

# ΥΠΟΥΡΓΕΙΟ ΠΟΛΙΤΙΣΜΟΥ

ΓΕΝΙΚΗ ΔΙΕΥΘΥΝΣΗ ΑΡΧΑΙΟΤΗΤΩΝ ΚΑΙ ΠΟΛΙΤΙΣΤΙΚΗΣ ΚΛΗΡΟΝΟΜΙΑΣ  
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*Τα αρχειακά τεκμήρια μιλούν...  
για τις πρώτες γυναίκες στην αρχαιολογία  
(πρώτο μισό 20ού αιώνα)*



ΑΘΗΝΑ 2026

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## ΠΡΟΛΟΓΟΣ

Στο πρώτο μισό του 20ού αιώνα οι λιγοστές γυναίκες αρχαιολόγοι εργάζονταν στην «αφάνεια». Η κυριαρχία των ανδρικών επαγγελματικών και επιστημονικών προτύπων δημιουργούσε σημαντικούς φραγμούς στην ένταξη γυναικών επιστημόνων στον χώρο. Ταυτόχρονα, όπως προκύπτει από τα λιγοστά δημοσιευμένα στοιχεία, εξαιρετικά περιορισμένη υπήρξε και η μελέτη της ζωής και του έργου των Ελληνίδων και ξένων αρχαιολόγων που έδρασαν στην ελληνική επικράτεια.

Το τοπίο αλλάζει τις τελευταίες δεκαετίες, καθώς ανασύρονται από τη λήθη αρχειακά τεκμήρια σχετικά με τη δράση των πρώτων γυναικών αρχαιολόγων. Έναν ικανοποιητικό αριθμό αυτών των τεκμηρίων διαθέτει και το Ιστορικό Αρχείο Αρχαιοτήτων και Αναστηλώσεων της Διεύθυνσης Διαχείρισης Εθνικού Αρχείου Μνημείων (ΔΔΕΑΜ). Το υλικό αυτό σε συνδυασμό με τα αρχεία ξένων αρχαιολογικών σχολών, πανεπιστημίων, μουσείων, επιστημονικών ιδρυμάτων αλλά και προσωπικών αρχείων ήρθε να φωτίσει ενδιαφέρουσες πτυχές της προσωπικότητας γυναικών που έδρασαν ανασκαφικά ή συνέβαλαν με την παρουσία τους στο αρχαιολογικό έργο, αφήνοντας ανεξίτηλο το αποτύπωμά τους.

Με έναυσμα το διαθέσιμο αρχειακό υλικό διοργανώθηκε υβριδικά τον Νοέμβριο του 2021, εν μέσω πανδημίας, επιστημονική συνάντηση με τον εύγλωττο τίτλο *Τα αρχειακά τεκμήρια μιλούν... για τις πρώτες γυναίκες στην αρχαιολογία (πρώτο μισό του 20ού αιώνα)*. Η συνάντηση δεν απέβλεπε στο να καλυφθεί πλήρως και σε όλες τις διαστάσεις του το θέμα στο οποίο ήταν αφιερωμένη, αλλά να τεθούν οι βάσεις για έναν γόνιμο διάλογο με στόχο την αξιοποίηση των αρχειακών συλλογών και τη διάθεσή τους στην επιστημονική κοινότητα και το ευρύ κοινό. Συγχρόνως απέβλεπε στην καλύτερη γνωριμία της επιστημονικής κοινότητας με τις υπάρχουσες αρχειακές συλλογές, όπως επίσης και στη διερεύνηση ενδεχόμενων συνεργειών για τον εντοπισμό κοινών αρχειακών συνόλων, τη διασύνδεση των τεκμηρίων και την αξιοποίησή τους μέσω ψηφιακών τεχνολογιών.

Το αρχειακό υλικό που αξιοποίησαν οι ανακοινώσεις μας παρείχε την ευκαιρία να παρακολουθήσουμε τους παράλληλους και ενίοτε συμπορευόμενους βίους των πρώτων Ελληνίδων και λιγοστών Ευρωπαίων αρχαιολόγων. Ο αρχικός σχεδιασμός προέβλεπε τη συμμετοχή περισσότερων ομιλητριών και, κατά συνέπεια, τη γνωριμία με περισσότερες σημαντικές προσωπικότητες Ευρωπαίων και Αμερικανίδων αρχαιολόγων. Ωστόσο, οι έκτακτες υγειονομικές συνθήκες ανέτρεψαν εν μέρει τα σχέδιά μας.

Η επιστημονική συνάντηση πραγματοποιήθηκε με την υποστήριξη της τότε προϊσταμένης της ΔΔΕΑΜ, επίτιμης διευθύντριας Αρχαιοτήτων Ευγενίας Γερούση, ενώ την επιμέλεια της επιστημονικής συνάντησης είχαν η αρχαιολόγος Σοφία Φραγκουλοπούλου και η υπογράφοσα. Στην καλλιτεχνική επιμέλεια του συνεδριακού υλικού συνέβαλε καθοριστικά και ο συντηρητής αρχαιοτήτων και έργων τέχνης Δημοσθένης Τσορμπατζόγλου. Την επίλυση των τεχνικών θεμάτων έφερε σε πέρας ο πληροφορικός Νίκος Συρρός σε συνεργασία με την εταιρεία που ανέλαβε την τεχνική υποστήριξη της διαδικτυακής κάλυψης της ημερίδας.

Τη διεκπεραίωση των οικονομικών θεμάτων επωμίστηκε το Τμήμα Υποστήριξης Λειτουργίας της ΔΔΕΑΜ, με προϊστάμενο τον Νίκο Λένο, και κυρίως οι διοικητικοί υπάλληλοι Χρύσα Πλευρά και Μαρία Τσούγκα.

Η εκδήλωση φιλοξενήθηκε στο Επιγραφικό Μουσείο, όπου ο διευθυντής του Νάσος Θέμος, οι προϊστάμενες των τμημάτων Γιάννα Βενιέρη και Έλενα Ζαβού και οι αρχαιολόγοι Σταματούλα Μακρουπόδη και Μαίρη Φουντούλη κατέβαλαν κάθε δυνατή προσπάθεια για την ομαλή διεξαγωγή της συνάντησης κάτω από τις δύσκολες υγειονομικές συνθήκες.

Ο ανά χείρας συλλογικός τόμος περιέχει δέκα πρωτότυπες και αρχειακά τεκμηριωμένες μελέτες με την υπογραφή – ίσως όχι τυχαία – μόνο γυναικών αρχαιολόγων και ιστορικών, οι οποίες έφεραν σε πέρας με γνώση και υπευθυνότητα το δύσκολο εγχείρημα της σκιαγράφησης των προσωπικοτήτων πρωτοπόρων αρχαιολόγων.

Η αναδίφηση σε αρχειακά τεκμήρια ανέδειξε ενδιαφέρουσες και άγνωστες πτυχές του βίου και της δράσης των πρώτων αρχαιολόγων. Στις Ελληνίδες συγκαταλέγονται η εμβληματική μορφή της Σέμνης Παπασπυρίδη-Καρούζου, η Ειρήνη Βαρούχα-Χριστοδουλοπούλου, η Ελένη Φίλτσου-Παππαδάκη, η Ιωάννα Κωνσταντίνου και η Βενετία Κώττα. Με τα επαρκή επιστημονικά εφόδια που διέθεταν, χάρη και στην αστική τους καταγωγή, διακρίθηκαν σε μια ανδροκρατούμενη αρχαιολογική κοινότητα, καταλαμβάνοντας σημαντικές θέσεις σε μουσεία και Εφορείες Αρχαιοτήτων.

Σε διαφορετικά κοινωνικά περιβάλλοντα ανατράφηκαν οι μεγαλοαστικής καταγωγής Βρετανίδες Winifred Lamb και Sylvia Benton, καθώς και οι Γερμανίδες Elisabeth Jastrow, Berta Segall, Margaret Bieber και άλλες ομότεχνές τους. Προερχόμενες από εύπορες οικογένειες και με σπουδές σε γνωστά πανεπιστήμια, κινούμενες όμως στο δύσβατο και επισφαλές περιβάλλον της εποχής του Μεσοπολέμου, μπόρεσαν χάρη και στην υποστήριξη των ξένων αρχαιολογικών σχολών και ινστιτούτων να συνεχίσουν τις σπουδές τους στην Ελλάδα και να αφοσιωθούν με πάθος στη μελέτη και έρευνα του αρχαίου ελληνικού πολιτισμού. Ιδιαίτερο ενδιαφέρον παρουσιάζει και η συμβολή Γερμανίδων γυναικών, κυρίως θυγατέρων και συζύγων γνωστών αρχαιολόγων, οι οποίες δρώντας στο πλευρό τους συνέδραμαν ουσιαστικά στο ανασκαφικό τους έργο. Μοναδική είναι η περίπτωση της εύπορης Αμερικανίδας Εύας Palmer, κατόπιν συζύγου του Άγγελου Σικελιανού, η οποία κινούμενη στις παρυφές της αρχαιολογίας, διαδραμάτισε καίριο ρόλο στη χρηματοδότηση και οργάνωση των Δελφικών εορτών.

Ο παρών τόμος είναι καρπός συνεργασίας και κοινής βούλησης για τη δημοσιοποίηση των ανακοινώσεων της ημερίδας στην αρχαιολογική κοινότητα και στο ευρύτερο ενδιαφερόμενο κοινό.

Για την έκδοση των πρακτικών της ημερίδας, θερμές ευχαριστίες οφείλονται στην προϊστάμενη της ΔΔΕΑΜ Μαρία-Ξένη Γαρέζου που ενθάρρυνε την πρωτοβουλία αυτή, στην πρόεδρο του ΟΔΑΠ Νικολέττα Διβάρη-Βαλάκου, επίτιμη διευθύντρια Αρχαιοτήτων, και στο Διοικητικό Συμβούλιο που ενέκριναν την ένταξη του τόμου στο εκδοτικό πρόγραμμα, καθώς και στην πολύπειρη διευθύντρια Εκδόσεων και Ψηφιακών Εφαρμογών Ελένη Κώττου, σταθερή αρωγό σε κάθε εκδοτικό εγχείρημα της αρχαιολογικής κοινότητας. Ξεχωριστές είναι οι ευχαριστίες προς την επιμελήτρια Χριστίνα Μακαρατζή για την εξαιρετική γλωσσική και τυπογραφική επιμέλεια του τόμου.

Τέλος, ευχαριστούμε θερμότατα τις συγγραφείς του τόμου που μας εμπιστεύτηκαν τα κείμενά τους και συνεργάστηκαν άφογα σε όλη την εκδοτική διαδικασία.

Αθηνά Χατζηδημητρίου  
Ιστορικό Αρχείο Αρχαιοτήτων και Αναστηλώσεων  
Διεύθυνση Διαχείρισης Εθνικού Αρχείου Μνημείων

## ΠΕΡΙΕΧΟΜΕΝΑ

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# From Macedonia to Ithaca: Sylvia Benton in Greece between the World Wars\*

Catherine Morgan

From the time that they were first admitted in 1890-1891, women students of the British School at Athens were active in studying antiquities across Greek lands, travelling extensively, often in difficult conditions, and (from 1911 onwards) participating with increasing regularity in School excavations<sup>1</sup>. Yet by the time that Britain declared war in 1939, very few women had been permitted to direct School excavations. Scholars such as Mercy Money-Coutts or Edith Eccles (who worked with John Pendlebury on Crete) were instrumental in the completion of field projects directed or co-directed by male colleagues<sup>2</sup>. This reluctance to yield authority to women makes the achievements of two figures in particular all the more remarkable<sup>3</sup>. Winifred Lamb has been the subject of extensive recent research<sup>4</sup>, but the subject of this chapter, Sylvia Benton (fig. 1), is less frequently discussed.

Despite significant differences in their intellectual outlook, personal means, social class, and connections, both Lamb and Benton were professional and social pioneers in the conservative society of the School between the wars (fig. 2). An important link between them was their collaboration with



Fig. 1. Sylvia Benton. Portrait accompanying her record of admission as student of the BSA for the academic year 1927-1928 (BSA Archive, BSA Albums, BSAA/7/108).

\* Particular thanks are due to Amalia Kakissis (British School at Athens Archive), Athina Chatzidimitriou and Archontoula Papoulakou (Historical Archive of Antiquities and Restorations, Hellenic Ministry of Culture), Peter Stewart (Classical Art Research Centre, University of Oxford) and Patricia Aske (Pembroke College, Cambridge). Roderick Bailey kindly shared his research on Walter Heurtley in The National Archive.

1. Gill 2002.

2. Schofield n.d.

3. For example, Winifred Lamb's offer to excavate at Eleutherna (using her personal funds), if necessary in collaboration with Humfry Payne but on terms of equality, was regarded as unacceptable: BSA Archive, Corporate Records-London, 1929: 2.4 (Q-Z); Woodward: Le Fanu to Woodward 1/1/1929, 25/1/1929.

4. Cooper 2012. Gill 2018. I thank Amalia Kakissis for sharing work in progress.



Fig. 2. Sylvia Benton (top right) and Winifred Lamb (far right) at Phyle with John Pendlebury (top centre), Hilda White (centre), and Miss Turnbull (left) (BSA Archive, John Pendlebury Personal Papers, PEN/2/2/1/68).

Walter Heurtley, the School's Assistant Director from 1923-1933. Lamb met Heurtley in 1921 when, as Students of the School, they worked together on Alan Wace's excavation at Mycenae. They remained lifelong friends: she wrote his obituary for the School's *Report for the Session 1954-1955*. In 1925, Lamb joined Heurtley's excavation staff at Vardaroftsa in Macedonia, and she was a well-established team member by the time that Benton joined them in 1927<sup>5</sup>. Their subsequent research – Lamb mostly in the northeast Aegean (notably at Thermi)<sup>6</sup> and Benton in northwestern Greece and the Ionian islands<sup>7</sup> – was initially aimed towards achieving a broad understanding of the prehistory of northern Greece, from western Anatolia to Epirus. Both women travelled extensively to study pottery assemblages. Benton's notebooks in the Archive of the British School reveal work, for example, on Neolithic and Bronze Age Boiotia, on a scale hard to guess from her publications alone<sup>8</sup>.

Sylvia Benton is best known for her pioneering excavations on Ithaca and for her work on early Greek bronzes, especially the tripods from the shrine in Polis Bay excavated in 1930-1932 (fig. 3)<sup>9</sup>. Shortly after her death in September 1985, her former collaborator John Cook, the first post-World War II Director of the School, wrote of the admiration for her work felt by leading European scholars such as Emil Kunze and Georg Karo, even though many British colleagues underrated her<sup>10</sup>. In this article, however, I aim to look behind Benton's published work, to contextualize her activities in Greece, and to track the development of her approach to landscape, ancient and modern. The evidence for this is mostly found in

5. Gill 2018, 123-128.

6. Lamb 1936.

7. Benton 1931-1932.

8. BSA Archive, Sylvia Benton Personal Papers, BEN/3/1/5.

9. Benton 1934-1935a. Benton 1934-1935b. Benton 1938-1969. Benton and Anderson 1953.

10. BSA Archive, Helen Waterhouse Personal Papers, HTW/1/4/2, Cook to Waterhouse 3/10/85.



Fig. 3. Sylvia Benton seated to the right, excavating at Polis Cave, Ithaca (BSA Archive, Sylvia Benton Personal Papers, BEN/1/3/1/23).

the Archive of the British School and the Historical Archive of Antiquities and Restorations of the Hellenic Ministry of Culture. It consists of Benton's travel diaries from her early years in Greece, the rich archive of her forty years of work in the Ionian islands, and records of Walter Heurtley's excavations in Macedonia. Yet despite a wealth of material, we miss the personal voice which would give a direct understanding of Benton's own views and character. Her academic correspondence can be discursive and sometimes forthright: colleagues and School officers expressed a variety of opinions about her; and I have been fortunate to talk to a number of people who worked with her<sup>11</sup>. But whereas Winifred Lamb's view of School life is vividly expressed in her letters to her parents, almost none of Benton's personal correspondence survives and her diaries contain only limited reflection. As a result, we see her through the eyes of (largely male) others. While not an unusual challenge in female life writing (and one which adds insights into the male observers), in the context of this volume I draw attention to the importance of understanding the often distinctive contributions of those female scholars whose voices are least heard.

Benton's background and early life differed from that of most of her contemporaries at the BSA. She was born in 1887 in Lahore, where her father was a senior judge, into a Scottish family originally from Speyside<sup>12</sup>. She read Classics at Girton College, Cambridge, taking final examinations in 1910 and a teaching qualification in 1912. She then taught for some fifteen years, spending the duration of World War I as a provincial high school teacher. She thus lacked the experience of war service which in varying ways proved formative for many of

11. I thank in particular Helen Hughes Brock, Olympia Megalogeni, and the late Robert Cook and Sotiris Kouvaras.  
12. Cook 1985.

the people she was to encounter in Athens<sup>13</sup>. There is anecdotal evidence of Benton's early desire to become an archaeologist despite opposition from her parents and local professionals. Opposition eased with her father's death in 1917 and then her inheritance of what she termed a 'modest competence'. She was not independently wealthy in the same way as Lamb, who could cover her own fieldwork expenses, but she was able to give up teaching and competing for academic jobs. This may not have been entirely to her advantage, considering the course of her research and her reluctance to court patronage or sustain a strong professional network. Winifred Lamb, by contrast, entered an influential academic circle as a result of her activities as a vase collector, and in 1918, at the age of 25, was appointed Honorary Keeper of the Greek and Roman Department at the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge, an advisory role but nonetheless influential and a source of professional standing<sup>14</sup>.

Benton was 39 when she first came to Greece in 1926 on a sightseeing trip and 40 when she was admitted as a student at the BSA. She brought a passion for hiking and climbing, and a formidable level of physical fitness which put her in good company with the School's renowned circle of walkers (fig. 4), including Nicholas Hammond, John Pendlebury, and her regular companion, Walter Heurtley (fig. 5). Heurtley was closest to her in age and had also had a career as a teacher before enlisting in 1915 and serving on the Salonica Front for the remainder of the war. He then turned to archaeology and was admitted to the BSA as a student in 1921. Benton remained friends with Hammond (who was to work with her on Ithaca) despite bringing out his most competitive instincts in the field<sup>15</sup>, but Pendlebury was unhappy at being outpaced by a woman, as he admitted in a letter to his father<sup>16</sup>. Benton's diaries are hikers' itineraries<sup>17</sup>. She occasionally includes gossip about her companions, but there is none of the ethnographic and archaeological detail present in the diaries of other school members, such as Alan Wace or Stanley Casson in Macedonia, or indeed Heurtley himself (who was also a talented illustrator)<sup>18</sup>. Neither Benton's publications nor her diaries convey any sense of the social landscape, let alone of the stark contrast between the prosperous, Europeanized society of the Ionian Islands and war-ravaged Macedonia (figs. 6, 7)<sup>19</sup>. Benton liked to survey terrain from high points, to assess routes and paths, and generally to read the physical landscape and antiquities within it in quite an abstract way. Physical challenges appealed to her. She was refused readmission to the School in 1928-1929 because, while excavating in Sparta, she disobeyed an order from the Director not to climb

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13. For example, Winifred Lamb's employment in Naval Intelligence led her to work alongside a number of distinguished classicists, including Sir John Beazley, see Gill 2018, 38-45.

14. Cooper 2012. Gill 2018, 34-38, 47-54, 90-101, 136-157, 220-229.

15. Helen Hughes Brock, personal communication.

16. BSA Archive, John Pendlebury Family Papers, PEN/1/3/1/5/10 (he was also embarrassed by being injured while walking with Benton: PEN/1/3/1/5/11). Compare Sylvia Benton Personal Papers: BEN/1/1/4 (*A Walking Tour in the Peloponnesos*, 1927), BEN/1/1/6 (*Easter in the Cyclades*, 1927?), BEN/1/1/15 (*The West*, no date), BEN/1/1/10 (*S. Euboea*, 1928), BEN/1/1/12 (*Round the Peloponnesos*, 1928?), BEN/1/1/11 (*Chalkidike*, 1928), BEN/1/1/9 (*A Winter Trip in the Argolid*, 1928), BEN/1/1/14 (*Thessaly*, undated).

17. BSA Archive, Sylvia Benton Personal Papers: BEN/4/1/4 (*Walking Tour in Peloponnesos*, 1927), BEN/4/1/6 (*Easter in the Cyclades*, 1927), BEN/4/1/15 (*The West*, 1927), BEN/4/1/10 (*Trip to Euboea Island*, 1928), BEN/4/1/12 (*Round the Peloponnesos*, 1928), BEN/4/1/11 (*Trip to Chalkidike*, 1929), BEN/4/1/9 (*A Winter Trip in the Argolid*, 1929), BEN/4/1/14 (*Thessaly*, undated).

18. Pembroke College, Cambridge, GBR/1058/WAC/1, Wace, the papers of Alan J. B. Wace. Field Notebooks 19-9-1912. Classical Art Research Centre, University of Oxford, Casson Archive, *Macedonia and Thrace*, 1921. BSA Archive, Walter A. Heurtley Personal Papers, Heurt 1-8 (these notebooks evidently remained in the possession of Sylvia Benton, who presented them to the BSA in 1972).

19. Compare Classical Art Research Centre, University of Oxford, Casson Archive: *Macedonia and Thrace*, 1921 with Moschopoulos 2010, part 2, and Miliarakis 1890, part 1.



Fig. 4. Group in the village of Myriophyton near Olynthos, March-April 1928, including Sylvia Benton (right of doorway), John Pendlebury, and (seated) C. A. Raleigh Radford (BSA Archive, John Pendlebury Family Papers, PEN/2/2/1/280).

Taygetus alone. A mature, highly independent woman with substantial climbing experience was always liable to trust her own judgement. Nonetheless, her own account is revealing: the climb took place in foul weather, her local guide turned back, and she completed the last 2,000 feet of rock-climb solo<sup>20</sup>.

In her year away from Athens, Benton began an excavation in the Sculptor's Cave at Covesea on the Moray Firth (close to her family home), revealing a rich Late Bronze Age mortuary assemblage<sup>21</sup>. The endeavour itself, and the methodology applied (notably systematic sieving), lend credence to the idea that Benton had a serious interest in archaeology well before she came to Greece. Her conclusions, and especially the then daring proposal of mobility from central Europe (which eventually won favour with Gordon Childe), illustrate an important feature of her research throughout her career. Benton was intuitive in a way that could appear impulsive: when her observations hit the mark (and many do) they are very perceptive, but speculation opened her to criticism for a lack of rigour<sup>22</sup>. Benton's

20. BSA Archive, Sylvia Benton Personal Papers, BEN/1/1/4 (*A Walking Tour in the Peloponnesos*, 1927).

21. Benton 1931.

22. See n. 36 below.



Fig. 5. Walter Heurtley excavating at Chauchitza in 1921 (Classical Art Research Centre, University of Oxford, Stanley Casson Archive).

achievements at Covesea made no impression in Athens. In 1929-1930 she registered for the Diploma in Classical Archaeology in Oxford, returned to the School, and began to work in earnest in Macedonia. In Greece she was treated as a novice excavator and her reputation in Scotland never entered into consideration<sup>23</sup>. Late in 1928, the BSA London Secretary wrote to the Director that he found nothing wrong with Benton apart from her ignorance and unsuitability as a senior student<sup>24</sup>. Yet she was a Cambridge graduate, elected a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland in 1928, and already capable of directing a field project. The problem was likely her difference, and especially her independence and greater age<sup>25</sup>.

Benton's formative archaeological experience in Greece was gained working with Walter Heurtley at a series of Macedonian sites, including Sartse in 1929, Servia in 1930, and Armenochori in 1931<sup>26</sup>. The first of these to be excavated, Chauchitza, had been discovered in 1917 during the construction of dugouts for the Doiran offensive, the closing act of World War I on the Macedonian front. Stanley Casson, a former military intelligence officer heavily involved in wartime archaeology, studied the material and returned to excavate in 1921-1922 when BSA Assistant Director, bringing Heurtley to assist him. In addition to the establishment

23. Reflected in her obituaries, see Cook 1985. Keillar et al. 1985.

24. BSA Archive, Corporate Records - Athens, Correspondence Director-Secretary 1922-1932, File 1928-1929, Letter Le Fanu to Woodward dated 13/12/1929 and Letter Le Fanu to Payne dated 15/12/1932.

25. BSA Archive, John Pendlebury Family Papers, PEN/1/3/1/5/8 (letter dated 4 March 1928), describing to his father the students encountered when he first arrived at the BSA, called Benton 'an elderly school marm, tough as nails and hard as a rock'. In later accounts (especially when writing to his future wife, Hilda) he is much less complimentary (see PEN/1/2/1/1/1, written *en route* to Macedonia in 1928).

26. For an overview of the programme, see Heurtley 1939, 1-59.



Fig. 6. Photographs of the Macedonia Expedition in 1928 from John Pendlebury's travel log (BSA Archive, John Pendlebury Family Papers, PEN/2/2/1).

of typological sequences in what were still new, barely explored lands within the Greek state, this work brought about the first systematic overview of long distance relationships, notably the Vardar valley trade routes. Interest in these larger goals led Heurtley to conduct his own excavation at Vardina and, after succeeding Casson as the School's Assistant Director, to widen the project and excavate a series of tumuli across a wider area<sup>27</sup>. In this he was joined by Winifred Lamb and then Sylvia Benton.

Two aspects of this work in Macedonia had a particular impact on Benton's career and outlook. First, the approach taken to landscape. I have written elsewhere about the impact of wartime military priorities on the study of ancient landscape around Thessaloniki, noting the novelty (in the Greek context) of the archaeological sampling linked to construction along routes of communication, high points, and defensible locations. These gains were further developed in post-war BSA research in Macedonia, which was more innovative than often recognised<sup>28</sup>. Whereas Stanley Casson had been an intelligence officer with a particular interest in the British Salonica Force Museum, Walter Heurtley fought on the front line during the Doiran offensive as an officer in the East Lancashire Regiment<sup>29</sup>. The area thus held personal significance for him: he was plainly captivated by its landscape and archaeology, and likely also relished both the opportunity to travel widely through the Balkans to study comparative material, and the quiet and distance from academic politics in Athens.

Not all School students on Heurtley's teams fully appreciated his work. Pendlebury, for example, did not linger despite the initial excitement expressed in letters to his father at the prospect of working in a little-known area<sup>30</sup>. Prominent members of the School's Managing Committee also saw Macedonia as an unwelcome distraction<sup>31</sup>. Yet Heurtley's approach

27. Heurtley 1939, xix-xxiii. Gill 2018, 123-128. Ignatiadou 2012. Maitland 2017. Pappa 2014.

28. Morgan 2017.

29. The National Archive WO 339/2056 and for mentions in dispatches, WO 372/24/75218. Nicholson and MacMullen 1936, 490-493. Heurtley ended the war as deputy governor of the military prison in Salonika.

30. BSA Archive, John Pendlebury Family Papers, PEN/1/3/1/5/22 (letter dated 4 December 1927).

31. BSA Archive, Corporate Records-London, Acc# 2.4 (Steel Case 1), Letters 1929-1930, File S-V, Letter to Le Fanu from MST, undated.



Fig. 7. Sylvia Benton in conversation at Kalamos, northern Ithaca (BSA Archive, Sylvia Benton Personal Papers, BEN/1/3/1/29).

permeated Benton's first two seasons of work in the Ionian islands<sup>32</sup>. She was a pioneer in setting aside Homer to pursue an overview of the archipelago and surrounding coasts which focused as much on the smaller islands of the Taphian chain and the Echinades as their larger neighbours. She conducted an extensive pedestrian survey, documenting natural resources and ancient remains, sailing around the islands, and trying to integrate maritime and terrestrial perspectives. While she had a particular interest in the Bronze Age (taking inspiration from her discussions with Gordon Childe on the role of northwest Greece in the Dorian migrations and 'coming of the Greeks'), she pursued a broad chronological coverage of all periods up to Medieval, with extensive use of local informants. This is far from the standard classical archaeology of the time: the closest but imperfect parallel is Nicholas Hammond's work in Epirus, begun in 1929 and published only in 1967<sup>33</sup>. It draws together threads from Covesea and Macedonia and displays a landscape sensibility far ahead of its time. Benton's unpublished 1934 Oxford BLitt thesis, *The Barony of Odysseus*, drew on this phase of work and retains some of the same feel albeit with a specific Late Bronze Age focus.

The second legacy of the Macedonian campaigns was the close friendships formed, including that between Benton and Heurtley. I have emphasized that both stood out in the younger, competitive social circle of the BSA. This was a matter not only of age and career path, but also religion and politics. Benton was a strict Presbyterian: Ithacesians still recall her as austere, tenacious, and uncompromising. Heurtley was a Catholic convert born into a

32. Benton 1931-1932.

33. Hammond 1967, vii-ix on the history of the work, 3-45 for a flavour of the geographical approach incorporating ethnographic observations.

family of distinguished theologians but, unlike Lamb, not part of the Anglo-Catholic establishment. His conversion – on his own account inspired by the beauty of Austrian baroque church architecture experienced on early travels – was deeply held. Before the war he taught in Catholic schools (the Birmingham Oratory and Stonyhurst), and in 1915 married into leading Irish nationalist circles. His wife, Eileen, came from a landowning family: her great-grandfather, Daniel O’Connell, had championed Catholic emancipation in Britain and been an early voice for Irish independence<sup>34</sup>. These considerations apart, both Heurtley and Benton faced hostility from factions on the BSA Managing Committee. Heurtley was eventually manoeuvred out of office in 1933, but back in 1929 Maurice Thompson openly referred to him as ‘not a scholar’ and to his archaeological interests as ‘hardly Hellenic at all’<sup>35</sup>. His position in the School largely rested on his administrative abilities. Benton was seen as ‘difficult’ and her academic standing regularly attacked, to the extent of trying to reassign her material to others (there was, for example, an unsuccessful attempt to commandeer her work on the bronze tripods from Palaikastro on Crete)<sup>36</sup>. Heurtley felt the slight badly: Benton’s response is unknown.

In 1929, the British School agreed to excavate on Ithaca with funds raised from a public appeal by James Rennell Rodd, a former diplomat and amateur Homerist who wanted archaeological evidence of the kingdom of Odysseus to counter Wilhelm Dörpfeld’s theory placing it on Leukas<sup>37</sup>. I have written elsewhere about the historical significance of this expedition and the politics surrounding it, drawing heavily on the Historical Archive of Antiquities and Restorations<sup>38</sup>. Rodd effectively manoeuvred the BSA into undertaking the project<sup>39</sup>. The School Director, Humfry Payne, wanted a Classical excavation and favoured Siphnos. He conceded that Ithaca would be popular, although he began to take a real interest only when Aetos yielded significant quantities of Corinthian and Corinthianizing pottery, which was studied by his protégé as School Student, Martin Robertson<sup>40</sup>. Payne’s problem was finding suitably qualified staff for the expedition. Since Macedonia was not the School’s priority, Heurtley was reassigned (to his displeasure)<sup>41</sup>. Benton had travelled in the islands and the northwest and could work with Heurtley<sup>42</sup>, but was seen as unqualified to direct. Neither agreed with Rennell Rodd’s Homeric agenda or wanted any part in his planned book<sup>43</sup>

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34. Hood 1998, 145-149.

35. See n. 31 (MST to Le Fanu), BSA Archive, Corporate Records-London, Acc# 3.3 (Steel Case 2), Letters 1936, Heurtley to Barnett 20 March 1936.

36. BSA Archive, Corporate Records-London, Acc# 3.2 (Steel Case 2), Letters 1935, Barnett to Hutchinson 28 March 1935 and Acc# 3.3 (Steel Case 2), Letters 1936, Skeat to Myres 4 February 1935.

37. Rennell of Rodd 1932-1933. Appeal: *Times* 6/11/1929, 17/11/1929, *Observer* 1/12/1929.

38. Morgan (forthcoming).

39. Rodd published a premature claim that responsibility was ‘practically settled’ (*Observer* 1/12/1929). BSA Archive, Corporate Records-Athens, Correspondence Chairman-Director 1922-1924, 1928-1939, 1945-1952, File 1929-1931, Macmillan to Payne, variously 15/11/29-16/12/31. Correspondence Director-Secretary 1922-1932, File 1927-1929, Woodward to Le Fanu dated 27 June 1928.

40. BSA Archive, Corporate Records-Athens, Correspondence Chairman-Director 1922-1924, 1928-1939, 1945-1952, File 1929-1931, Macmillan to Payne 11 December 1929 and Payne to Macmillan 21 November 1929; Corporate Records-London, Acc# 2.3 (Steel Case 1), Letters 1929-1930, Payne, Payne to Macmillan 8 January 1930 and Acc# 3.2 (Steel Case 2), Letters 1935, Payne to Myres 24 June 1935 and 2 January 1936.

41. BSA Archive, Corporate Records-London, Acc# 2.3 (Steel Case 1), Letters 1929-1930, Payne, Payne to Macmillan 23 October 1929. Corporate Records-Athens, Correspondence Chairman-Director, 1929-1931, Macmillan to Payne 15 November 1929 and Payne to Macmillan 21 November 1929.

42. BSA Archive, Sylvia Benton Personal Papers, BEN/1/1/15 (*The West*, no date), BEN/1/1/12 (*Round the Peloponnese*, 1928?).

43. BSA Archive, Corporate Records-Athens, Director-Secretary 1933-1954, File 1932-1935, Myres to Payne 6 January 1934. Corporate Records-London, Acc# 2.9 (Steel Case 1), Letters 1933-1934, Payne to Myres 11 January 1934.

(happily the solution eventually adopted – a series of journal articles – gave proper prominence to Benton’s personal contribution). Heurtley approached the sites he dug – principally Pilikata and Aetos – in the same way as his Macedonian tumuli, looking for well-stratified early prehistory. Benton was assigned Polis Cave, which she dug with great success from 1930 to 1932 despite major logistical challenges, and rapidly published<sup>44</sup>. This excavation, and especially her treatment of the famous tripods, is perhaps her best-known achievement in Greek archaeology. Yet alongside this she continued to pursue her own regional research agenda, digging at Astakos in 1932, at Vasiliko and Katastari on Zakynthos in 1934 (with Hilda Lorimer)<sup>45</sup>, and applying to dig Kastri on Kythera in 1936 in order to understand trade from Crete into the islands (an application eventually withdrawn to make way for the excavation of tombs at Perachora)<sup>46</sup>.

Sadly, Heurtley and Benton’s friendship was ended by the Rennell Rodd expedition. Given their differences in character, it is tempting to suggest that they were bound together as much by shared adversity as common experience. Certainly, there was a volatility not seen in Heurtley’s relationship with Lamb (to judge from her generous obituary of him). The initial flash point was the extent to which they were willing to engage in local politics on Ithaca. Neither could avoid it, but Heurtley positively disliked it and disapproved of what he saw as Benton’s machinations<sup>47</sup>. Although Heurtley had a reputation as a reserved person with a dry sense of humour, incidents during his military service confirm that he had a fierce temper when provoked<sup>48</sup>. Academically, Benton owed much to him, but when she was finally able to draw a line under the Rennell Rodd campaign and pursue her own agenda on Ithaca, she became increasingly critical of his work<sup>49</sup>. The School supported her continuing research, but at the cost of a complete breach with Heurtley, who refused all correspondence with her (he had left the BSA in 1933 and served as the librarian of the Department of Antiquities of Palestine until his return to England in 1939)<sup>50</sup>. Writing after her death, John Cook singled out Walter Heurtley among the colleagues who in the end failed to do justice to her scholarly qualities and skills<sup>51</sup>.

Upon the formal conclusion of the Rennell Rodd expedition and Heurtley’s withdrawal, one might expect Benton to revert to her interest in the archipelago as a whole. Instead, she continued to focus on Ithaca, digging at Aetos, Agios Athanasios, Stavros, Tris Langadas, and several smaller sites. She became a stable presence on the island, collecting chance finds

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44. Benton 1934-1935a. Benton 1934-1935b. Benton 1938-1939.

45. Hellenic Ministry of Culture/Directorate for the Curation of the National Archive of Monuments/Department for the Curation of the Historical Archive of Antiquities and Restorations/776B: Ithaca 1934: 9029/832.

46. BSA Archive, Corporate Records-London, Acc# 3.1 (Steel Case 2), Letters 1934-1935, File M-P, Myres to Benton 29 December 1934. Corporate Records-Athens, Excavation Permits, File 1903-1939, Director to Ministry 28 February 1936. Corporate Records-London, Acc# 3.3 (Steel Case 2), Letters 1936, File M, Megaw to Myres 12 May 1936.

47. BSA Archive, Corporate Records-Athens, Excavation Reports A-K, Ithaca 1931-1968, Heurtley to Payne 15 November 1934.

48. Nicholson and MacMullen 1936, 490.

49. BSA Archive, Corporate Records-Athens, Correspondence Chairman-Director 1922-1924, 1928-1939, 1945-1952, File 1936, Myres to Dunbabin 6 December 1936. Corporate Records-Athens, Excavation Reports A-K, Ithaca 1931-68, Benton to Young/Benton to Myres 15 February 1939.

50. BSA Archive, Corporate Records-Athens, Excavation Reports A-K, Ithaca 1931-1968, Heurtley to Payne 24 July 1933 and 15 November 1933, Benton to Young 15 February 1939. Corporate Records-London, Acc# 3.3 (Steel Case 2), Letters 1936, File B, Benton to Blakeway 2 September 1936. Corporate Records-Athens, Correspondence Director-Secretary 1933-1954, File 1936, Myres to Dunbabin 6 December 1936 and Excavation Reports A-K, Ithaca 1931-1968.

51. BSA Archive, Helen Waterhouse Personal Papers, HTW/1/4/2, J. Cook to Waterhouse 3/10/85.

and reports of antiquities<sup>52</sup>. The loss of her manuscript catalogue of these finds during the Italian occupation leaves a real gap: such details as survive are to be found in correspondence in the Historical Archive of Antiquities and Restorations and the British School (a further study, beyond the scope of this chapter)<sup>53</sup>. Excavation projects were planned right up to the point when Benton was forced to return to England late in August 1939. From 1940 she was engaged in war work, initially in naval hydrography and then in postal and telegraph censorship in ‘uncommon languages’ (Greek included). She returned to Ithaca in 1947, and in 1951, with her pre-war team still largely intact, reported that she was close to completing her publications<sup>54</sup>. But then the catastrophic 1953 earthquake intervened. Benton turned her attention to civil relief, using contacts in the Admiralty to secure passage to the island despite the opposition of the BSA Director, and working with an army unit sent by the regional governor to salvage the museum<sup>55</sup>. She was fully aware of the political dimension of the relief operation. When the Council of Europe adopted Ithaca and other national powers sent aid, the BSA lacked the resources to act. Benton therefore went over the heads of the School’s Managing Committee to appeal to the Foreign Office<sup>56</sup>. Her main helper in this was another fascinating figure, Mark Ogilvie Grant, a former attaché in Athens and Captain in the Special Operations Executive, Greece (1940-1941), at the time employed in the information department of the Greek Embassy in London.

As the 1960s progressed, Benton’s academic agenda began to fade away. She continued to visit Ithaca to work on her material but, with the exception of Tris Langadas<sup>57</sup>, made little progress with publication. Her major unpublished manuscript, a guidebook to Ithaca drafted through the late 1960s-1970s with the aim of serving the expanding tourist market<sup>58</sup>, is an impractical mixture of a hiker’s guide beyond the capacity of the average tourist, vignettes of island life, and raw archaeological data presented with no concession to a popular audience.

Sylvia Benton retired to Scotland in 1970, where she continued to read widely on Scottish and Greek archaeology, and for a short while served as honorary Curator of the Elgin Museum, near her home. She paid her last visit to Greece in 1974 and died in 1985 at the age of 98, after almost 60 years in archaeology. Her publications on Polis Cave and Aetos are rightly celebrated. However, the high point of her career, between the world wars, coincided with an extraordinary and underrated period of thought about landscape. The archival evidence confirms the major and largely unacknowledged role that she played in this, even though her reputation almost certainly suffered from an unresolved tension between her personal interests and agendas and the academic priorities of the senior staff of the BSA.

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52. BSA Archive, Corporate Records-Athens, Excavation Reports A-K, Ithaca 1931-1968, Benton to John Cook 19 October (no year).

53. BSA Archive, Corporate Records-Athens, Excavation Reports A-K, Ithaca 1931-1968, Benton’s report to BSA 1 May 1947.

54. BSA Archive, Corporate Records-Athens, Excavation Reports A-K, Ithaca 1931-1968, Director’s report 2 October 1951.

55. BSA Archive, Corporate Records-Athens, Excavation Reports A-K, Ithaca 1931-1968, Benton to J. Cook 28 August 1953 and J. Cook report to BSA Managing Committee 11 September 1943.

56. BSA Archive, Corporate Records-Athens, Excavation Reports A-K, Ithaca 1931-1968, Director to Chairman 20 January 1954.

57. Benton and Waterhouse 1973.

58. BSA Archive, Sylvia Benton Personal Papers, BEN/2/2/1/1/2.

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ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

**Από τη Μακεδονία στην Ιθάκη: η Sylvia Benton στην Ελλάδα ανάμεσα σε δύο παγκόσμιους πολέμους**

Catherine Morgan

Αν και είναι περισσότερο γνωστή για τις πρωτοποριακές ανασκαφές της στην Ιθάκη, το ευρύτερο ενδιαφέρον της Sylvia Benton για το ελληνικό τοπίο – τόσο το αρχαίο όσο και το σύγχρονο – τεκμηριώνεται εκτενώς στις αναφορές των δραστηριοτήτων της που φυλάσσονται στο Αρχείο της Βρετανικής Σχολής Αθηνών και στο Ιστορικό Αρχείο Αρχαιοτήτων και Ανασθηλώσεων του ελληνικού Υπουργείου Πολιτισμού. Η εξέλιξη αυτού του ενδιαφέροντος μπορεί να ανιχνευθεί μέσα από τρία κύρια σύνολα αρχείων: τα ταξιδιωτικά ημερολόγια της Benton από τα πρώτα χρόνια της στη Βρετανική Σχολή, τα έγγραφα που αφορούν στις ανασκαφές του Walter Heurtley σε θέσεις της Μακεδονίας κατά τη δεκαετία του 1920, στις οποίες συμμετείχε, και τα αρχεία των εργασιών της στα Ιόνια Νησιά, που πραγματοποιήθηκαν τόσο ανεξάρτητα όσο και στο πλαίσιο της αποστολής που χρηματοδοτήθηκε από τον James Rennell Rodd στην Ιθάκη. Είναι δυνατόν να ιχνηλατηθεί μια σαφής εξελικτική πορεία, η οποία όμως χαρακτηρίζεται από μια διαρκή διάσταση ανάμεσα στα προσωπικά ερευνητικά ενδιαφέροντα της Benton και στις ακαδημαϊκές προτεραιότητες της Βρετανικής Σχολής.

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