

Louis Leakey

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Louis Leakey examining skulls from Olduvai Gorge 7 August 1903

Born	Kabete, British East Africa (modern-day Kenya)
Died	1 October 1972 (aged 69) London, United Kingdom
Citizenship	Kenyan, British
Nationality	British
Fields	Archaeology, Paleoanthropology, Paleontology
Known for	Pioneering the study of human evolution, human evolutionary development in Africa
Spouse	Mary Leakey



Map of Kenya.

Louis Seymour Bazett Leakey (L.S.B. Leakey) (7 August 1903 – 1 October 1972) was a British archaeologist and naturalist whose work was important in establishing human evolutionary development in Africa, particularly through his discoveries in the Olduvai Gorge. He also played a major role in creating organizations for future research in Africa and for protecting wildlife there. Having been a prime mover in establishing a tradition of palaeoanthropological inquiry, he was able to motivate the next generation to

continue it, notably within his own family, many of whom also became prominent. Leakey participated in national events of British East Africa and Kenya during the 1950s.

In natural philosophy he asserted Charles Darwin's theory of evolution unswervingly and set about to prove Darwin's hypothesis that humans arose in Africa. Leakey was also a devout Christian.

Background

"When I think back ... of the serval cat and a baboon that I had as pets in my childhood days – and that eventually I had to house in large cages – it makes me sad. It makes me sadder still, however, and also very angry, when I think of the innumerable adult animals and birds deliberately caught and locked up for the so-called 'pleasure' and 'education' of thoughtless human beings. ... surely there are today so many first-class films ... that the cruelty of keeping wild creatures in zoos should no longer be tolerated."

From L.S.B. Leakey, *By the Evidence*, Chapter 4.

Louis' parents, Harry and Mary Bazett Leakey (called May by her friends), were British missionaries of the Christian faith in then British East Africa, now Kenya. Harry had taken a previously established post of the Church Mission Society among the Kikuyu at Kabete. The station was at that time a hut and two tents in the highlands north of Nairobi. Louis' earliest home had an earthen floor, a leaky thatched roof, rodents and insects, and no heating system except for charcoal braziers. The facilities improved but slowly. The mission, a center of activity, set up a clinic in one of the tents, and later a girl's school for African women. Harry was working on a translation of the Bible into a Kenyan language, Kikuyu.

Louis had a younger brother, Douglas, and two older sisters, Gladys Leakey Beecher and Julia Leakey Barham. Louis' primary family came to contain also Miss Oakes (a governess) Miss Higgenbotham (another missionary), and Mariamu (a Kikuyu nurse). Unsurprisingly, Louis grew up, played, and learned to hunt with Africans. He also learned to walk with the distinctive gait of the Kikuyu and speak their language fluently, as did his siblings. He was initiated into the Kikuyu ethnic group, an event of which he never spoke, as he was sworn to secrecy.

Louis requested and was given permission to build and move into a hut, Kikuyu style, at the end of the garden. It was home to his personal collection of natural objects, such as birds' eggs and skulls. All the children developed a keen interest in and appreciation of the pristine natural surroundings in which they found themselves. They raised baby animals, later turning them over to zoos. Louis read a gift book, *Days Before History*, by H. R. Hall (1907), a juvenile fictional work illustrating the prehistory of Britain. He began to collect tools and was further encouraged in this activity by a role model, Arthur Loveridge, first curator (1914) of the Natural History Museum in Nairobi, predecessor of the Coryndon Museum. This interest may have predisposed him toward a career in archaeology.

Neither Harry nor May were of strong constitution. From 1904-1906 the entire family lived at May's mother's house in Reading, Berkshire, England, while Harry recovered from neurasthenia, and again in 1911-1913, while May recovered from general frailty and exhaustion. During the latter stay, Harry bought a house in Boscombe.

The formative years

His father's example

In Britain the Leakey children attended elementary school; in Africa they had a tutor, Miss Laing. They sat out World War I in Africa. When the sea lanes opened again, they returned to Boscombe, where Louis was sent to Weymouth College, a private boy's school in 1919 at age 16. In three years there he did not do well, and complained of rules he considered an infringement on his freedom and hazing by the other boys. Advised by one teacher to seek employment in a bank, he appealed to his English teacher, Mr. Tunstall, who started him in the application process to Cambridge. His excellent scores on the entrance exams won him a scholarship.

Louis matriculated at his father's alma mater, Cambridge University, in 1922, intent on becoming a missionary to British East Africa.

For the rest of his life he would dine out on the story of his finals. When he had arrived in Britain he had notified the register of people with a knowledge of rare languages that he was fluent in Swahili. When he came to his finals he asked to be examined in this and after some hesitation the authorities agreed. Then one day he received two letters. One instructed him to report at a certain time and place for a viva voce examination in Swahili. The other asked if, at the same time and place, he would examine a candidate in Swahili.

His son says:

"Louis was in his early twenties when he decided to pursue a fossil-hunting career. Until then, he had intended to follow his father's example and be a Christian missionary in Kenya."

He preached Christian zeal to his fellow students and otherwise impressed Cambridge society with behavior that was considered eccentric. He was also an evolutionist and befriended some future naturalists. In 1923 his usual zeal led him into a severe concussion in a game of Rugby union. He was relieved of his academic duties. Rest and the outdoors were prescribed.

Diversion from missionary work

In that year a position became available that pushed all thought of rest into the background. In 1922 the British had been awarded German East Africa as part of the settlement of World War I, subsequently applying the name Tanganyika. Within its territory the Germans had discovered a site rich in dinosaur fossils, Tendaguru. Louis was told by C. W. Hobley, a friend of the family, that the British Museum of Natural History was going to send a fossil-hunting expedition to it. Louis applied and was hired to locate the site and manage the administrative details. In 1924 the party under William E. Cutler departed for Africa. They never found a complete dinosaur skeleton. Louis was recalled from the site by Cambridge in 1925, while Cutler contracted blackwater fever and died nine months later.

This critical experience changed Louis' career decision. Switching courses to anthropology, he found a new mentor in Alfred Cort Haddon, head of the department. In 1926 he graduated with a "double first", or high honours, in anthropology and archaeology. He had used some of his preexisting qualifications; for example, Kikuyu was offered and accepted as the second modern language in which he was required to be proficient, even though no one there could test him on it. The university accepted an affidavit from a Kikuyu chief signed with a thumbprint.

From 1925 on Louis lectured and wrote on African archaeological and palaeontological topics. On graduation he was such a respected figure that Cambridge sent him to East Africa to study prehistoric African humans. He excavated dozens of sites, undertaking for the first time a systematic study of the artifacts. Some of his culture names are still in use; for example, Elmenteitan.

Research fellow



St. John's College, Cambridge.

In 1927 Louis received a visit at a site called Gamble's Cave, near Lake Elmenteita, by two young ladies on a holiday, one of whom was Henrietta Wilfreda "Frida" Avern.^[10] She had done some course work in archaeology. Louis and she talked the entire night. They continued the relationship on his return to Cambridge and in 1928 they were married and set off together for Elmenteita. At that time he discovered the Acheulean site of Kariandusi, which he excavated in 1928, after collecting a team of interested associates.

On the strength of his work there he obtained a research fellowship at St. John's College and returned to Cambridge in 1929 to do post-graduate work and to classify and prepare the finds from Elmenteita. His patron and mentor at Cambridge was now Arthur Keith. While cleaning two skeletons he had found he noticed a similarity to one found in Olduvai Gorge by Professor Hans Reck, a German national, whom Louis had met in 1925 in Germany while on business for Keith.



Olduvai Gorge.

The geology of Olduvai was known. In 1913 Reck had extricated a skeleton from Bed II in the gorge wall. He argued that it must have the date of the bed, which was believed to be 600,000 years, in the mid-Pleistocene. The public was not ready for this news. Humans must have evolved or have been created long after then, was the general belief. Reck became involved in a media uproar. He was barred from going back to settle the question by the war and then the terms of the transfer of Tanganyika from Germany to Britain. In 1929 Louis visited Berlin to talk to the now skeptical Reck. Noting an Acheulean tool in Reck's collection of artifacts from Olduvai, he bet Reck he could find ancient stone tools at Olduvai within 24 hours.

Meanwhile Frida worked on illustrations for *The Stone Age Culture of Kenya Colony*. Louis was given the PhD in 1930 at age 27. His first child, a daughter, Priscilla Muthoni Leakey, was born in 1931. His headaches and epilepsy returned in the excitement and he was prescribed Luminal, which he took the rest of his life.

Reversals of fortune

The Defense of Reck

In November, 1931, Louis led an expedition to Olduvai, including Reck, whom he allowed to enter the gorge first. Louis did find Acheulean tools within the first 24 hours, costing Reck ten pounds on the bet. They verified the provenance of the 1913 find, now Olduvai Man. Non-humanoid fossils and tools were extracted from the ground in large numbers. Frida delayed joining him and was less enthusiastic about him

on behalf of Priscilla. She did arrive eventually, however, and Louis put her to work. Frida's site became FLK, for Frida Leakey's karongo ("gully").

Back in Cambridge, the skeptics were not impressed. To find supporting evidence of the antiquity of Reck's Olduvai Man, Louis returned to Africa, excavating at Kanam and Kanjera. He easily found more fossils, which he named *Homo kanamensis*. While he was gone, the opposition worked up some "evidence" of the intrusion of Olduvai Man into an earlier layer, evidence that seemed convincing at the time, but is missing and unverifiable now. On his return Louis' finds were carefully examined by a committee of 26 scientists and were tentatively accepted as valid.

Scandal

With Frida's dowry money, the Leakeys bought a large brick house in Girton near Cambridge, which they named "the Close." She suffered from morning sickness most of the time and was unable to work on the illustrations for Louis' second book, *Adam's Ancestors*. At a dinner party given in his honor after a lecture of his at the Royal Anthropological Institute, Gertrude Caton-Thompson introduced him to her own illustrator, the twenty-year-old Mary Nicol.

Louis convinced Mary to take on the illustration of his book. A few months later companionship turned to romance. Colin Leakey was born in December, 1933, and in January, 1934, Louis asked Frida for a divorce. She would not sue for divorce until 1936.

A panel at Cambridge investigated his morals. Grants dried up, but his mother raised enough money for another expedition to Olduvai, Kanam and Kanjera, the latter two on the Winam Gulf. His previous work there was questioned by P. G. H. Boswell, whom he invited to verify the sites for himself. Arriving at Kanam and Kanjera in 1935, they found that the iron markers Louis had used to mark the sites had been removed by the Luo tribe for use as harpoons and the sites could not now be located. To make matters worse, all the photos Louis took were ruined by a light leak in the camera. After an irritating and fruitless two-month search, Boswell left for England, promising, as Louis understood it, not to publish a word until Louis returned.

Boswell immediately set out to publish as many words as he was able, beginning with an article in *Nature* dated 9 March 1935, destroying Reck's and Louis' dates of the fossils and questioning Louis' competence. Louis on his return accused Boswell of treachery, but Boswell now had public opinion on his side. Louis was not only forced to retract the accusation but also to recant his support of Reck. Louis was through at Cambridge. Even his mentors turned on him.

On the road in Africa

Meeting Mary in Africa, he proceeded to Olduvai with a small party. Mary joined him under a stigma but her skill and competence eventually won over the other participants. Louis' parents continued to urge him to return to Frida, and would pay for everyone in the party but Mary. Louis and his associates did the groundwork for future excavation at Olduvai, uncovering dozens of sites for a broad sampling, as was his method. They were named after the excavator: SHK (Sam Howard's karongo), BK (Peter Bell's), SWK (Sam White's), MNK (Mary Nicol's). Louis and Mary conducted a temporary clinic for the Maasai, made preliminary investigations of Laetoli, and ended by studying the rock paintings at the Kisese/Cheke region.

The Village of Nasty

Louis and Mary returned to England in 1935 without positions or any place to stay except Mary's mother's apartment. They soon leased Steen Cottage in Great Munden and lived without heat, electricity, or plumbing, fetching water from a well, huddling before a fireplace and writing by oil lantern. They lived happily in poverty for eighteen months at this low point of their fortunes, visited at first only by Mary's relatives. Louis gardened for subsistence and exercise and improved the house and grounds. He appealed at last to the Royal Society, who relented with a small grant to continue work on his collection.

In British East Africa

The Return of the Native Son

Louis had already involved himself in Kikuyu tribal affairs in 1928, taking a stand against female genital cutting. He got into a shouting match in Kikuyu one evening with Jomo Kenyatta, who was lecturing on the topic. R. Copeland at Oxford recommended he apply to the Rhodes Trust for a grant to write a study of the Kikuyu and it was given late in 1936 along with a salary for two years. In January 1937 the Leakeys shook the dust off their feet and travelled to Kenya. Colin would not see his father for 20 years.

Louis returned to Kiambaa near Nairobi and persuaded Senior Chief Koinange, who designated a committee of chiefs, to help him describe the Kikuyu the way they had been. Mary excavated at Waterfall Cave. She fell ill with double pneumonia and lay at death's door for two weeks in the hospital in Nairobi, during which time her mother was sent for. Contrary to expectation she recovered and began another excavation at Hyrax Hill and then Ngoro River Cave. Louis got an extension of his grant, which he used partially for fossil-hunting. Leakey discoveries began to appear in the newspapers again.

Tensions between the Kikuyu and the settlers increased alarmingly. Louis jumped into the fray as an exponent of the middle ground. In *Kenya: Contrasts and Problems*, he angered the settlers by proclaiming Kenya could never be a "white man's country."

The fossil police

The government offered Louis work as a policeman in intelligence, which he could not afford to refuse. He traveled the country as a pedlar, reporting on the talk. When Britain went to war in September, 1939, the Kenyan government drafted Louis into its African intelligence service. Apart from some bumbling around, during which he and some settlers stalked each other as possible saboteurs of the Sagana Railway Bridge, his first task was to supply and arm Ethiopian guerrillas against the Italian invaders of their country. He created a clandestine network using his childhood friends among the Kikuyu. They also hunted fossils on the sly.

Louis conducted interrogations, analyzed handwriting, wrote radio broadcasts and took on regular police investigations. He loved a good mystery of any sort. The white leadership of the King's African Rifles used him extensively to clear up many cultural mysteries; for example, he helped an officer remove a curse he had inadvertently put on his men.

Mary continued to find and excavate sites. Jonathan Leakey was born in 1940. She worked in the Coryndon Memorial Museum (later called the National Museums of Kenya) where Louis joined her as an unpaid honorary curator in 1941. Their life was a menage of police work and archaeology. They investigated Rusinga Island and Olorgesailie. At the latter site they were assisted by a team of Italian experts recruited from the prisoners of war and paroled for the purpose.

In 1942 the Italian menace ended, but the Japanese began to reconnoiter with a view toward landing in force. Louis found himself in counter-intelligence work, which he performed with zest and imagination. Deborah was born, but died at three months. They lived in a rundown and bug infested Nairobi home, provided by the museum. Jonathan was attacked by army ants in his crib.

The turn of the tide

In 1944 Richard Leakey was born. In 1945 the family's income from police work all but vanished. By now Louis was getting plenty of job offers but he chose to stay on in Kenya as Curator of the Coryndon Museum, with an annual salary and a house, but more importantly, to continue palaeoanthropological research.

In January, 1947, Louis conducted the first Pan-African Congress of Prehistory at Nairobi. Sixty scientists from 26 countries attended, delivering papers and visiting the Leakey sites. The conference restored Louis to the scientific fold and made him a major figure in it. With the money that now poured in Louis undertook the famous expeditions of 1948 and beyond at Rusinga Island in Lake Victoria, where Mary discovered the most complete Proconsul fossil up to that time.

Charles Boise donated money for a boat to be used for transport on Lake Victoria, *The Miocene Lady*. Its skipper, Hassan Salimu, was later to deliver Jane Goodall to Gombe. Philip Leakey was born in 1949. In 1950, Louis was awarded an honorary doctorate by Oxford University.

Kenyan affairs

"... I sought a personal interview with the governor, hoping to make him appreciate that it was no longer possible to continue along the lines of the old colonial regime. ... Colonial governors and senior civil servants are not easy people to argue with; and, of course, I was not popular, because of my criticism of the colonial service ... Had it been possible to make the government open its eyes to the realities of the situation, I believe that the whole miserable episode of what is frequently spoken of as 'the Mau Mau rebellion' need never have taken place."

From L.S.B. Leakey, *By the Evidence*, Chapter 18.

While the Leakeys were at Lake Victoria, the Kikuyu struck at the European settlers of the Kenyan highlands, who seemed to have the upper hand and were insisting on a "white" government of a "white" Africa. In 1949 the Kikuyu formed a secret society, the Mau Mau, which attacked settlers and especially loyalist Kikuyu.

Louis had attempted to warn Sir Philip Mitchell, governor of the colony, that nocturnal meetings and forced oaths were not Kikuyu customs and foreboded violence, but was ignored. Now he found himself pulled away from anthropology to investigate the Mau Mau. During this period his life was threatened and a reward placed on his head. The Leakeys began to pack pistols, termed "European National Dress." The government placed him under 24-hour guard.

In 1952, after a massacre of loyal chiefs, the government arrested Jomo Kenyatta, president of the Kenya African Union. Louis was summoned to be a court interpreter, but withdrew after an accusation of mistranslation because of prejudice against the defendant. He returned on request to translate documents only. Because of lack of evidence linking Kenyatta to the Mau Mau, although convicted, he did not receive the death penalty, but was sentenced to several years of hard labor and banned from Kenya.

The government brought in British troops and formed a home guard of 20,000 Kikuyu. During this time Louis played a difficult and contradictory role. He sided with the settlers, serving as their spokesman and intelligence officer, helping to ferret out bands of guerrillas. On the other hand he continued to advocate for the Kikuyu in his book, *Defeating Mau Mau* and numerous talks and articles. He recommended a multi-racial government, land reform in the highlands, a wage hike for the Kikuyu, and many other reforms, most of which were eventually adopted.

The British realized the rebellion was being directed from urban centers, instituted military law and rounded up the committees. Following Louis' suggestion, thousands of Kikuyu were placed in re-education camps and resettled in new villages. The rebellion continued from bases under Mt. Kenya until 1956, when,

deprived of its leadership and supplies, it had to disperse. The state of emergency lasted until 1960. In 1963 Kenya became independent, with Jomo Kenyatta as prime minister.

Work in Palaeoanthropology

Vindication at Olduvai

"We know from the study of evolution that, again and again, various branches of animal stock have become over-specialized, and that over-specialization has led to their extinction. Present-day *Homo sapiens* is in many physical respects still very unspecialized— ... But in one thing man, as we know him today, is over-specialized. His brain power is very over-specialized compared to the rest of his physical make-up, and it may well be that this over-specialization will lead, just as surely, to his extinction. ... if we are to control our future, we must first understand the past better."

From L.S.B. Leakey, *Adam's Ancestors*, Fourth Edition, final page.

Louis and Mary spent all the time they could at Olduvai, starting in 1951. So far they had discovered only tools. A trial trench in Bed II at BK in 1951 was followed by a more extensive excavation in 1952. They found what Louis termed an Oldowan "slaughter-house", an ancient bog where animals had been trapped and butchered. Louis was so carried away that he worked without his hat and his hair was bleached white from the sun. They stopped in 1953.

In 1955 they excavated again with Jean Brown. She related that he preferred to be called Louis, was absent-minded, once had everyone looking for spectacles that were around his neck, wore pants with the buttons off and shoes with holes in them, charged about everywhere and once collapsed unconscious. He was completely happy.

In 1959 they decided to excavate Bed I. While Louis was sick in camp, Mary discovered the fossilized skull OH 5 at FLK, which Mary called "Our Man", and became "Dear Boy" and "Zinj." The question was whether it was a previous genus discovered by Robert Broom, *Paranthropus*, which Broom had taken not to be in the human line, or a different one, in it. Louis opted for Zinj, a decision opposed by Wilfrid Le Gros Clark, but one which attracted the attention of Melville Bell Grosvenor, president of the National Geographic Society. That contact resulted in an article in *National Geographic* and a hefty grant to continue work at Olduvai.

Also in 1960 Jack Evernden and Garniss Curtis, young geophysicists, dated Bed I to 1.75 mya. The world was stunned. Zinj was far older than anyone had imagined. Scientists swarmed to Africa. Reck and Louis were completely vindicated, too late for Reck, who had died in 1937.

Expansion

In 1960, unable to leave the museum except on weekends, Louis appointed Mary director of excavation at Olduvai. She brought in a staff of Kamba tribesmen, instead of Kikuyu, who, she felt, took advantage of Louis. The first, Muteva Musomba, had kept her children's ponies. He recruited Kamoya Kimeu among others. Mary set up Camp 5 under Jonathan's direction. He was 19. From then on she had her own staff and associates.

Mary picked and sieved at the site from early morning dressed in old clothes, chain smoking cigarettes, always surrounded by her Dalmatian dogs. She and Louis communicated by radio. On weekends he drove non-stop at high speed the 357 miles between Olduvai and Nairobi. The teenage boys, Richard and Philip, were on site holidays and vacations. Louis invited them and Irven DeVore to eat a raw rat so that he could

compare the result to some Hominid coprolites. He said to DeVore, "My dear boy, let me make you famous." DeVore and the boys demurred.

Their home in Nairobi was chaotic, when they were there. Dinner guests were frequent. Important guests stayed for weeks if they could stand it. They shared the quarters and the dinner table with the Dalmatians, hyraxes, a monkey, a civet cat, an African eagle owl, tropical fish, snakes, such as vipers, and a python. The extended families of twenty African staff lived in cinderblock huts in the yard. Mary had switched to cigars and the ashes often fell into the food. Both Louis and Mary cooked. Louis never stopped talking; his stories were endless. He literally ran through the day, making long lists of things to be done, which he never completed. He drove recklessly through the streets of Nairobi, often reading and writing as he drove.

Floruit

Jonathan Leakey achieved some brief fame before he quit palaeoanthropology altogether. He started his own site, "Jonny's site" in the Leakey lingo, FLK-NN. There he discovered two skull fragments without the Australopithecine sagittal crest, which Mary connected with Broom's and Robinson's *Telanthropus*. The problem with it was its contemporaneity with *Zinjanthropus*. When mailed photographs, Le Gros Clark retorted casually "Shades of Piltdown." Louis cabled him immediately and had some strong words at this suggestion of his incompetence. Clark apologized.

Not long after, in 1960, Louis, his son Philip and Ray Pickering discovered a fossil he termed "Chellean Man", as it was in context with Olduvan tools, the first such find. After reconstruction Louis and Mary called it "Pinhead." It was subsequently included with *Homo erectus* and was in fact contemporaneous with Paranthropus, which on that account cannot have been in the human line. For many years Louis believed *H. erectus* was the user of the tools and *Australopithecus* was not. It is now conceded that both Hominid genera used them.

In 1961 Louis got a salary as well as a grant from the National Geographic Society and turned over the acting directorship of Coryndon to a subordinate. He created the Centre for Prehistory and Paleontology on the same grounds, moved his collections to it, and appointed himself director. This was his new operations center. He opened another excavation at Fort Ternan on Lake Victoria. Shortly after, Heselon discovered *Kenyapithecus wickeri*, named after the owner of the property. Louis promptly celebrated with George Gaylord Simpson, who happened to be present, aboard the *Miocene Lady* with "Leakey Safari Specials", a drink made of condensed milk and cognac.

In 1962 Louis was visiting Olduvai when Ndibo Mbuika discovered the first tooth of *Homo habilis* at MNK. Louis and Mary thought it was female and named her Cinderella, or Cindy. Phillip Tobias identified Jonny's Child with it and Raymond Dart came up with the name *Homo habilis* at Louis' request, which Tobias translated as "handyman."^[35] It was seen as intermediary between gracile *Australopithecus* and *Homo*.^[36]

Calico Hills

Main article: Calico Early Man Site

In 1959 Leakey, while at the British Museum of Natural History in London, received a visit from Ruth DeEtte Simpson, an archaeologist from California. Simpson had acquired what looked like ancient scrapers from a site in the Calico Hills and showed it to Leakey.

In 1963, Leakey obtained funds from the National Geographic Society and commenced archaeological excavations with Simpson. Excavations at the site carried out by Leakey and Simpson revealed that they had located stone artifacts which were dated 100,000 years or older, suggesting a human presence in North America much earlier than estimated.^[37]

The geologist Vance Haynes had made three visits to the site in 1973 and had claimed that the artifacts found by Leakey were naturally formed geofacts. According to Haynes, the geofacts were formed by stones becoming fractured in an ancient river on the site.^[38]

In her autobiography, Mary Leakey wrote that because of Louis's involvement with the Calico Hills site she had lost academic respect for him and that the Calico excavation project was "catastrophic to his professional career and was largely responsible for the parting of our ways".

Leakey's Angels

Main article: Leakey's Angels

One of Louis's greatest legacies stems from his role in fostering field research of primates in their natural habitats, which he understood as key to unraveling the mysteries of human evolution. He personally chose three female researchers, Jane Goodall, Dian Fossey, and Birute Galdikas, who were later dubbed 'Leakey's Angels' and each went on to become important scholars in the field of primatology. While these are the stars, it should be noted that Louis also encouraged and supported many other Ph.D. candidates, most notably from Cambridge University.

The last years

Kenya became independent at noon on 12 December 1963, with Jomo Kenyatta as the first prime minister. The settlers were already leaving the country in large numbers. Kenyatta saw that he had to act swiftly to prevent a descent into chaos. He took a conciliatory view. There were a few deportations, but no reprisals. Louis had felt considerable trepidation about the future of palaeoanthropology in Kenya. A meeting was arranged between him and Jomo at the suggestion of the last colonial governor, Malcolm MacDonald. He was introduced by his old friend Peter Koinange. They spoke in Kikuyu. The meeting ended with an embrace and reassurances.

During his final years Louis became famous as a lecturer in the United States and United Kingdom. He brought audiences cheering to their feet. He did not personally excavate any longer, as he was crippled with arthritis, for which he had a hip replacement in 1968. He raised funds and directed his family and associates. In Kenya he was an indispensable facilitator for the hundreds of scientists then exploring the East African Rift system for fossils. Without his say-so, permits could not be obtained and access to museum collections was denied. Once he gave permission, his advice was invaluable.

In 1963 he helped Ruth De Ette get started at a site in the Calico Hills of the Mojave Desert in California. The date then accepted for the arrival of humans in the Americas was about 12,000 BCE. On the basis of the time required for the evolution and distribution of native American languages, Louis hypothesized that the arrival must have been thousands of years previously. He encouraged Ruth to view the apparent artifacts she was finding as older than 100,000 years.

Mary did not share his visionary view. She was increasingly disrespectful, viewing him as incompetent, from 1963 on. The old intimacy was gone. Her professional opposition began over Calico Man. Under the rationale of trying to stop Louis from making a mistake that would tarnish his reputation, she persuaded the National Geographic Society to refrain from publishing Calico and pull funding from the project, but Louis found other means. On 26 March 1968, Alan and Helen O'Brien of Newport Beach, California, and some prominent Californians formed the Leakey Foundation. When Louis stayed with them when he was in California, the O'Briens noticed that he was very much underpaid on the lecture circuit. From then on Louis worked with them in fund-raising.

Mary's opposition soon turned into a major schism in the palaeoanthropological village. For example, in 1968 Louis refused an honorary doctorate from the University of Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, primarily

because of apartheid in South Africa. Mary accepted one. Now it was Louis' turn to be concerned about her reputation. The two still cared about each other, but were apart and conducted different professional lives.

In the last few years Louis' health began to fail more seriously. He had his first heart attacks and spent six months in the hospital. An empathy over health brought him and Dian Fossey together for a brief romance, which she broke off. Richard began to assume more and more of his father's responsibilities, which Louis resisted, but in the end was forced to accept. Everything bad seemed to happen to him in a run of unfortunate luck: he had more heart problems, he was swarmed by bees and nearly killed, he had a stroke, he was involved in controversy over Calico Man, and he had to brook Mary's opposition. One good thing that happened is that he found increasing support and comfort in his friend Vanne Goodall (mother of Jane Goodall), whose London apartment Louis visited when he could.

Death and legacy

Death

On 1 October 1972, Louis was stricken with a heart attack in Jane Goodall's apartment in London. Jane sat up all night with him in St. Stephen's Hospital and left at 9:00 a.m. He died 30 minutes later at the age of 69.

Mary wanted to cremate Louis and fly the ashes back to Nairobi. Richard intervened. He was flown home and interred at Limuru, near the graves of his parents.

In denial, the family did not face the question of a memorial marker for a year. When Richard went to place a stone on the grave he found one already there, courtesy of Rosalie Osborn. The inscription was signed with the letters, *ILYFA*, "I'll love you forever always", which Rosalie used to place on her letters to him. Richard left it in place.

Prominent organizations

- **1958.** Louis founded the Tigoni Primate Research Center with Cynthia Booth, on her farm north of Nairobi. Later it was the National Primate Research Center, currently the Institute of Primate Research, now in Nairobi. As the Tigoni center, it funded Leakey's Angels.
- **1961.** Louis created the Centre for Prehistory and Paleontology on the same grounds as Coryndon Museum, appointing himself director.
- **1968.** Louis assisted with the founding of The Leakey Foundation, to ensure the legacy of his life's work in the study of human origins. The Leakey Foundation exists today as the number-one funder of human-origins research in the United States.

Prominent family members

Louis Leakey was married to Mary Leakey, who made the noteworthy discovery of fossil footprints at Laetoli. Found preserved in volcanic ash in Tanzania, they are the earliest record of bipedal gait.

He is also the father of paleoanthropologist Richard Leakey and the botanist Colin Leakey. Louis' cousin, Nigel Gray Leakey, was a recipient of the Victoria Cross during World War II.

Books by Louis Leakey

Louis's books are listed below.^[44] The gaps between books are filled by too many articles to list. It was Louis who began the Leakey tradition of publishing in *Nature*.

First Publication Date	Title	Notes
1931	<i>The Stone Age Culture of Kenya Colony</i>	Written in 1929. Illustrated by Frida Leakey.
1934	<i>Adam's Ancestors: The Evolution of Man and His Culture</i>	Multiple editions with rewrites, the 4th in 1955. Illustrated by Mary Leakey. Book reviews. ^[45]
1935	<i>The Stone Age races of Kenya</i>	Proposes Homo kanamensis.
1936	<i>Kenya: Contrasts and Problems</i>	Written in 1935.
1936	<i>Stone Age Africa: an Outline of Prehistory in Africa</i>	Ten chapters consisting of the ten Munro Lectures delivered in 1936 by Louis to Edinburgh University and intended by him as a textbook. Illustrated by Mary.
1937	<i>White African: an Early Autobiography</i>	Louis described it as a "pot-boiler" written in 1936 for Hodder & Stoughton.
1951	<i>The Miocene Hominoidea of East Africa</i>	With Wilfrid Le Gros Clark. Volume I of the series <i>Fossil Mammals of Africa</i> published by the Natural History Museum in London.
1951	<i>Olduvai Gorge: A Report on the Evolution of the Hand-Axe Culture in Beds I-IV</i>	Started in 1935. Names the Olduwan Culture.
1952	<i>Mau Mau and the Kikuyu</i>	Online at ^[46] Quaestia.
1953	<i>Animals in Africa</i>	Photographs by Ylla.
1954	<i>Defeating Mau Mau</i>	With Peter Schmidt. Online at ^[47] Quaestia.
1965	<i>Olduvai Gorge: A Preliminary Report on the Geology and Fauna, 1951-61</i>	Volume 1. ^[48]
1969	<i>Unveiling Man's Origins</i>	With Vanne Morris Goodall.
1969	<i>Animals of East Africa: The Wild realm</i>	
1970	<i>Olduvai Gorge, 1965-1967</i>	
1974	<i>By the Evidence: Memoirs, 1932-1951</i>	Written in 1972 and published posthumously. Louis finished writing on the day before his death.
1977	<i>The Southern Kikuyu before 1903</i>	Published posthumously. The manuscript remained in Louis' safe for decades for lack of a publisher. It was 3 volumes. He refused to follow editorial advice and shorten it.