Curating the Macedonian Campaign

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‘As I found the graves of these well-armed warriors I could not but reflect on the progress of civilisation, for above those graves I had first, before excavation, to clear away countless shell-fragments, cartridges and all the oddments of modern war, before I could arrive, a few feet lower down, at the armaments of our ancestors’. (Casson 1935:275)

In 2012 the Archaeological Museum of Thessaloniki put on a temporary exhibition called ‘Archaeology Behind Battle Lines’ (Adam-Veleni and Koukouvou 2012). It marked an important anniversary: the centenary of the foundation of the Archaeological Service in Macedonia, which was formed as a result of the military conquest of Thessaloniki by Greek forces in 1912 during the First Balkan War. It shows the importance of archaeology to the Hellenic State that the archaeology of Macedonia was given protection even before the 1913 Treaty of London had been signed, marking the formal absorption of Thessaloniki and its surrounding area into Greece. The exhibition covered the first ten years of the Archaeological Service, finishing with objects brought by refugees from Asia Minor in 1922 as a result of the disastrous Greek campaign to expand the borders of the state further east (Koukouvou 2017). In this part of the world, the Great War was part of a much longer period of conflict which helped to determine the borders and populations of the modern Greek state.

Among the exhibits were objects excavated at the site of Chauchitza by Stanley Casson in 1921-1922. The countless shell-fragments Casson describes were the product of the British front line around Lake Doiran, where three major battles against Bulgarian and German forces were fought between 1916 and 1918. The Iron Age cemetery of Chauchitza was discovered accidentally in a camp behind the lines by a YMCA volunteer named Robert Gaddie in 1917 (Casson 1935:274; Maitland 2017). Captain Casson, who was serving both as an intelligence officer in the British Army and acting as assistant curator in the British Salonika Force Museum in Thessaloniki, investigated the site and found more burials. In 1921 he returned to excavate the site properly and the finds became some of the first additions to the collection of the Archaeological Museum of Thessaloniki (Casson 1921). The original finds from the site had ended up in the National Museum of Scotland in Edinburgh and the British Museum in London. Other warrior graves from Macedonia became part of the Louvre collections. Casson himself resumed his academic career, writing an important book on the history and archaeology of Macedonia before signing up again at the outbreak of the Second World War and dying while on military service in 1944 (Casson 1926; Myres 1945).

This paper will explore the intertwined nature of archaeology and warfare during the Macedonian Campaign which began with the arrival of Allied troops in Thessaloniki, also known as Salonika, in October 1915 and ended with their withdrawal in 1919. Although the Campaign was not on the scale of the Western Front, and has largely been forgotten by comparison, at its peak the Allied Army numbered 600,000 soldiers (Wakefield 2017:8). A combination of political necessity, military activity and archaeological opportunism resulted in the discovery and reporting of large numbers of sites and finds in the area of Macedonia under Allied control. The presence of archaeologists such as Stanley Casson serving in the British and French forces fostered the development of archaeology in the region, only a few years after it had become part of Greece. These foreign archaeologists co-operated with Greek archaeological officials, resulting in two museums being formed in Thessaloniki, one for British finds and the other for French finds. The museums were dispersed in 1919 with many of the finds being donated to the UK and France by the Greek government. Such objects, as the 2012 exhibition showed, have a dual significance as a result of their archaeological and First World War context.

Foundation of the Museums

Allied troops arrived in Salonika in October 1915 in order to go to the aid of Serbia, which was threatened by the imminent entry of Bulgaria into the First World War on the side of the Central Powers.[1] By the time French and British forces arrived in Serbia, it was too late to stop the Bulgarian advance, and by the end of 1915 they had retreated back into Greece with the remains of the Serbian army. Greece remained neutral and so the Bulgarian Army remained for the time being on the Serbian side of the border. Instead the Allied forces withdrew to the area around Salonika, a strategically important harbour on the Aegean Sea, and dug themselves in. These fortifications became known as the 'Birdcage' because so much barbed wire was used, but it was the associated trenches which became significant from an archaeological point of view because as they were dug, antiquities started coming to light. This was an inevitable consequence of trench digging on other fronts too (Saunders 2010:4-7), but in Macedonia it was particularly productive for the archaeology of the region because of the nature of the Campaign, the rich archaeological landscape, and the way these discoveries were reported and collected.

The British and the French took control of different areas of Macedonia, partly as a result of differences of opinion between the British and French commands about the aims of the Campaign. This was reflected in their approach to antiquities: the French Army included a formal scientific expedition which began to explore the French zone and undertake excavations. The British Army instead relied on archaeologists who had signed up, a number of whom had ended up in intelligence roles because of their knowledge of Greece and the Greek language. Among these was Ernest

Gardner, who signed up as a Lieutenant in the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve while Professor of Archaeology at the University of London, and had previously served as Director of the British School at Athens. In December 1915 Gardner persuaded his superior, Col. Cunliffe-Owen to issue orders that any antiquities found were to be reported. As a result, early in 1916, when the Greek Government in Athens expressed concern about the protection of antiquities in Macedonia, particularly those of the Byzantine period, Gardner was tasked with finding a mutually agreeable solution. In February 1916 a meeting was called between British and French representatives and the Greek official (Ephor) in charge of Byzantine antiquities, Adamantios Adamantiou. It was agreed that finds were to be reported and brought to Thessaloniki, where they could be inspected by the Ephor (Gardner and Casson 1919:10-12). In this way the antiquities laws could be upheld despite neutral Greece effectively being occupied by the Allied army, and orders to this effect were signed by its commander, General Maurice Sarrail.

As a result of the agreement, two museums were established in Thessaloniki. French finds were kept in the ancient church of Saint George, also known as the Rotunda (Farnoux 2012). The French took the opportunity to expand earlier Greek excavations in the area of the Rotunda and nearby Arch of Galerius, both important examples of Roman architecture (Hébrard 1920). From the start, the French were more willing to initiate archaeological excavations in and around Thessaloniki. Archaeologists and historians served in the formally constituted *Service Archéologique de l'Armée d'Orient*, whose activities were justified as being part of the Army's scientific mission, in the spirit of Napoleon (Mendel 1918). Many of its members had previously worked in Greece as members of the French School at Athens.

Meanwhile the British based their museum at another landmark of Thessaloniki, the White Tower, a remnant of the city's mediaeval walls on the harbourside. Gardner sought permission to use this building at the suggestion of Harry Pirie-Gordon, another archaeologist, who was at that time in charge of the Eastern Mediterranean Special Intelligence Branch in Salonika (Gill 2006). It was the ideal place for Gardner to combine his formal role as intelligence officer, since it was also used as a signals station and offered a view over the harbour, with his informal position as museum curator (figure 1). Gardner's assistant in both activities was 2nd Lieutenant Marcus Tod, University Lecturer in Greek Epigraphy at Oxford (Gill 2011: 393-95). As an Italian Liaison officer in Salonika approvingly noted of the British Army: "Archaeologists were found particularly useful in "I" work, because their training rendered them thoroughly capable of weighing, sifting, and co-ordinating evidence, and deducing accurate or at least reasonable conclusions." (Villari 1922: 71).

At first Gardner's intelligence role consisted largely of reading the newspapers from Athens in order to write reports on the political situation in Greece but over time his knowledge of modern Greek meant that he took a more active role in intelligence gathering, and he left the White Tower Museum

in 1917. He was succeeded briefly by Thomas Eric Peet, an Egyptologist serving with the Army Service Corps, before another officer took over, Major Alexander Wade, who served as curator until the end of the War. Unlike Gardner and Peet, or Stanley Casson, who was Wade's deputy as museum curator, Wade was an amateur archaeologist with no experience of Greece. Wade was Landing Officer for the harbour but also worked in counter-espionage, boasting of his spy-catching exploits in a book written after the War (Wade 1938). It was under Wade that the museum was moved in 1918 from the White Tower to nearby British Headquarters at the Papapheion Orphanage.

These various museums appear to have served their purpose of allowing Greek officials to inspect finds. Both Adamantiou and Georgios Oikonomos, Ephor of Antiquities visited the White Tower (Gardner and Casson 1919: 12). Oikonomos was succeeded by Eustratios Pelekidis in 1917, when royalist officials were removed from post following the abdication of the King, coinciding with the entry of Greece into the First World War on the side of the Allies. Pelekidis appears to have taken a more active interest in the collection, compiling a catalogue of the pottery of the British finds (Kanatselou and Shapland 2014). The British Salonika Force Museum, as it became known, was open by appointment and became part of the lively entertainment scene along the harbourside for off-duty troops (Gardner and Casson 1919:12). The atmosphere was dampened by the Great Fire of Thessaloniki in summer 1917 which destroyed much of the city but the museums continued to function. Over the course of the War, fighting became more intense along the borders of Greece but the British and French continued to accumulate archaeological material in Thessaloniki from discoveries made by soldiers.

Significant Finds

Before the First World War there had been little systematic archaeological excavation in Macedonia. In the 19th century, when the region was part of the Ottoman Empire, a number of antiquarians had come in search of inscriptions, and a collection of antiquities had been formed in Thessaloniki (Adam-Veleni 2017). Although the Greek Archaeological Service had initiated excavations in the city after 1912, there were few resources available against a background of continuing military conflict (Akrivopoulou 2012). The wider Macedonian landscape was known for its distinctive 'toumbes', artificial mounds, some of which had attracted the attention of treasure hunters and which had become of increasing interest to archaeologists. In 1909 Alan Wace and Maurice Thompson proposed a classification dividing them into funerary tumuli, prehistoric settlements and Greek town sites but they did not conduct any excavations in Macedonia (Wace and Thompson 1909). The First World War explorations of these sites are therefore regarded as the foundation of the prehistoric archaeology of the region (Kotsakis 2017). With the arrival of the Allies in 1915, as Gardner noted, "the numerous mounds which are familiar to Macedonian archaeologists lent themselves readily to military

purposes" (Gardner and Casson 1919:10). The use of the mounds for military installations and the digging of trenches across the landscape resulted in the accidental discovery of a large number of antiquities. Although some were no doubt kept by soldiers, the existence of orders to report them did result in some of them making their way to the British and French museums. Whereas the curators of the British Salonika Force Museum did little more than visit findspots and conduct the odd limited excavation, members of the *Service Archéologique de l'Armée d'Orient* initiated a number of large-scale excavations in the French zone.

Nevertheless, a number of significant discoveries were made by British soldiers while digging the Birdcage lines in early 1916. These included an inscription from the time of Hadrian dedicated to Manius Salarius Sabinus found by the Royal Scottish Fusiliers and a sixth century tomb reported by Major Thomas Gayer Anderson (Gardner and Casson 1919:15-24). Both were reported in the British press, with the grave group featuring in the *Illustrated War News* (figure 2). Gayer Anderson was a career soldier with a strong interest in Egyptology, and reported the find to Gardner in a beautifully illustrated letter (Morgan 2017:132-148). Another officer who had followed orders and reported an archaeological find to Gardner was Lieutenant Archibald Don, a recent graduate from Cambridge with an interest in geology (Gardner and Casson 1919:12-15). He and his brother had excavated two deposits of Neolithic pottery in a trench dug by their battalion of the Black Watch. It has only recently become apparent that this was at the time the earliest evidence for human occupation in Macedonia, with the oldest sherds dating to the Early Neolithic, around the 7th millennium BC (Dimoula 2017).

Over the course of the War, a number of soldiers, often officers with archaeological interests, contributed sherds found while trench digging or sometimes their own informal explorations of mounds while off-duty. Archaeology for some became a pastime, one of a number of leisure activities for which the Macedonian Campaign unfairly gained the reputation of being a holiday posting (Wakefield and Moody 2011:146-164). There was a perception that little fighting was going on in Macedonia but after the initial withdrawal in 1915, trench warfare was established along the borders of Greece and there was also a high number of casualties from malaria and dysentery as a result of the climate. As the British front line expanded to the borders of Greece, the number of sites represented in the British Salonika Force Museum increased, growing to 36 by the end of the War. Among the later finds, of particular importance were the Iron Age jewellery from the Chauchitza cemetery mentioned above and a warrior burial of the Classical period discovered by Major Wade and Ephor Pelekidis while investigating reports of looting near Thessaloniki (figure 3) (Morgan 2017:148-152). These finds were rapidly published in the *Annual of the British School at Athens* after the War, resulting in a wide-ranging survey of the Neolithic-Byzantine archaeology of Macedonia (Gardner and Casson 1919).

Among the significant finds made by French archaeologists were the warrior burials at the Archaic-Classical cemeteries of Zeitenlik and Mikro Karaburun (Picard 1919; Descamps 2017). These were the location of military camps but were extensively excavated by the archaeologist Léon Rey. The *Service Archéologique de l'Armée d'Orient* also conducted major excavations at three prehistoric mounds and explored many others. Soon after the War, Rey published a volume on prehistoric Macedonia which set these excavations in a wider regional context. Including detailed plans and sections of the mounds, as well as photographs and drawings of pottery, it was a seminal work for the prehistory of Macedonia (Rey 1917). It was dedicated to General Sarrail, who was frequently photographed visiting excavations in order to show that he was a patron of scientific research. One of these photographs gained wide circulation as a postcard (figure 4).

The arrival of British and French archaeologists as part of what later became 'The Army of the Orient' had a long-lasting legacy for Macedonian archaeology. The finds made in the course of military activities, alongside the more directed archaeological exploration, resulted in what would now be described as an archaeological field survey of the landscape. Important sites such as Chauchitza and Dikili Tash were discovered during the War and then continued to be excavated afterwards. In the case of Chauchitza, two soldiers who served in the British Salonika Force, Stanley Casson and Walter Heurtley, returned to Macedonia after the War was over. Heurtley went on to excavate a number of other sites in the 1920s and wrote an important synthesis, *Prehistoric Macedonia* (Heurtley 1939). Many of the wartime finds, however, did not stay in Greece as a result of agreements made at the end of the War.

Transfer

The British and French made separate agreements for the dispersal of their wartime museums when Allied troops withdrew in 1919. Ephor Eustratios Pelekidis was keen to establish a new museum in Thessaloniki, bringing together the various collections of finds in the city (Koukouvou 2017:268-270). Although the Greek antiquities law ensured that the British and French finds belonged to the Greek state, there were provisions allowing the export of certain objects (Galanakis 2017). The French finds were subject to a partage agreement between the Greek Archaeological Service and the Louvre, with finds arbitrarily divided so that the contents of individual tombs were often split between the two (Descamps-Lequime 2017:74). The British Salonika Force Museum was instead exported almost wholesale to London as a result of Alexander Wade's efforts. Although Ernest Gardner had intended that British finds stay in Greece, Wade offered the museum's contents to the newly formed Imperial War Museum, which refused them, before submitting his proposal to the War Office Trophies Committee. The Committee, although its remit was to collect military memorabilia for the Imperial War Museum, duly sent an order requesting the archaeological material. This resulted in a

diplomatic flurry as General Milne, commander of the British Army in Salonika, sought permission from the government in Athens to export the contents of the Museum. The collection was listed and permission was granted, with the exception of two inscriptions which were clearly felt to be of historical significance to the region of Macedonia (Kanatselou and Shapland 2014).

As a result of these agreements, 30 crates of objects were despatched to the Louvre and 29 crates to the War Museum in London. Knowing that the War Museum did not want the archaeological objects, Wade contact the British Museum, which agreed to take them instead. The Louvre and the British Museum dealt with the objects in similar ways: selected objects were immediately put on display, with the warrior burials proving popular. The bulk of the objects, however, remained uncatalogued in the museum basements. In 1919 Stanley Casson assisted with the registration of some of the British Museum's Macedonian objects, but only about 10% were registered at that time. The remainder, almost entirely potsherds, were finally registered in 2011 and 2013 (Shapland 2017:97-100). Some potsherds still bear labels written by soldiers giving the findspot, and Pelekidis' catalogue number, making them archaeological objects bearing the trace of their First World War history.

A number of other finds from Macedonia were brought back by individual soldiers. As a result, there are also objects from Chauchitza in the National Museum of Scotland (Maitland 2017). Wade also donated potsherds to the Ashmolean (Galanakis 2017). The British Museum also accepted a small number of objects from a tomb in Amphipolis, apparently revealed by shellfire, donated by Eric Gardner (Shapland 2017:97). These, and other objects still in private hands, can be categorised as souvenirs, often brought home by soldiers. By contrast the objects which went to the Louvre and British Museum functioned more as diplomatic gifts at a time when Greece needed the support of Britain and France as it sought to expand its borders (Clogg 2017: 48).

Curating the Great War

A small number of objects from Macedonia became part of permanent exhibitions at the Louvre and British Museum, but they were, and still are, primarily displayed for their aesthetic or archaeological interest. It was only in 2011 with the Louvre's temporary exhibition, '*Au royaume d'Alexandre le Grand. La Macédoine antique',* that attention was drawn to the wartime context of some of these objects (Descamps-Lequime 2011). The exhibition also provided the impetus for the Louvre to work with the Archaeological Museum of Thessaloniki in order to understand the tomb assemblages from Zeitenlik and Mikro Karaburun split up in 1919. As a result some of the finds made by French soldiers which had remained in Thessaloniki were temporarily put on display in France along archival material and other finds made by the Army of the Orient.

In 2012 the 'Archaeology Behind Battlelines' exhibition in Thessaloniki included, alongside a number of finds from Chauchitza, the Salarius inscription mentioned above, which the Greek government had retained in 1919 (Koukouvou 2017). It was shown alongside the photograph of its discovery by British troops, emphasising its wartime context (figure 5). Unfortunately it did not prove possible to include British Salonika Force finds from the British Museum as had been intended. Nevertheless, the catalogue and related symposium at the British Museum provided the opportunity to explore the archaeological activities of Allied soldiers in Macedonia. Continuing interest in this topic in Greece is shown by a 2018 exhibition, *Archaeology in Times of War at Kilkis,* at the Archaeological Museum of Kilkis in Central Macedonia[2] and a recent book on the subject (Andreou and Efkleidou 2018). The centenary of the First World War in Greece has been marked with a number of other exhibitions and conferences (Katsaridou and Motsianos 2017; Mourelos et al. 2018).

The various centenaries of the First World War in 2014-2018 provided the opportunity for heritage organisations in Britain to join the commemoration activities (coordinated as *14-18 Now*). These largely focussed on the Western Front, and to a lesser extent on the British Navy and the Home Front in line with the First World War events the Government chose to focus on commemorating (DCMS 2013). The Gallipoli Campaign was a significant exception, which in some ways stood for the wider reach of the conflict. The Macedonian Campaign remained somewhat neglected, echoing the experience of veterans in the aftermath of the First World War (Palmer 1965:239-242; Wakefield and Moody 2011:235-236). There was a small display of Macedonian finds at the British Museum, including coins and other objects from Chauchitza. The Sedgwick Museum of Earth Sciences in Cambridge featured Archibald Don in a display on Cambridge geologists in the First World War (Freshney 2015). Soon after finding the Neolithic sherds mentioned above, Don had discovered a mammoth tusk at the bottom of the trench and sent it off to Cambridge. The display also acted as a form of commemoration since Don died of malaria a few months after the mammoth tusk arrived in Cambridge. A label on the tusk, recording Lieut. A.W.R. Don as the donor and the findspot as 'Nr. Aivali Salonika, 1916' gave an immediacy to the history of the tusk given in the display.

Although the Macedonian Campaign remains largely unknown outside Greece, despite the efforts of organisations like the Salonika Campaign Society, the focus on First World War centenaries has resulted in an increasing number of academic publications on this subject. As well as the various exhibition catalogues and other publications, the British Salonika Force collection at the British Museum is now available in its entirety on its website, and the online collections databases of the National Museum of Scotland and Louvre also include objects excavated by soldiers[3]. The British Museum online database received unexpected media attention in Greece in 2014 when objects from Amphipolis were erroneously linked to an excavation of an important burial mound at the same site; a widely reported conspiracy theory suggested that British troops had looted the mound despite it being of a later date than the British Museum finds and the other side of the front line (Holloway 2014).

This demonstrates that collections databases can be used to tell a variety of stories: while they are an important means of making objects in museum collections available, museums also need to provide overviews of their collections, and the circumstances of acquisition. There is the potential for online exhibitions to fulfil this role, in the same way that temporary exhibitions have in recent years. Vodcasts and blog posts are another way to tell these stories (Shapland 2015).

Conclusions

Over time, the archaeological significance of the finds made by British and French soldiers in the First World War Macedonian Campaign has decreased. Some of the sites they explored, such as Mikro Karaburun (Karabournaki) or Aivatli (Lete), have been excavated subsequently, using modern techniques producing more detailed data. The syntheses by Casson and Heurtley have been superseded by the continuing discoveries of the Greek Archaeological Service and other academic projects. The centenaries of the various battles and conflicts which affected Thessaloniki in the early twentieth century have instead stimulated a growing interest in the historical significance of the same objects that were once used to establish the archaeology of the region. Labels which once simply recorded a findspot now have a poignancy as First World War documents. Exhibitions at the Louvre and Archaeological Museum of Thessaloniki have placed these objects in a military context rather than a purely archaeological context. In some ways these exhibitions have come full circle: these finds were first curated in temporary wartime museums in Thessaloniki staffed by British and French soldiers. The postwar deposition of these objects in archaeological museums helped fix their identity as archaeological finds but their significance continues to change as a result of different contexts of display and the stories that are told about them.

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Notes

[1] For detailed accounts of the Macedonian Campaign see Falls (1933-35), Palmer (1965) and Wakefield and Moody (2011).

[2] With an accompanying website: https://www.warandarchaeology.gr/en

[3] British Museum (https://research.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/search.aspx): 3076 results for 'British Salonika Force'; National Museums Scotland (https://www.nms.ac.uk/explore-our-collections/search-our-collections/): 106 results for 'Chauchitsa'; Louvre (http://cartelen.louvre.fr/): 9 results for 'Armée d'Orient' .

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