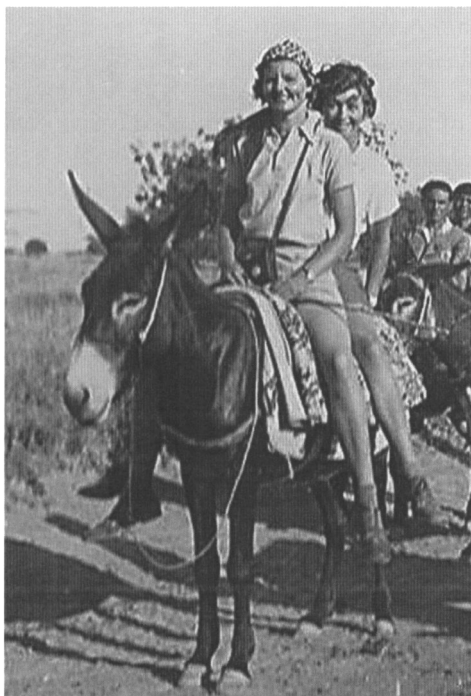


OBITUARY

MRS RACHEL MAXWELL-HYSLOP, F.B.A., F.S.A. (1914–2011)



The archaeologist Rachel Maxwell-Hyslop, who died on 9 May 2011 aged 97, had a long and valuable connection with the British Institute for the Study of Iraq, during her time known as the British School of Archaeology in Iraq. She was assistant to Sir Max Mallowan as editor of the eleventh issue of this journal (1949), served on the School's Council from 1958 to 1996, was elected Vice-President in 2001 and from 2004 to 2007 enjoyed the distinction of being its last President.

Rachel Maxwell-Hyslop was the daughter of Sir Charles and Lady Violet Clay. Her father (1885–1978) was librarian of the House of Lords and a noted antiquary. She was educated at Downe House in Thatcham and the Sorbonne. Her archaeological career began in 1933, cleaning Roman pavements at St Albans, and continued at Maiden Castle in Dorset, where Sir Mortimer Wheeler was beginning his exploration of the Iron Age hill fort. Camping on the exposed hilltop convinced her that archaeology would be more agreeable if practised abroad, and she enrolled as one of the first three students of Mesopotamian archaeology at the University of London's new Institute of Archaeology. In London her academic mentor was Sidney Smith, then Keeper of Egyptian and Assyrian Antiquities at the British Museum. His multidisciplinary approach to understanding material culture and daily life made a great impression on her. Digging in Turkey and Cyprus confirmed that her intellectual interests lay in the Near East.

Just before the war came marriage to Bill Maxwell-Hyslop. After war service driving ambulances, Rachel Maxwell-Hyslop joined the Institute of Archaeology as an honorary demonstrator, in which post she began her lifelong study of materials and technology. She was subsequently appointed assistant lecturer and then lecturer in Western Asiatic archaeology. Several of her students went on to win international reputations as leading authorities in arts and crafts, not only metalwork but also ivories and cylinder seals. While lecturing at the Institute of Archaeology Rachel also contributed to the British School of Archaeology's highly successful excavations at Nimrud in the 1950s by acting as Mallowan's administrator in London.

Her main intellectual activity lay in developing the field of ancient Near Eastern metals, gemstones and glass. A succession of scholarly articles, many published in this journal, demonstrated her expertise in the study of metals and their use in ancient Near Eastern weaponry and personal ornamentation. Retirement from teaching in 1966 allowed her to concentrate on the completion of her *magnum opus* on *Western Asiatic Jewellery c.3000–612 B.C.* Its publication in 1971 established her as the leading authority on the jewellery of successive historical cultures of Mesopotamia, Anatolia, the Levant and Iran. Forty years on it remains the standard work of reference.

Resignation from the university also allowed Rachel to devote more time to travel, often in the company of her lifelong friend Barbara Parker, later Lady Mallowan, who was her fellow student and colleague at the Institute of Archaeology and preceded her as President of the British School of Archaeology in Iraq (1983–93). The photograph that accompanies this obituary, kindly supplied by Andrew Maxwell-Hyslop, shows them on a donkey in Cyprus in the late 1930s, Rachel holding the stick, Barbara riding pillion. In 1989, at the combined age of one hundred and fifty-five, they made what was to be their final visit to Iraq and were able to spend some time at one last dig, the British Museum's excavations directed by her former students at Nimrud and Balawat.

Rachel Maxwell-Hyslop was elected Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries in 1950. Her signal contribution to Near Eastern archaeology was recognized in 1991 by her election as Fellow of the British Academy, like her father before her. It is said that she appreciated this honour, especially so late in life, because it gave her an opportunity to be outspoken without worrying about any adverse affect on her academic career.

A.R.G., D.C.