, an exhibition given by the Delegacy of Local Examinations, and the school leaving Exhibition. These awards enabled him, on the death of his father and brother, to proceed to Brasenose College, Oxford, of which he was Junior (and later Senior) Hulme Exhibitioner. His undergraduate days, in which his basic interest in languages and literatures was both broadened and

<sup>1</sup> The Public Orator in Convocation, Oxford, 28 February 1953.

<sup>2</sup> Published as *Iraq*, xxxi, 1, and xxxi, 2, 1969; ed. M. E. L. Mallowan and D. J. Wiseman, with bibliography of C. J. Gadd on pp. 184–8.

<sup>3</sup> Among the sheet music he treasured was a set of the music of Handel, Haydn, and Mozart inscribed: ‘Presented to Samuel Gadd by the Scholars and Friends of the Baptist Sunday School, Steeple Ashton; as a mark of esteem and respect. June 1876’.

<sup>4</sup> It is not widely known that Gadd was fond of children and is remembered for many kindnesses by several god-children and by the families of colleagues, especially those whose fathers had died in office. His own marriage lasted but briefly and was childless.

deepened by the Oxford Honours School of Literae Humaniores courses, were interrupted by war service in 1915. From the Worcestershire Regiment he was transferred to the Royal Engineers then experimenting with new searchlights in the air defences of the Home Counties. Technical interests then roused were to be revived during archaeological field operations.<sup>5</sup>

On demobilization in 1919 he returned to Oxford to take his degree and began study with Stephen Langdon, Shillito Reader in Assyriology, whose recently published Sumerian grammar and epic of the flood and fall of man had moved Gadd's inquiring mind from matters Cretan to the Sumerians. However, the untimely death in August of that year of L. W. King created a vacancy in the Department of Egyptian and Assyrian Antiquities of the British Museum and Gadd, as an obvious and wise choice, was urged to apply for the Assistantship. He was duly appointed under the Keepership of Sir E. A. Wallis Budge and encouraged to continue his studies in Sumerian. He set to work copying royal inscriptions and hymns and published new information on the early dynasties of Sumer and Akkad in the first of many penetrating historical studies.<sup>6</sup> Meanwhile, with his colleague Sidney Smith he set about the first attempt to catalogue the vast resources of unpublished Babylonian tablets in the Museum collections.<sup>7</sup> In the course of this work he made known a newly discovered Babylonian chronicle relating to the fall of the Assyrian capital Nineveh.<sup>8</sup> The paper he read to the British Academy on 11 July 1923 resulted in wide-spread publicity which caused him some embarrassment. His wit was stirred, however, by the publication in *Punch* of a poem which he used later to relate with high glee. Written because 'Mr. Gadd proved . . . that Nineveh fell in 612 B.C., six years before the date hitherto accepted', it ended:

' But still I counted on the Past,  
Deeming it steady as a rock ;  
History at least, I said, stands fast ;  
And it has been a horrid shock,  
A bitter, bitter blow to me  
To hear this news of Nineveh.

They taught us how in six-o-six  
(B.C.) that godless town fell flat ;  
And now the new-found records fix  
A date anterior to that ;  
It fell, in fact, six-one-two,  
So what they taught us wasn't true.

<sup>5</sup> As reflected in his diaries which go into some detail of the siting of sheerlegs for the mechanical excavation of the well of Aššur-našir-apli II and the building of a field oven for firing tablets at Nimrud in 1952. During his Keepership he brought into use a special laboratory for treating clay tablets.

<sup>6</sup> *Cuneiform texts from Babylonian tablets etc., in the British Museum* (hereafter *CT*), xxxvi, 1921 ; *The early dynasties of Sumer and Akkad*, 1921.

<sup>7</sup> He later introduced the current system of cataloguing and planned the series *Catalogue of the Babylonian tablets in the British Museum*.

<sup>8</sup> *The fall of Nineveh : the newly discovered chronicle no. 21901*, British Museum, 1923.

The gentleman who worked it out,  
 He got it from a slab of clay,  
 And he has seared my soul with doubt  
 To see the old truths pass away ;  
 Such disillusionment (by GADD)  
 Might easily drive a fellow mad'.<sup>9</sup>

The Biblical implications of this find, as indeed of his studies generally, were not a primary interest ; yet, never having studied Hebrew, he was elected a member of the Society for Old Testament Study.<sup>10</sup> In the following year King's College, London, appointed him 'Honorary Lecturer in Sumerian Assyriology' an office which drew no students, since the subject was not then part of any University course.

The year 1923 saw Gadd's participation in a new field of exploration. He was sent by the British Museum as epigraphist to the joint British Museum-University Museum, Philadelphia archaeological expedition undertaking its second season at Ur under Mr. (later Sir) C. Leonard Woolley. His outward journey via Cairo and Jerusalem and thence from Damascus to Baghdad by Nairn convoy he recorded in photograph and writing.<sup>11</sup> The ruin-heaps of southern Iraq he found somewhat dismal for 'to give pleasure ruins must have character'.<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, he entered vigorously into the full and busy life of field-work. 'Today', he wrote of 26 November 1923, 'has produced the foundation-tablet of A-Annipadda son of Mesannipadda, thus triumphantly introducing the first dynasty of Ur (!) and presumably settling the authorship of the bronzes, as well as the nature of the site of Obeid—namely the Temple of Ninursag. Certainly a red-letter day.'<sup>13</sup> A red-letter day it was indeed. It was to be recalled when he received an Honorary Doctorate of Letters from Oxford in 1953.<sup>14</sup> Colleagues and workmen remember how Gadd danced a jig

<sup>9</sup> *Punch*, 18 July 1923, 50, 'On the instability of things' by O. S. (Sir Owen Seaman). Reprinted by permission of *Punch*.

<sup>10</sup> He read a paper on 'The Sumerian after-life' at the Society's Jubilee meeting on 4 January 1950.

<sup>11</sup> His photographic albums and diaries for this journey to Ur (where he was from 2 October 1923 to 14 March 1924), as for subsequent missions on behalf of the British Museum to the Museum of the Ancient East, Istanbul (1933); the 'Atšhanah expedition in 1946; and to Nimrud, Iraq (1952) are now in the British Museum.

<sup>12</sup> C. J. Gadd, *Times*, 19 March 1966, in a leading article on 'Nimrud reveals its treasures' cf. his article on 'Layard at Nineveh', *Times*, 9 November 1945. He was a reviewer for the *Times Literary Supplement*, 1921-37.

<sup>13</sup> Diary, ad. loc. To his mother he wrote 'I've had the luck to find the oldest dated historical document from this land' (letter of 1 December 1923).

<sup>14</sup> The Public Orator in Convocation, Oxford, 28 February 1953: 'et quo putatis eum animo fuisse tum cum in eo loco, quem trium primum nominavi, hortante archaeologo primario, Leonardo Woolley, verba legeret lapidi insculpta quae non modo parietinarum aetatem ostenderent, sed regiae domus annales, rem diu ab historicis agitatam, ad certam temporum rationem perducerent'. Cf. Sir Leonard Woolley, *Ur of the Chaldees*, 1938, 53: 'A workman unearthed before my eyes a small oblong tablet of white limestone bearing an inscription. I handed it to Mr. Gadd, . . . and he read it out . . .'. It 'not only proved the date of the building but cleared up a whole chapter in ancient history'.



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on reading the inscription directly after its emergence from the soil. This day was to set in motion a train of events. Gadd was to become the editor responsible for the series of Ur Excavations Texts of which he himself contributed Vols. I (*Royal inscriptions*, with L. Legrain, 1928) and VI (*Literary and religious texts*, Parts I and II, with S. N. Kramer, 1963, 1966). His bold clear hand in the conventional 'British Museum' style resulted from painstaking work and understanding of the originals which have rarely been faulted.

His account of Ur and its monuments is in the learned and scholarly, sometimes allusive, style which nevertheless made his writings such a delight to read.<sup>15</sup> One reason for this was the ever-growing fascination the arts of the peoples of ancient Mesopotamia had for him. He rapidly became an authority on Sumerian sculpture and seals<sup>16</sup> and this led to his detailed study of the Assyrian bas-reliefs. The history of their discovery and interpretation soon followed in the classic account presented in his book *The stones of Assyria, the surviving remains of Assyrian sculpture, their recovery and original positions*, 1936,<sup>17</sup> which remains to-day as the basic reference work on the subject. The very title shows how steeped he was in the traditions of the early explorers. Great was his delight, as that of his colleagues, when he was persuaded to join the excavations of the British School of Archaeology in Iraq at Nimrud as epigraphist to the 1952 expedition led by Professor (later Sir) Max Mallowan who had been a colleague at Ur. This provided the first and only opportunity he had of seeing that site and Nineveh from which the original sculptures had come.

While at Ur Gadd visited the excavations at Kish and Babylon and found time to study 'Kirkuk' tablets which were brought to him there.<sup>18</sup> With similar texts he later examined in the British Museum this initiated the new field of Nuzi studies. The return journey afforded him a brief glimpse (one of two short visits) of Athens, but to his lasting regret he never visited other parts of Greece. He did not much enjoy the hardships of foreign travel. His other major journey was to rejoin Woolley as epigraphist for the less spectacular and less successful season at Tell 'Atshānah in the Hatay in 1946.<sup>19</sup>

Gadd was an accomplished grammarian and philologist, and his contributions have proved to be advances which have stood the test of time. Significantly his *Sumerian reading book* (1924) became the introduction to the subject in English

<sup>15</sup> *History and monuments of Ur*, 1929. A reviewer of this book must surely have noted the echoes in Gadd's style culled from his favourite Edward Gibbon, *The decline and fall of the Roman Empire*, for he wrote, '... Gadd on men of Ur is likely to be nearer the actual truth than Gibbon and Mommsen on Rome!' (*New Statesman*, 28 September 1929).

<sup>16</sup> 'Early Sumerian sculpture', *BMQ*, I, 2, 1926, 38-40; articles on cylinder seals in *BMQ*, III, 2, 1928, 39-40, v, 3, 1930, 97-8; and especially his 'Seals of ancient Indian style found at Ur', *Proc. British Academy*, XVIII, 1932, 191-210.

<sup>17</sup> Also *The Assyrian sculptures*, 1934; *Assyrian sculptures in the British Museum, from Shalmaneser III to Sennacherib*, 1938.

<sup>18</sup> 'Tablets from Kirkuk', *RA*, XXIII, 1926, 49-161.

<sup>19</sup> His diary shows that for him the highlight of his stay there was the pipe-playing of the local shepherds.

used by many distinguished students, though he himself constantly regretted the lack of an appropriate and updated successor to it. For ten years he threw himself into the massive task of publishing texts from the Museum's renowned collections. His first chosen group was the Babylonian omen series *šumma ālu*.<sup>20</sup> For these and similar public omina, especially haruspices, he had a distinct feeling with his leanings towards esoteric learning. It was well that he spent these years thus, for an arthritic hand made the work of copyist an ever increasingly laborious task.

The 1939–45 war caused little interruption to his academic energies, though his scientific work had often to make way for his share in the task of protecting, evacuating, and later restoring to their Bloomsbury home, the Department's antiquities. The Assyrian reliefs rested in the Aldwych tube tunnel alongside Queen Mary's china, the rest of the collection was moved under his tutelage to the Braughton Quarry, near Bradford-on-Avon (February 1942 to December 1946). This temporary resting-place will long be noted by the cuneiform inscription he devised and had inscribed there to mark the event. Between fire-watching and similar duties Gadd continued to work on recently discovered texts from Chagar Bazar and Brak which he published in *Iraq*, the journal of the British School of Archaeology in Iraq, of which he was editor from 1941 to 1948.<sup>21</sup> He was a member of the Council, and later of the Executive Committee, of the School from soon after its inception in 1932 until his death.<sup>22</sup>

Gadd, a meticulous and careful author himself, agreed, though often with understandable reluctance, to divert his talents to editorial work at various phases of his career.<sup>23</sup> He spent many months rescuing the valuable ideas of his late friend Reginald Campbell Thompson found scattered among the rough notes of his *Nachlass*, turning them into a useful reference work on Assyrian botany.<sup>24</sup> When the renewed attempt was made to revise the first two volumes of the 'Cambridge Ancient History' he was the obvious choice as an editor. This work was the primary occupation of his last ten years. He gave of his time, thought, and advice unstintingly to each contributor in the manner familiar to the many who ever approached him. He was a man who had no enemies and never spoke an unjust word of anyone. Though always showing the humility of the true scholar and critical of his own work, his desire to avoid public criticism of others sometimes meant that he did not like to reject outright some work or idea submitted to him whether by colleagues or students.

<sup>20</sup> *CT*, xxxviii, 1925; xxxix, 1926; xl, 1927; xli, 1931. He had as his first task to check and revise for publication in 1920 a volume of lexical and historical texts (*CT*, xxxv) copied by A. W. A. Leeper.

<sup>21</sup> 'Tablets from Chagar Bazar and Tall Brak, 1937–38', *Iraq*, vii, 1, 1940, 22–66. Despite wartime restrictions Gadd saw to press two supplements in 1943 and 1944; regular publication was renewed in 1946.

<sup>22</sup> He also served on the Council of Management of the British Institute of Archaeology at Ankara, 1950–65.

<sup>23</sup> e.g. H. R. Hall, *Ancient history of the Near East*, eighth ed., 1932, revised by C. J. G.

<sup>24</sup> *A dictionary of Assyrian botany*, British Academy, 1949.

He thus often took upon himself the burden of checking detail or answering questions however ill-founded; work which he characteristically termed 'not letting the right hand know what the left hand doeth'.

Gadd was perhaps at his best—and that was a veritable *summum bonum*—as a philosopher. For the Schweich Lectures in 1945, five years after the British Academy had elected him a Fellow, he took as his subject 'Ideas of divine rule in the ancient East'. These lectures, like his inaugural lecture in the University of London,<sup>25</sup> well exemplified his experience, erudition, and wide range of knowledge. He never paraded his learning and the Sumerian description of scholarship fitted this *ummānu rabū* well. 'The scribal art is the mother of speakers, the father of scholars.'

Professor Gadd was a reluctant administrator. By 1955 he had completed 37 years of service to the Trustees of the British Museum and plans for the division of his old Department there (of which he was Deputy Keeper from 1938 and Keeper from 1948) into the new Departments of Egyptian and of Western Asiatic Antiquities were well in hand. He then looked forward to further opportunities for his own researches and was persuaded to apply for appointment to the Chair vacated by the retirement of his former Museum colleague Professor Sidney Smith at the School of Oriental and African Studies. He became Acting Head of the Department of the Languages and Cultures of the Near and Middle East (October 1955–January 1958), and the conscientious performance of these duties limited the time available for his work on Akkadian texts. Nevertheless, the publication of the inscriptions of Nabonidus, found by his colleague Dr. Storm Rice at Harran, proved an exciting step forward in our knowledge of later Chaldaean history and religion.<sup>26</sup> In all his dealings Gadd's humility, integrity, sincerity and quiet resolution coupled with his sense of humour won him the respect of all.

He had been made a Commander of the Order of the British Empire in 1955, and Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of London in 1928. His retirement in 1960 was marked by his election to an Honorary Fellowship of the School. In the following year the University designated him Emeritus Professor of Ancient Semitic Languages and Civilizations. He was elected Honorary Fellow of Brasenose College, Oxford, in 1952. Great was his delight at the honour conferred on him by the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres when he was made a Corresponding Member on 6 June 1968.<sup>27</sup> He had been an honorary member of the Société Asiatique de Paris since 1932. It was appropriate that his last published article appeared in the *Revue d'Assyriologie* for he had been a particular supporter of the Groupe Thureau-Dangin and

<sup>25</sup> *Teachers and students in the oldest schools* (inaugural lecture, School of Oriental and African Studies, 6 March 1956).

<sup>26</sup> 'The Harran inscriptions of Nabonidus', *Anatolian Studies*, VIII, 1958, 35–92.

<sup>27</sup> Among notable addresses he delivered in French was one at the centenary of the foundation of the Département assyrien du Musée du Louvre, Paris, in June 1947 as representative of the Trustees of the British Museum. He gave two public lectures at the Université de Genève in 1954.

participated as often as possible in the *Rencontres Assyriologiques Internationales*.<sup>28</sup>

It is fitting to end this tribute to our colleague with the words of the poet Bacchylides, as did the Proem to the volume handed to him just before his passing from us.

. . . τὸ μὲν κάλλιστον, ἐσθλὸν  
ἄνδρα πολλῶν ὑπ' ἀνθρώπων πολυζήλωτον εἶμεν.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> He was chairman of the Committee responsible for the twelfth *Rencontre* held at the School, 1–4 July 1963.

<sup>29</sup> Bacchylides, ninth victory ode ('The noblest lot for a man is that his worth should make him widely admired among his fellows').