

Legacy of adventurer's global trips to go under the hammer



ADVENTURER: Tiger Sarll, pictured outside his Bradwell-on-Sea cottage in 1969 by nephew Geoff, travelled across the globe

CASKET: Relic of ancient Egypt set to be auctioned

By Peter Walker
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THE legacy of an eccentric adventurer from Bradwell-on-Sea will live on next week as his prized 3,000-year-old Egyptian sarcophagus is auctioned off.

Captain Tiger Sarll, who travelled the world as a soldier, hunter, journalist, cameraman, animal-catcher, firefighter and circus owner, died aged 94 in 1977.

Yet only last month his granddaughter decided to sell the prized casket as she renovates his former 14th century Dengie cottage. Bidding for the coffin lid will start at about £3,000 at Willingham Auctions in Cambridge next Saturday.

"It's jaw-dropping," said auctioneer Stephen Drake, who was called to examine and remove the tomb.

Restored

"I went to the call and I found that the cottage was being restored, and because they were closing the ceiling up, the only way into the room was a big hole in the wall they had knocked out. I climbed through and there it was, leaning up against a clock, covered in dust and cobwebs. We then brought it through the hole in the way, out of the cottage, and into the van."



INTACT: The coffin lid, expected to fetch thousands at the auction

The artefact is believed to date to 700BC when Egyptian 25th dynasty king Pharaoh Shebitku was on the throne.

"It's certainly not a common find," said Chelmsford Museum manager Nicholas Wickenden.

"But I think it's still unclear in this case how this one got to be where it was."

Tiger was born in London in 1882 and was christened Thomas Henry William Bang-fee Sarll – the Bang-fee being included courtesy of a Chinese family friend.

He trained as a doctor but enlisted with the South African Light Horse regiment in the Boer War in 1899, where he was wounded and lost vision in his left eye.

Nonetheless, he became a big game hunter, despite being a life-long vegetarian, and even made his way back into the armed forces with the Royal Canadian Dragoons.

He next dabbled in acting, journalism in Morocco and as a cameraman, working for Pathé in the Balkan War. He was sacked by the film company for not getting a single frame of good footage, reportedly wasting the company £600, but was still recruited to film scenes in Belgium by early firm pioneer James Williamson during the First World War.

After the conflict he returned to Morocco to report on the anti-Spanish rebellion, journeyed to Mexico to capture pythons and alligators for zoos, and upon moving back to England, started up a circus act.

Firefighter

Soon after working as a firefighter during the Second World War he settled with his partner Edith, thought to be his seventh wife, in the Grade II listed cottage in Caidge Row, Bradwell-on-Sea.

The aging building was also a former nunnery, and the couple claimed its bedroom doors had been built deliberately narrow to stop chubby monks walking in.

In the library, Tiger kept his hoard of collectibles, including a Japanese idol which was apparently "at war" spiritually with the sarcophagus.

Tiger gave the idol to a friend, who experienced further spooky goings on, before dumping it in a railway station deposit box.

Speaking to the Chronicle from California, his nephew Geoff Spenceley said he was saddened to hear the heirloom was being sold – which he thinks once held a mummy inside.

"I'm surprised they are auctioning it because it should stay

JAW-DROPPING: Stephen Drake will auction off the prize find in Cambridge on Saturday next week



INTREPID: Tiger Sarll was a cameraman for Pathé News

in the family," said Geoff. The 92-year-old believes his "fantastic" Uncle Willy inherited the tomb.

He said: "He was an adventurer. I remember he would call up at our house a lot of the time on the biggest bike ever and bring a mandolin or a banjo.

"He was my idol. I remember he had to sleep in my room in the same bed when he visited and one night he got up with cramp – I couldn't believe my hero could get leg cramps."

Tiger, who was 6ft 4ins tall and wore a distinctive monocle, shocked Bradwell-on-Sea villagers when in 1959 he appeared on BBC show This is Your Life.

He provoked a chorus of confused laughter when, as his grown-up family walked on stage, he asked: "You're not one of mine, are you? Which one are you?"

Southminster resident and district councillor Brian Beale MBE said: "Everyone was in awe of what they found out about him on that programme.

"He had an extraordinary life. I only knew him from walking around the village and he had such an aura around him, a massively imposing person."

Fantastic

British author Godfrey Lias wrote a book about Capt Sarll in 1961, entitled Adventurer Extraordinary: The Tiger Sarll Story.

Maldon historian and town mayor Stephen Nunn said: "It's a fantastic story.

"Bradwell-on-Sea has got a fantastic history that goes right back to the Roman period but who would have thought that something from ancient Egypt would have turned up there, it's right out of the Raiders Of The Lost Ark.

"What a wonderful collection this man must have had."

Tiger's wife Edith, significantly younger than he was, died in 2005 and his granddaughter Dawn owns the cottage.



OBSESSION: The 1922 discovery drew worldwide interest

KING TUT A BIGGER FIND

While the news of Tiger Sarll's sarcophagus has excited both local and national media, the discovery doesn't come close to one made more than 90 years ago.

King Tutankhamun's tomb and the remains of his body were found in remarkable condition in November 1922 by Howard Carter in the Valley of the Kings.

The discovery sparked a worldwide obsession with Egyptian history.

King Tut's remains can still be found in the Valley of the Kings



RESTING PLACE: The tomb of King Tutankhamun and in the tomb site known as KV62.

His burial piece is in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo.

TOP FINDS IN ESSEX

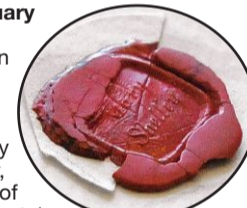
■ **1980s:** A child finds what he thinks is a brass button in his Burnham garden. Upon closer inspection by experts and Maldon historian Stephen Nunn however, it is identified as a 3,000-year-old Iron Age solid gold coin

■ **1999:** A Bronze Age women's brooch is found under Bradwell-on-Sea land

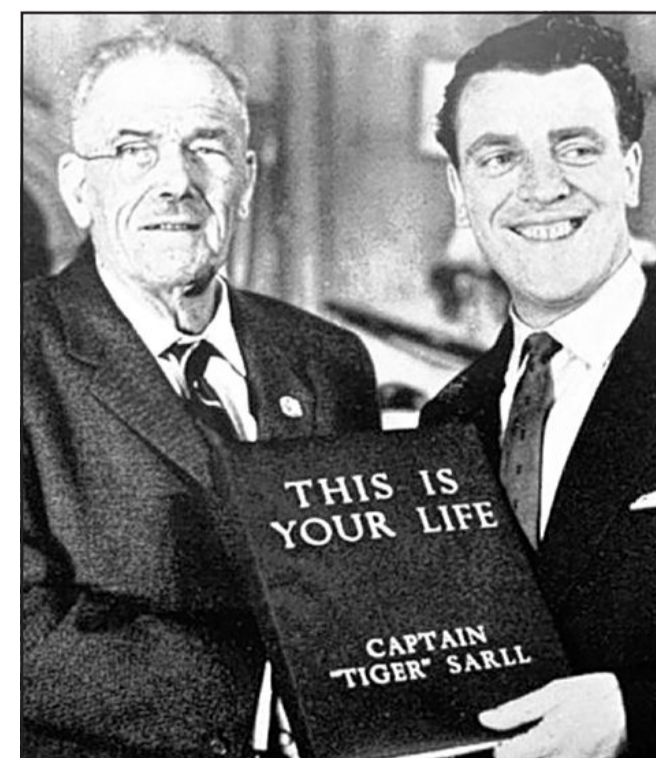
■ **Circa 2008:** Maldon Archaeological and Historical Group find stone hands holding a stone heart in the grounds of Beeleigh Abbey near Maldon. It proved to be the remains of a shrine to St Roger of Beeleigh which would have been smashed up during the 1536 dissolution of monasteries.

■ **2009:** Amateur archaeologists Heritage Writtle find 2,000-year-old Bronze Age coins at their top-secret excavation site.

■ **January 2014:** Thirteen private letters written by Mary Shelley, author of Frankenstein, are found by Anglia Ruskin professor Nora Cook in Essex Record Office archives



THE LIFE AND TIMES OF TIGER SARLL



IMPOSING: Tiger Sarll shocked Bradwell-on-Sea villagers when he appeared on This is Your Life in 1959 with presenter Eamonn Andrews

■ **1882:** Born in London and christened Thomas Henry William Bang-fee Sarll

■ **1899:** Enlists with the South African Light Horse regiment in the Anglo-Boer War where he is wounded and loses sight in his left eye

■ **1900+:** Joins Royal Canadian Dragoons and travels to Argentina and Mexico

■ **1907:** Travels to Morocco as a cameraman

■ **1912:** Travels as a cameraman to the Balkan War and reportedly got no useable footage for Pathé News and was sacked

■ **1913:** Films the derby at Epsom racecourse where suffragette Emily Davidson jumps in front of the King's horse Amner and is killed

■ **1914:** Films footage at the First World War in Belgium

■ **1918+:** Reports on rebellion against the Spanish in Morocco, catches pythons and alligators in Mexico for zoos and returns to England to start a circus act

■ **1939+:** Works as a firefighter

■ **1940s:** Moves to Bradwell-on-Sea


■ **1959:** Appears on TV show This is Your Life with Eamonn Andrews

■ **1977:** Dies aged 94

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