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The Society for Libyan Studies Archive: Past, Present and Future

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Abstract

The archive of the Society for Libyan Studies, housed at the University of Leicester, is home to a rich collection of excavation reports, notes, photographs, typescripts, maps, plans and letters by prominent scholars that worked in North Africa. Amongst the material are the records of Olwen Brogan, Charles Daniels, John Ward-Perkins, John Dore and the UNESCO Libyan Valleys Survey. The aim is to draw attention to the research potentials in the archive, and to encourage scholars to visit this important collection to engage with the material that is unpublished or merits re-interpretation. A future digital format for the archive is proposed, to make it accessible to a much wider academic audience worldwide.

تضم جمعية أرشيف الدراسات الليبية، ومركزها جامعة ليستر، مجوعة ثرية من تقارير التنقيب، والملاحظات، والصور، والوثائق المطبوعة، والخرائط، والمخططات، والرسائل التي كتبها أبرز الباحثين الذين عملوا في شمال إفريقيا. ومن ضمن مواد الأرشيف هناك سجلات كلّ من: ألوين بروغان، وشارلز دانيالز، وجون وارد- بيركنز، وجون دور، بالإضافة لاستطلاع الوديان الليبية الذي أشرفت عليه منظمة اليونسكو.

هدف الجمعية هو لفت الانتباه إلى فرص البحث المحتملة باستخدام الأرشيف، وتشجيع الباحثين على زيارة الجمعية والإطلاع على المواد الهامة غير المنشورة الموجودة في الأرشيف واستخدامها، وكذلك إعادة تأويل بعض المواد الأخرى. وهناك اقتراح بتحويل الأرشيف إلى أرشيف رقمي في المستقبل لإتاحة مزيد من الفرص لشريحة أوسع من الأكاديميين للاطلاع على المواد الموجودة واستخدامها في أي مكان من العالم.

Introduction

The Society for Libyan Studies archive was established in 1988 at the University of Newcastle but has recently been moved to the University of Leicester, where there is currently a much larger community of students and academics following research on Libyan-focused subjects. This move has provoked a re-organisation and re-assessment of the material, which has enormous research and outreach potential, particularly through the use of digital storage and dissemination. The aim of this article is, therefore, to draw attention to the research opportunities available in order to encourage students and scholars alike to visit and use the archive. We would like to encourage researchers to bid for funding, from the Society and elsewhere, to exploit the rich resources that are lurking within this collection, to bring them to a much wider audience.

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The archive forms an important resource of documents, photographs, drawings, maps and ceramic material, with many of the major collections coming from deceased scholars such as Kathleen Kenyon, John Ward-Perkins, Olwen Brogan, Barri Jones, Charles Daniels and John Dore. Others have donated their work, such as John Riley and Martyn Webb, and David Mattingly's material from excavations in Fazzan is gradually being added as the publications are completed. Not only are these figures significant contributors to the history and archaeology of Libya, but they were a set of truly pioneering, immensely interesting and often eccentric characters.

Kathleen Kenyon

Kathleen Kenyon learnt many of her techniques from Mortimer Wheeler, when she worked under his supervision at Verulamium. She is best known for her work in Jericho, where her analysis of the stratified pottery allowed her to make ground-breaking discoveries about the continuity of the ancient settlement there. In Libya, she used her ceramic skills at the excavations at Sabratha in 1948, 49 and 51, which she co-directed with John Ward-Perkins.

John Ward-Perkins

John Ward-Perkins first became acquainted with Libya during the Second World War, when serving in an anti-aircraft regiment commanded by (Col.) Mortimer Wheeler. He was already an experienced archaeologist and spotted a Roman pottery kiln near Lepcis Magna from his military vehicle, which was later recorded by Richard Goodchild. After the war he was appointed Director of the British School at Rome and undertook a series of expeditions in Tripolitania. His main focus was the collection and study of artistic motifs and architecture at Lepcis Magna, and the collection of inscriptions of the province as well as surveys of the hinterland, which changed completely our perception of the Roman frontier system in this area. The archive contains a substantial number of drawings of the Severan buildings at Lepcis, and of those around the Old Forum (made in 1951–53), many of them still unpublished. He did further work in Cyrenaica, including a survey of Christian monuments. One of his greatest legacies was to pass on his enthusiasm and experience to other archaeologists such as

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Richard Goodchild, Barri Jones, David Oates, Olwen Brogan and Charles Daniels.

John Ward-Perkins was President of the Society from 1979 until his death in 1981.

Olwen Brogan

Olwen Brogan (or latterly 'Lady Brogan' as wife of Sir Denis Brogan — a title which obscured her identity and which she bitterly resented) first went to Libya in 1948 with the Sabratha expedition. She subsequently took a great interest in field survey in Tripolitania, influenced in her choice of location by her Masters supervisor, Mortimer Wheeler. Her work also took her to Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco, for comparative data. Her main passion, however, was for Libyan archaeology and she published numerous important scholarly contributions that focused on the eastern pre-desert and the Tripolitanian gebel. From the late 1950s Brogan visited Libya almost every year until 1974 when (following the death of Sir Denis and her marriage to Charles Hackett) she lived there full-time until the 1980s. This gave her plentiful opportunities to explore and record a large number of sites and monuments through survey and excavation. Her focus was on the Roman period, principally settlements, sculpture and mausolea, but she also developed a keen interest in the tiny medieval mosques in the countryside of the Jabal Nafusah. Her enthusiasm, and the large amount of time she spent in the region, are reflected in the rich variety of data that is present in her archive. Her collection perhaps represents the most complete history of an archaeologist in the Society's archive, following her career and containing valuable information about the sites she visited. Indeed, it also contains material from outside Libya, including France and even Iraq, to which she was enticed by David Oates.

Olwen Brogan was the first Honorary Secretary of the Society, from 1969 to 1974.

Barri Jones

Professor Barri Jones began his career as a lecturer at the University of Manchester in 1964. He was devoted to raising the profile of archaeology as a profession and putting it on the political agenda. His work in Italy at the British School at Rome put him into contact with John Ward-Perkins and Charles Daniels; this brought him to Libya, where he was in the field during the 1969 revolution. He carried out excavations at Tocra and Euesperides and then co-directed the UNESCO Libyan Valleys survey in the Tripolitanian pre-desert from 1979–89. He was also in part responsible for the eventual publication of the volume by John Ward-Perkins on the Severan buildings of Lepcis Magna. He was an active member of the Society, was on the Council and served as Chairman in 1984–88.

Charles Daniels

First as Keeper of the Museum of Antiquities in Newcastle upon Tyne, and then as a lecturer in Archaeology at the university there, Charles Daniels' work was wide-ranging, from Hadrian's Wall to South Etruria and southern Libya and Sudan. From 1958 and over the next twenty years he went to Fazzan on ten campaigns. He was an excellent photographer, and left a vivid and priceless record of the archaeology and socio-economic conditions in Fazzan during his time there. His excavations were run on a shoe-string budget, travelling in landrovers called Balbus and Augustus, and he ran the fictitious 'Sabha Rowing Club' – membership of which was earned through hard work! Other well known archaeologists he worked with in Fazzan include David Breeze, Olwen Brogan, Bill Hanson, Mark Hassall, John Hayes, Barri Jones, John Little and Tim Tatton-Brown. Though he maintained a good archive of material, he did not excel when it came to publications, mainly because he was a perfectionist. His extraordinary body of work has mostly now been published in David Mattingly's Archaeology of Fazzan series. His archive also reaches far beyond his work in Fazzan and contains important images from sites elsewhere in Libya, Tunisia and Morocco, which in some cases record sites that are now damaged or completely destroyed.

Daniels was Chairman of the Society from 1979 to 1983.

James Copland Thorn

From an early age, James Thorn was interested in history. He became an archaeological illustrator for the London Archaeologist and the Royal Commission of Historic and Ancient Monuments, and later at the British Museum's Department of Medieval and Later Antiquities. His involvement in Libya started in 1981 when he went to Cyrene as a member of the University of Pennsylvania team studying the Sanctuary of Demeter and Persephone, where he illustrated the architectural features and made restoration drawings of one of the sacred houses. He also created his own drawings for his magisterial book *The Necropolis of Cyrene: Two Hundred Years of Exploration*.

John Dore

John Dore was responsible for finding the first home for the archive at the University of Newcastle. He was one of Barri Jones' students, and was thus

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dispatched to Sidi Khrebish, Benghazi, where his interest in ceramics evolved. Although involved in projects in England, Italy, Portugal and Tunisia, his main interest was in Libyan archaeology. His pottery classifications are a considerable achievement and lasting legacy, particularly from Tunisia (Leptiminus) and Libya (Sabratha, the Libyan Valleys Survey, el-Merj and Fazzan). His connections with Libya were strengthened by his ability to speak and write Arabic. He was for a long time involved with the Society, taking on the roles of Honorary Secretary (1994–2001), Head of Mission (1999–2008) and sitting on the Council and Publications and Fieldwork Committees. His unexpected and tragic death in 2008 left a void in the study of Libyan pottery.

What is in the archive, and why is it important?

A great deal of the archive has never been published and represents a wealth of research opportunities. It also includes large data sets from previous fieldwork missions that are ripe for re-interpretation, since new tools now exist for digitisation, spatial mapping and scientific analysis – methods not available when the excavations were originally carried out – and new research agendas looking at state formation, social behaviour, use of space, networks and so on can now be followed. Research on Libya has a great deal of potential at present, as it is hoped that the new Libyan government will take a more open and positive attitude to its cultural heritage. Equally, with all the current problems in Libya and the virtual impossibility of doing any fieldwork, now is the right moment to re-organise, digitise and exploit these resources. In particular, the digitisation of as much material as possible would be invaluable, not only for UK researchers, but more significantly, for Libyan students and academics, who have limited library resources and currently have little prospect of being able to order books from abroad.

The archive covers the geographical area of modern-day Libya but also other parts of North Africa if they are included in the collection from an individual. The subjects covered are archaeology, history, geography, the natural sciences and linguistics. As well as documents, photographs, drawings, maps and books, there are a few artefacts in some of the collections.

The archive moved into its new home, at the University of Leicester, in April 2012. It is located at 6 University Rd, in the same building as Professor David Mattingly's Trans-Sahara project. The material is stored in four rooms, allowing space for researchers to work on the premises. A collection-based catalogue was made when it arrived by Tyr Fothergill, based on the initial work by John Dore, and the John Dore scholar, currently Niccolò Mugnai, is responsible for adding detail to that electronic catalogue, though the work still to be done is immense.

So what can we do with it?

The Olwen Brogan archive

The Brogan archive is a vast collection of records, predominantly from Tripolitania in Libya but including some material from Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco.[1] It contains photographs, notes, letters and typescripts of published and unpublished material covering the period from the 1930s through to the late 1970s and early 80s. Additionally, records of Brogan's early research interests in Roman Gaul and the German frontiers are also included in the archive. The bulk of this material is on the excavations at Gergovia in Gaul, which took place in the 1930s. The records include detailed notes and photos of, for instance, the West gate, the ramparts and walls, the temple, pottery, metal finds, and small finds such as brooches.

Brogan's largest project in Tripolitania was on the settlement and monumental cemetery of



Figure 1. Olwen Brogan (on the left) at Gasr Nagazza, Tripolitania, in 1960 (photo: Brogan archive).

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Figure 2. Relief from a mausoleum in the Wadi Talah, Tripolitania, in 1958 when Brogan and Daniels visited the site together (photo: Brogan archive).

Ghirza, published in a monograph by Brogan and Smith (1984). However, more information about Ghirza and its cemeteries can be gained through her extensive photographic and handwritten records that go beyond the already very detailed publications. The archive also includes detailed records of many other Roman-period sites and features across the Tripolitanian pre-desert and the gebel, such as farmsteads, gsur, wadi walls, irrigation systems, wells, cisterns, sculpture, mausolea, cemeteries, and mosques (Figs 1–3). The significance of these records is that many of these sites are now lost or have been further damaged by earthquakes and stone-robbing. It would be of great benefit to the academic community (and other interested parties) to establish an online photographic archive of all of these photographs in order to further research into the archaeology and history of these regions.

UNESCO Libyan Valleys survey

The UNESCO Libyan Valleys Survey (1979–1989) concentrated on a 50,000 km² pre-desert area in eastern Tripolitania. The Anglo-Libyan team recorded a vast number of previously unknown sites that included farmsteads, gsur, settlements, and cemeteries. This work revolutionised our understanding of the nature and density of settlement in this region. The two-volume publication (Barker *et al.* 1996a; 1996b) includes a synthesis and a gazetteer. The archive contains the original record sheets that provide additional detailed information such as measurements, drawings, and notes, and some pottery samples. These data (together with Brogan's material) could yield fresh insights into the architecture and building techniques of farmsteads and *gsur* of different periods. Furthermore, irrigation systems of the wadis could be further investigated, adding to the research already done on the complex and diverse water management systems and farming in these dry areas (e.g. Barker 1985; Brogan and Vita-Finzi 1965; Gilbertson and Hunt 1996; Gilbertson *et al.* 2000). The pottery samples would also greatly benefit from scientific investigation to help provenance them and compare them to more recent work in Libya and beyond to help trace trade routes, networks and chronological variations that may have been linked to particular political or climatic dynamics.



Figure 3. The mausoleum at Wadi Talah in 1981: the relief shown in Figure 2 was missing when the ULVS surveyed the area (photo: ULVS archive).

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The John Riley archive

This fantastic archive of notebooks, ceramic samples, thin-sections, photographs and drawings could be put to very good use through comparison with new excavation and survey material from Cyrenaica. John Riley was ahead of his time in terms of the scientific collection and study of ceramic evidence. Though his samples are mainly from his work at Sidi Khrebish in Benghazi (Riley 1979), there are also samples, notes and descriptions from Tocra, Cyrene, Ptolemais, Zuwaytinah, Jalo, Apollonia, Ajdabiya, Germa, Saniat Jibril, plus scrapbooks with photographs taken for Scanning Electron Microscope analysis of Sidi Khrebish material.

The Martyn Webb archive

Martyn Webb worked in Cyrenaica in the 1960s. He directed a project based on an aerial photographic survey of the Jabal Akhdar between Massah and al-Qubbah in the late 1950s and thus free of modern interference save for the Italian settlements and farms; neither of which change the landscape.This provided an unparalleled record of land-boundaries in an agricultural landscape which had remained visible since classical antiquity. He also collected ground-based photographs taken of the sites at the time. However, in 1963 Webb took up the foundation chair of geography at the University of Western Australia, which curtailed his research into ancient field systems in Cyrenaica. His archive contains 1960s plots of the Cyrene field systems, various later revisions, and photographs and field notes made by the 1960 and 1963 Oxford University Cyrenaica Expeditions.[2] This material is immensely valuable as many of the sites he plotted and photographed have since been damaged or destroyed by later building or agricultural development. A gazetteer of sites and the publication of the maps would add important information to the history of this area, and if made available online would provide a hugely useful and important resource for archaeologists working in the area.

El-Merj Excavation material

This excavation at ancient Barca in Cyrenaica is currently only reported on in interim reports in *Libyan Studies* (Vols 21–25) and would benefit from a re-assessment and a new study of the pottery, which is included in the archive. John Dore was the director in the field but never completed the final report before his death, unfortunately. It is particularly interesting for its deep stratigraphic sequence of medieval and early modern Islamic buildings, overlaying the possible Classical and early Islamic town, and is thus significant for our understanding of Libya's Islamic heritage. This archive would benefit from the completion of a final publication and specialist work on the materials.

The Thorn archive

This archive, the most recent collection to arrive, is in fact a compilation of archives that Thorn used to publish *The Necropolis of Cyrene: Two Hundred Years of Exploration* (2005), which also includes many of his own drawings. The papers are mainly connected to Alan Rowe, who led the original 1952–7 excavations from the University of Manchester. In addition, the archives of Dixon, Cassels, Jowlett and Buttle are included. Despite the size of the final publication (829 pages), there is undoubtedly additional information and illustrations and photographs that would benefit from reinterpretation and publication, and there is certainly a fascinating social history lurking in amongst all the excavation records. A systematic re-organisation of the material would be a first priority to identify its research potential. With the recent final publication of Richard Norton's exploration of the northern necropolis in Cyrene, there is also much comparative work to undertake (Santucci and Uhlenbrock 2013). This archive is likely to acquire added importance as a result of the tomb-robbing and unlicensed building activity which has been reported recently in the Cyrene area.

Historiography

The Libyan Studies archive offers an exciting opportunity for historiographical work on the archaeology of Libya and the development of the Society for Libyan Studies, but also the study of archaeology in general. For instance numerous letters between Brogan and other experts in the field such as Pierre Fr. Fournier, Emile Desforges, John Bryan Ward-Perkins, Joyce Reynolds and David Smith can be found that tell us about the difficulties (and joys!) of practising archaeology at that time. Other surprising gems in the archive include, for instance, a handwritten text of a talk by Francis Haverfield. The collections held in the Libyan Studies archive provide an excellent opportunity to 'look behind the scenes' at how archaeology was practised in the past, why and how the material was collected and what was deemed important at the time. This can give us clues not only about the personal research interest of the individual archaeologist, but also about how politics and society can influence the way we study the past.

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The Future

The intention of this paper is to highlight the potential of the Society for Libyan Studies archive, which goes far beyond the handful of research project areas suggested here. The collection is still growing, with material gradually being added, such as David Mattingly's Fazzan project, and eventually the records of the Euesperides excavations directed by Paul Bennett and Andrew Wilson. One of the most important goals for the future must be to develop a digital version of the archive. The outreach potential of an online digital archive would be immense, especially to Libyan academics and students, and this would provide relevant material to raise awareness of their rich cultural heritage to students and the general public. Moreover, digitisation preserves more fragile images and records, such as fading handwritten notes or brittle negatives and slides, for future generations of scholars. The sensitive political climate in Libya has had a negative effect on fieldwork, but this archive provides an important gateway to enable work on the history and archaeology of Libya to continue.

Notes

1 For more in depth information about Olwen Brogan and her outstanding life and work see Mattingly 2004 and a full bibliography of her work in Buck and Mattingly 1985.

2 Some of the records are kept in the Bodleian library collection of the Oxford University Exploration Club.

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