

who surveyed Childe's views on Danube pre-historic settlement, settlement topology and the influence of economic systems on settlement patterns. The next paper by Professor Elizbieta Jastrzebowska (Accademia Polacca di Roma) reviewed the influence of Childe's historical and political interests on his perception of the late antiquity and its evaluation as a 'Dark Age'.

The conference continued with a presentation by Mr Mark Manuel and Professor Robin Coningham (Durham University) who analyzed Gordon Childe's contributions to the understanding of social organization and the origin of Indus civilization. Professor Peter Rowley-Conwy (Durham University) followed by discussing Childe's views on the concept of culture. The next paper by Mr Peter Gathercole (Darwin College, Cambridge) was concerned with Childe's Marxist ideas and the traces of its presence in his academic work. The conference was appropriately brought to an end by Professor Don Brothwell (York University) whom having been one of Childe's many students managed to both 'put a face to' and describe the man who had achieved many great things in the field of archaeology.

The conference was well attended and was followed by lively discussions not only during the conference, but also at coffee and lunch breaks, and later over dinner. Over the past few years, the Department of Archaeology at Durham University has managed to become one of the most prominent departments in the history of archaeology due to the interests of many of its researchers in this relatively new but already well-established field of archaeology. It is this interest that had led to the privilege of being able to hold, and continue to hold many significant conferences on the history of archaeology in this department at Durham University. Details about its conferences and workshops can be found on [http://www.dur.ac.uk/archaeology/research/groupings/history\\_of\\_archaeology/](http://www.dur.ac.uk/archaeology/research/groupings/history_of_archaeology/).

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## **IX. Dissertations**

### **Town and Gown: Amateurs and Academics. The Discovery of British Prehistory; Oxford 1850–1900, 'A Pastime Professionalised'**

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This investigation into the origin of a collection of nineteenth century lanternslides revealed evidence of the social, intellectual and cultural importance of various scientific societies in Oxford, and the contributions made by those involved, particularly the creator of the lanternslides, H. M. J. Underhill, (1855–1920). Evidence gathered from primary sources showed a fluidity in the relationships between the supposed 'town and gown' in late nineteenth century Oxford which consisted of a community of citizens, amateurs and academics, all of whom were linked by a growing interest in the real and mythological British past.

Following a discussion of the key intellectual and social influences in Britain during the latter half of the nineteenth century, including the implications of the emerging evidence of an ancient human past, the thesis focuses on individual case studies. They illustrate the roles of overlooked or neglected individuals whose work contributed to the growth of today's discipline of British prehistory. Several people, now forgotten, including Underhill were contemporaries of Arthur Evans and Edward Tylor whose social circumstances made it easier for them to become prominent academics.

The results of this research indicate that a new approach is required in the history of archaeology; one that would draw attention to the vital contributions made by forgotten or overlooked individuals,

societies and popular publications. Further attention to these issues will shed new light on the way that prehistoric archaeology moved from an antiquarian pastime to an academic discipline between 1850 and 1900.

## **The Antiquity of Caste: British Archaeologists, Colonialism and Orientalism**

**Christopher Davis**, Durham University  
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This dissertation will evaluate the impact of British archaeologists on the study of the antiquity of caste and their role in presenting caste as an integral part of the timeless, rigid social order of India. Interest in Orientalism, as defined by Said (1978), has spurred a reappraisal of the relationship between Europe and the 'Orient'. In India, this has led historians and sociologists to reconsider the caste system's time-depth, arguing that caste was in part a creation of British colonial government infrastructure (Inden 1990; Dirks 2001). However, the role of archaeologists in its 'creation' has yet to be fully reviewed (Boivin 2005), even though archaeologists have studied and analysed evidence from South Asia's most distant past.

This study will adopt a deliberately historical approach in the analysis of the role of British archaeologists in the construction of caste. In particular, the writings of Sir Mortimer Wheeler, Stuart Piggott and Gordon Childe will be examined as their work represents the most prominent archaeological research on India by British and British-based scholars. This will be furthered by an appraisal of the effect of these archaeologists' methods and ideas on later South Asian scholars, with a review of post-independence views of caste in the literature. Through these two twin avenues of research, this project will ascertain to what extent British archaeologists were complicit in perpetuating colonial constructs and the projection of a timeless hierarchical system onto Indian society.

Research for this Masters dissertation has been sponsored as part of a Post-Graduate student award from the AREA (Archives of European Archaeology) IV Culture 2000 project, funded by the European Union (n° 2005-0841/001-001 CLT CA 22).

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## **Skeletons in the Closet: The British Contribution to the History of Paleopathology**

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This study will explore the advancement of theory and methodology, employed in the field of Paleopathology, through time. Chronologically, the study will be broken down into four developmental

stages defined by Aufderheide & Rodriguez-Martin (1998): the ‘Antecedent Phase’ (the Renaissance until the mid 1800’s), the ‘Genesis of Paleopathology’ (mid-1800s until the beginning of World War I), the ‘Interbellum Consolidation Phase’ (1913 until 1945), and finally the ‘New Paleopathology Phase’ (1946 until the present). Within each of these defined periods, the major achievements of several significant individuals will be presented in context with changes in theory/understanding, period-appropriate technological advancements, and adaptations/advancements in methodology. In so doing, this examination will draw specific attention to the contributions of several notable British scientists who gave shape to this discipline from its early beginnings to the modern day.

The research for this study will begin by examining existing and well known publications on the history of Paleopathology and trace the more obscure references back to the original sources. Several international library collections will be utilized in this study including, but not limited to those of: Durham University, the University of Toronto, and Bradford University (containing the Calvin Wells Palaeopathology Archive).

Research for this dissertation has been a part of the Post-Graduate student award sponsored by the AREA (Archives of European Archaeology) IV Culture 2000 project funded by the EU (n° 2005-0841/ 001-001 CLT CA 22).

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## Tessa Verney Wheeler

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## Introduction: The Project and Its Sources

The research described here was undertaken in aid of the author’s D.Phil thesis at the Institute of Archaeology, University of Oxford. The work as a whole is entitled *Tessa Verney Wheeler: Women and Archaeology Before World War Two* and projected for submission in June 2008. It is a biography of the title subject, placing her within the history of archaeology as well as women’s studies. For reasons of space and relevance, only the first aspect of the larger work will be directly addressed in this article.

While contemporaries of Verney Wheeler<sup>1</sup> and her famous husband R. E. M. Wheeler consistently reference her as a major archaeologist, no work has yet been done to assess her career and legacy.<sup>2</sup> This is probably due to her early and untimely death in 1936, in the midst of a major excavation at Maiden Castle, Dorset. This work attempts to redress the balance by critically examining Verney Wheeler’s work with and without her husband.<sup>3</sup> Sources used include her and their publications, press

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<sup>1</sup> To eliminate confusion, in this article Tessa Verney Wheeler is referred to as Verney Wheeler, and R. E. M. (Rik) Wheeler as Wheeler. She tended to sign herself T. V. Wheeler or T. V. W., and was occasionally referred to by others as Mrs Verney Wheeler, so this nomenclature is not without precedence.

<sup>2</sup> See for example G. Caton-Thompson (1983); A. Fox (2000); V. Seton-Williams (1988); W. Wedlake (unpublished memoirs).

<sup>3</sup> It should be emphasised that Rik Wheeler, more than anyone, always maintained that his first wife was his equal partner in archaeology. See for example his autobiography *Still Digging* (R. E. M. Wheeler [1956]). This biography is not intended as a posthumous reappropriation of credit, but rather its acknowledgement. The reverse is also true; any discussion of Verney Wheeler’s prodigious output must acknowledge her husband’s help and support of her work. Separating the two Wheelers is a difficult business; their personal and professional

coverage, personal documents, and excavation site archives, as well as the accounts of their colleagues and students.<sup>4</sup>

Work on Verney Wheeler has more than justified the author's suspicion that she was one of the most impressive British archaeologists of the early twentieth century. Despite a short career of just over twenty years, she published and excavated extensively while simultaneously developing new archaeological techniques, brought archaeology into the lives of the general public via presswork and the encouragement of site tours, and was an inspiring teacher to an impressive roster of students. The implications of this threefold legacy means that her influence is still apparent in the most important aspects of the way modern archaeology is taught and practiced.

### Verney Wheeler's Life

Tessa Verney Wheeler was born Tessa Verney in Johannesburg in 1893, but moved to London as a three-year-old and grew up in that city with her mother and stepfather. The loving relationship she maintained with the latter throughout her life is evidence that she had a happy childhood. She must have shown some intellectual promise as a child, as at about seventeen she matriculated and enrolled at University College London to read history, with a special focus on the now arcane field of Constitutional History. There she met another UCL student, the young archaeologist Robert Eric Mortimer Wheeler, and in 1914 the two married. Her husband saw active service in France during the war years, and she served on the Inland Revenue as one of its first female officers.<sup>5</sup>

On his return, Wheeler gained a post as Keeper of Archaeology at the National Museum of Wales in Cardiff, and the two Wheelers moved to Wales with their young son Michael. As was usual at the time, Verney Wheeler had no official, paid job of her own at the museum. It was expected, however, that she would advance her husband's career by assisting him as necessary, socially and practically.<sup>6</sup> It was *not* expected that she become his equal. However, while aiding Wheeler's overhaul of the moribund National Museum and helping him oversee summer excavations at two small Roman forts, something happened. Verney Wheeler found that she was as good an excavator and curator as her husband, though in a very different and more detail-oriented style.

From a minor role on her first Welsh dig at the Brecon Gaer in 1924–1925, Verney Wheeler moved swiftly to independently directing the more important excavation of the amphitheatre at Caerleon. The first publication of that site came out under her name alone in 1928, an impressive accomplishment for a woman whose name had previously only appeared in print in her husband's conventional list of acknowledgements.<sup>7</sup> She also became deeply involved at the National Museum of Wales, at that time undergoing a massive modernization and long-delayed move into its current purpose-built home in Cathays Park. Its archives still retain her voluminous written communications with various

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lives were effectively one. From the earliest years of their marriage, when they briefly lived in the offices of the National Museum of Wales after Wheeler took a position there, they acted out their marriage in museum galleries, before learned societies, and on excavations. There is no space here to discuss the stresses and strengths that professional closeness brought to their personal relationship, but the effect was far from trivial.

<sup>4</sup> See the end of this article for a list of sources used.

<sup>5</sup> *South Wales News*, 20th March 1926.

<sup>6</sup> A middle-class woman in that time and place would be expected to take a strong personal interest in her husband's work; even to the extent of reducing it considerably through her own efforts and effectively taking it up as her own career. The social conditioning of the period pressured women to express their ambitions through their husbands, but it could also (more positively) give them a congenial creative or organizational outlet. A husband's occupation determined his wife's vocation, a pattern still seen today in politics but largely vanished elsewhere in Western society.

<sup>7</sup> "Finally, this page [of acknowledgements] would not be complete without a reference to the continuous assistance of my wife, of whom I will say no more than that she carried out the administrative duties of the excavation and has shared in all stages of the work [at Segontium]." R. E. M. Wheeler 1923: 13.

archaeological correspondents. After she left, she still remained a presence via the young archaeologist V. E. Nash-Williams, who succeeded Wheeler as Keeper of Archaeology, and Verney Wheeler as the main excavator of Caerleon. He wrote to both Wheelers frequently for advice on their respective subjects, after Wheeler took a new post as head Keeper of the London Museum in 1926.

Back in London, the Wheelers continued their pattern of joint work. Though Wheeler was still the sole museum chief on paper, he and Verney Wheeler both had their own offices at the London Museum, and shared the task of updating and re-ordering its collections. There they perfected a Mother-Father management style that they would also find of great use on excavations. Wheeler's volatile father-figure challenged staff and students to reach higher goals, and Verney Wheeler's affectionate mother-figure taught them how to attain those ideals. It was a winning combination in the 1920s and 1930s, although it is doubtful whether it could be maintained in today's social climate. Verney Wheeler was never paid for her curatorial and conservation work, although eventually the London Museum council voted her a small salary for her public lectures. The museum was essentially getting two curators for the price of one, a not unheard of situation during this period, and certainly something that made Wheeler more attractive as a candidate.

The Wheeler's excavation work was supported by a large group of London students, mainly associated with their alma mater UCL. At that time there was no department, or even a library, for the college's archaeology students, and the Wheelers found house-room for them at the Museum of London and the Society of Antiquaries. Students were taught how to mend finds at the museum, and were expected to participate in the great summer digs at Verulamium and Maiden Castle.<sup>8</sup> These two sites took on the nature of archaeological summer schools, where students were given small areas to dig, supervise, and record, with their site notebooks modeled on and inspected by Verney Wheeler. As at the museum, Wheeler's role was that of the challenger – criticizing work, pushing students to improve. Verney Wheeler's was that of the practical teacher, showing students the physical techniques of excavation through direct demonstration and her own work.<sup>9</sup>

Outside the museum, excavations continued apace during the summers. The Wheelers co-published the Romano-British Temple-complex of Lydney Park, Gloucestershire in 1932, following 1928–1929 excavations underwritten by the Society of Antiquaries of London. They were both active, contributing members of this prestigious organization; Verney Wheeler was only the second woman to be normally elected to its ranks.<sup>10</sup> In return, the society brought the Wheelers the connections and financial support necessary for their next two excavations.

After Lydney came the large Roman town of Verulamium (St Albans), where the Wheelers worked from 1930–1933. The subsequent co-authored report, published in late 1936, was Verney Wheeler's last major book.<sup>11</sup> Her last excavation was at the even larger prehistoric site of Maiden Castle in Dorset, where work began in 1934. She was deeply involved in pre-season preparations for the site in April 1936, when she died in London after a botched minor operation. She was only forty-two.

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<sup>8</sup> Seton-Williams 1988: 23–25.

<sup>9</sup> Margaret Drower and Beatrice de Cardi, today grande dames of British archaeology, both worked briefly under the Wheelers at Verulamium and Maiden Castle respectively. Drower recalls being impressed by Verney Wheeler's quick identification of daub that had puzzled the younger woman at Verulamium. De Cardi remembers evenings in Verney Wheeler's Dorchester hotel room during the Maiden Castle excavations, where students were taught additional skills of use on site; in her case, how to clean and wrap a horse skull. Author's interviews with Margaret Drower (19th January 2007, London), and Beatrice de Cardi (14th November 2006, London).

<sup>10</sup> When she died, the Antiquaries gave the still unusual honor of a full-page obituary in its *Antiquaries Journal* for the year. *Antiquaries Journal*, Volume XVI 1936: 327–328.

<sup>11</sup> This report's over-reaching synthesis of Verulamium's history has been challenged, justifiably, since its publication. See J. Hawkes 1982: 159–161 for a brief and even-handed discussion of the issues involved. The data the report presents, however, is so complete that it may still be easily and profitably analysed by modern archaeologists.

## Verney Wheeler's Importance: Research Conclusions

Verney Wheeler's importance to archaeology falls into three sections.

### 1) Technique

The 'Wheeler Method' is well known, and while it is not an inflexibly applicable methodology suitable for any site regardless of other factors, it is a collection of individually useful techniques that can be individually applied with great profit.<sup>12</sup> While Rik Wheeler was the progenitor of the 'Method', Tessa Wheeler was the progenitrix of the methods, working on site to practically test and refine a system of strict object recording and attention to stratigraphic layering that remains her most practical and physical legacy.<sup>13</sup> Examination of excavation archives shows that Wheeler moved over landscapes like Verulamium, engaging in the great leaps of historical synthesis that still make his reports so readable, while Verney Wheeler remained in one spot, painstakingly collecting and collating the evidence he used.

More specific technical innovations may also be laid at her door, most interestingly the method she developed for lifting and preserving mosaics at Verulamium, and published in volume 33 of *The Museums Journal*.<sup>14</sup>

### 2) Teaching

Verney Wheeler's second legacy. She was a natural teacher, demonstrating the methods she developed to her students and helping them develop the physical skills of excavators. She was also an important figure in the establishment of the UCL Institute of Archaeology, campaigning for its foundation and finding its first home at St John's Lodge. Like the Verulamium Museum (another of her projects) it opened after her death with a dedicatory plaque to her memory. The Wheelers shared the desire to make archaeology something that could be systematically taught in a university setting, and thus open it up to many more students.

### 3) The public

Considering Verney Wheeler's presswork in the same light as her practical labor may seem strange, and of the three aspects of her career, it was the one she found the most difficult. A naturally shy woman, she lacked her husband's easy assurance before the camera. She was, however, an excellent lecturer, and worked hard from Caerleon onwards to publicize the work she and other archaeologists were doing. She spoke to local archaeological societies, school groups, and museum visitors with the same charm and erudition she displayed before the Society of Antiquaries.<sup>15</sup> Both Wheelers, fueled by their museum work, believed that archaeology and the past belonged to the public. They encouraged the public to visit (and support) their archaeological sites, where Verney Wheeler, or a carefully trained senior student, would give a short talk and tour explaining what was before their audience. Press releases were made frequently, and by the excavation of Verulamium, the wire services were being exploited in such a way that an article interviewing her could appear in identical form in newspapers all over the country.

The importance of these three aspects of archaeology to present day practitioners of the subject

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<sup>12</sup> The Wheeler Method received its definitive statement in Wheeler's 1954 textbook *Archaeology from the Earth*, one of the first practical guides on the subject.

<sup>13</sup> This is not to denigrate Rik Wheeler's contribution – his emphasis on selective excavation and the place of a site in the historical record is just as important and as practical. However Verney Wheeler was, generally, the more hands-on member of their partnership.

<sup>14</sup> T. Verney Wheeler 1933.

<sup>15</sup> An argument could be made that the former work was more important. Rik's career was marked by his insistence that, as the public often partially paid for archaeology, they ought to know what they were getting for the money. See Wheeler 1956: 104 for his clearest statement of this argument.

needs no explanation here. In short, it is hoped that this biography, when complete, will illuminate the debt modern archaeologists owe to this remarkable and charming woman, as well as reacquainting readers with the great British sites she excavated with her husband.

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