

SONIA ELIZABETH CHADWICK HAWKES PETKOVIC 1933–1999

Sonia Hawkes, M.A., F.S.A., Fellow of St Cross College Oxford, University Lecturer in European Archaeology 1973–1994, died of cancer on 30 May aged 65. She was born on 5 November 1933.

Sonia Hawkes will be remembered by scholars in Britain and abroad for her major contribution to Anglo-Saxon and Migration period archaeology. Over forty years she produced a body of influential papers, articles and monographs as well as playing a large part in the success of Oxford's Institute of Archaeology.

Sonia Hawkes's archaeological career began in the 1950s, when she took part in excavations and directed them for the then Ministry of Works. The sites included Longbridge Deverill in Wiltshire (Iron Age) and Finglesham in Kent (Anglo-Saxon). She took a degree in English at Bedford College, the University of London, and began a post-graduate thesis on Germanic art, so-called Jutish Style A, under the supervision of Vera Evison, before being appointed Curator of Scunthorpe Museum in 1958. But it was her marriage the following year to Christopher Hawkes, the Professor of European Archaeology, that took her to Oxford, where she was to spend the rest of her academic life.

She was elected a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries in 1961, and later that year the Institute of Archaeology on Beaumont Street in Oxford came into being. There, initially as a research assistant, she started the project, funded by the British Academy, to produce a Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Graves and Grave-Goods. Much of her work focused on the Anglo-Saxon cemeteries of Kent, the county of her childhood. Particular mention should be given to the site of Finglesham, in East Kent. The site of this cemetery was discovered in 1928, but when Sonia Hawkes came to republish the finds in the late 1950s (published under her maiden name Sonia Chadwick in *Medieval Archaeology*, Vol. 2, 1958), it became clear that much more of the cemetery remained to be explored. The Ministry of Works sponsored a total excavation, which was carried out, with long gaps to suit the farmers involved, between 1959 and 1967. This site has proved to be something of an albatross, for it has remained, throughout her academic life, unpublished in its entirety. Preliminary accounts of aspects of the cemetery have appeared. The find of the gilt-bronze buckle from grave 95, with its singular decoration of a warrior with a horned helmet, was discussed in *Antiquity* 39 (1965), and the paper, 'Orientation at Finglesham: sunrise dating of death and burial' appeared in *Archaeologia Cantiana* (1977). Although much has been done, Sonia was a perfectionist not only in her polished prose style but also in her wish to give a full account and a detailed interpretation of the excavated evidence. As she herself wrote, 'Problems of various kinds in the post-excavation work on the cemetery have delayed publication for too long, but have now been mostly resolved. . . With the possible exception of Dover, Finglesham is the only Kentish cemetery to have been excavated in its totality. A very few graves were destroyed in the chalk pit and one or two were inaccessible under the old road that formed the western boundary of the burial ground, but otherwise we have the whole story. And very interesting it has proved.'

Dr Helena Hamerow, a former graduate student and Sonia Hawkes's successor as Lecturer in European Archaeology, has confirmed that most of the unpublished work, Bifrons, Kingsworthy, Finglesham, Eastry is in the process of reaching publication in due course. It was Sonia's wish that a Hawkes Archive (her records of these unpublished excavations) be established at the Institute of Archaeology, Oxford, which researchers could consult.

As University Lecturer (appointed 1973), Sonia did much to raise the profile of Anglo-Saxon studies, although she was never a confident lecturer and was more at ease giving

guidance to her graduate students. She was a founder editor along with David Brown and James Campbell of the Oxford-based occasional series *Anglo-Saxon Studies in Archaeology and History*, the first volume of which was published in 1979. In the 1980s she organized a series of weekend conferences, Oxford Seminars in Anglo-Saxon studies, restricted by invitation to a small number of contributing scholars, and priding themselves on their interdisciplinary character and composition. The themes of the first three were *East Anglia, Arts and Crafts*, and *Mercia*. Undoubtedly the most memorable was that held in January 1987 entitled *Weapons and Warfare*, where in addition to a sequence of stimulating papers, participants were treated to a demonstration of an 'affray-at-arms' by members of the Dark Age Society, in the gardens of St Cross College Oxford on a sharp, frosty Saturday afternoon. The excellent monograph of this conference edited by Sonia and published by the Oxford University Committee for Archaeology, Monograph No. 21, broke new ground on a subject that had been greatly neglected in modern literature.

Her detailed scrutiny of jewellery, in particular the series of Kentish composite disc brooches, was very perceptive, in relation to their technical, stylistic and chronological development. This was allied to analysis of the alloys used for instance in the groundbreaking collaborative paper with J. M. Merrick and D. M. Metcalf, 'X-Ray fluorescent Analysis of some Dark Age Coins and Jewellery', *Archaeometry* 9, 1966. The imaginative leaps Sonia would take in bringing the past to life were also linked to common sense and rather homely experiment. One of the nagging problems Sonia addressed in her discussion of the chronology of grave items particularly at Finglesham was her detailed but subjective assessment of the wear and tear of items of jewellery, whether they be disc-brooches, silver square-headed brooches or D-bracteates. She records in 1981:

'Here I would like to mention an informal experiment of my own: that for twenty years, more or less continuously day and night, I wore on my finger a highly decorated soft silver ring, thus exposing it to nearly constant abrasion from all textures of fabrics and surfaces. At the end of twenty years the ornament of this ring was what I would call moderately worn, certainly not nearly so worn as that on the D3 square-headed brooch. So inadequate as my experiment has been, I feel I have at least some basis of factual evidence to back up my insistence on the fifty years during which I am sure the D3 brooch was in regular use.'

But away from details of archaeological chronology, Sonia should be remembered for being so instrumental in giving an ambience to the Institute of Archaeology, particularly in the choice of furniture and colour schemes for the new Common Room, and as one who saw the Institute as a civilized meeting of minds, particularly in the celebrated afternoon teas, so memorably recalled by Sonia in the Silver Jubilee Reflections booklet.

'Thinking about the original Common Room in the early 1960s brings back memories of a really friendly social scene; of a very important tea-time ritual, and above all of individual voices and of conversations that were amusing and valuable. . . . The tea party was the time of day for coming out of one's solitary study and socialising in good company.'

The idea of a Jubilee Open Day and party to celebrate 25 years of the Institute was Sonia's. Contacting all former students, the practical labour of organizing it, were tasks she threw herself into wholeheartedly. The creation of the Institute into what became a large, thriving and happy research centre is an achievement of which she was justly proud. Inevitably some of Sonia's comments written in 1986 are tinged with nostalgia. The Institute had changed in character after Christopher Hawkes's retirement. There was also the steady decline in Christopher's health and mobility to contend with, and inevitably more of Sonia's time was spent caring for and nursing her ailing husband.

Sonia's retirement from her academic post in 1994, two years after Christopher's death did allow her to travel worldwide and to find joy in a second marriage to Svetislav Petkovic. This joy has alas been short-lived, cut short by her tragic illness and death.

GEORGE SPEAKE