

MINERALOGICAL MAGAZINE

VOLUME 39 NUMBER 301 MARCH 1973

Arthur William Gerald Kingsbury (1906–1968)

MINERALOGY is a thoroughly heterogeneous subject, and there are large areas of it that may more properly be regarded as art than science because they are not amenable to precise instrumental measurement in the laboratory. As the detailed study of mineral species grows yearly more complex, it becomes increasingly apparent that the nuances of specimens cannot yet be tabulated and may only be tapped from the memory of a skilled and experienced observer.

Arthur Kingsbury, who died after a brief illness on 3 August 1968, was the most able and gifted mineralogical 'artist' of his generation. Born at East Meon, Hampshire, on 27 June 1906, he received a classical education, and after qualifying as a solicitor (at his family's insistence) practised rather unhappily for ten years from 1929, first at Sherborne and later at Crewkerne, Somerset. The move from London to the West Country, however, had its happy side for he had become interested in mineralogy as a hobby in 1927; collecting specimens in the field became much easier with the Mendip Hills close at hand and Cornwall and Devon readily available for a weekend visit. Encouraged first by Dr. J. Newton Friend, and later by Dr. L. J. Spencer who had himself studied the minerals of the area, Kingsbury began a painstakingly systematic survey of the Mendips (some 300 square miles). Interesting mineral localities are few for such an area, but he was patient and published his results in 1941. During this period he met Mr. (later Sir) Arthur Russell, with whom he maintained a firm friendship until the latter's death in 1964. Hopes of getting a job at the British Museum (Natural History) were dashed by the war, which he spent running a precision engineering works at Slough. In 1947, by way of a recommendation from Russell, he was appointed research assistant to the Reader in Mineralogy at Oxford and remained in this post until his death. He published some 30 papers, mainly in the *Mineralogical Magazine* and on minerals from localities in Cornwall, Devon, and the Lake District, and his work was recognized by the award of the Bolitho Medal of the Royal Geological Society of Cornwall in 1957, the Fellowship of the Mineralogical Society of America in 1960, and an M.A. by decree of Oxford University shortly before he died. He was a member of this Society from 1938, and served as a Member of Council 1960–3.

No 'British Mineralogy' has been published since R. P. Greg and W. G. Lettsom's classic work of 1858, and Kingsbury's hopes of producing a revised version—like those of Dr. Spencer and Sir Arthur Russell before him—were never realized. All three, however, left much unpublished material in the form of manuscript notes, annotated maps, and comments on the labels of specimens. Kingsbury was a frequent and

welcome visitor to the Mineral Department of the Natural History Museum for many years, and through the kindness of Professor E. A. Vincent spent a few days weekly in his last year carefully examining specimens in the Russell Collection and relevant material in the National Collections. I never tire of repeating the lesson that I learned from Arthur Kingsbury almost from the first time that we met in 1947: there is no way of being absolutely certain of the locality from which a specimen came if this is missing from the label—nearly everything else can be determined by instrumental examination. The locality problem crops up again and again in specimen mineralogy, and is the curator's bane; not only are there cases where locality information is missing, frequently in poorly preserved collections, but all too often the labelling is wrong. The reasons for the latter range from deceit, where a collector wishes to conceal the true locality from others or to enhance the value of the specimen, through to carelessness and ignorance, and to my lasting regret I shall never be in the same league as Arthur Kingsbury in the ability to spot discrepancies. His compendious knowledge of minerals, their variations in habit, colour, and association—for all of which he had an uncanny accuracy of visual memory—and their known locations, was gained by tireless study of specimens, the literature, and as many localities as he was able to visit. All this, and an eagle eye, enabled him to add more than fifty species to the list of those known from the British Isles, a remarkable achievement considering the skill and diligence of many of his predecessors. The mineral arthurite, from Hingston Down, Cornwall, was named jointly for Arthur Kingsbury and Sir Arthur Russell (*Min. Mag.* 33, 937).

Arthur Kingsbury's infectious enthusiasm, not only for minerals but for anything else he set his mind to, will be long remembered by his many friends and colleagues. A keen photographer and ornithologist, particularly in his younger days, he was also an able performer on the guitar, as many who accompanied him on field excursions will remember. Later, as his discerning palate improved after he gave up smoking, he became known in Oxford circles as a connoisseur of wines and was able to improve the cellars of Wolfson College, of which he was a senior member.

He is survived by his wife Philippa, whom he married in 1941, and their son and daughter. Thanks to them, the British Museum (Natural History) has been able to acquire his records and mineral collection in addition to the many specimens he freely gave during his lifetime. Most of the specimens he had collected himself, including very many boxes of material from old mines and dumps that are no longer accessible or extant, but a considerable number were from other collections that he acquired or that were in the possession of his own and his wife's families. He did not retain the foreign specimens from these collections, which are: a collection formed by his great-grandfather Thomas Kingsbury (1777–1854) and his grandfather William Joseph Kingsbury (1825–1904); a collection formed by the Misses M. A. and L. Haycock, patients of his maternal grandfather Robert Lake; a collection formed by his wife's maternal grandfather the first Lord Shuttleworth, of Gawthorpe Hall, Lancashire, containing well documented specimens some of which came from the Baroness Burdett-Coutts (1814–1906) [other Burdett-Coutts specimens are in the Russell Collection]; specimens acquired in 1944 from Mr. W. R. Storr, formerly of Bristol, some of which were from the collections of W. Semmons (an employee at Tincroft and

Carn Brea mines, Cornwall) and of Thomas Warburton of Highbury, London; an old collection of unknown origin bought from an antique shop at Hook, Hampshire, by his brother-in-law Mr. John Grey Murray.

An obituary notice appeared in *The Times* on 8th August, 1968, and another memorial notice (with portrait and complete bibliography) is scheduled to appear in the *American Mineralogist*, nos. 3/4 (March–April) 1973.

P. G. EMBREY