

C. A. RALEGH RADFORD 1900–1998 (Pl. IV)

Courtenay Arthur Raleigh Radford was born in 1900 and died in Devon on 27 December 1998 shortly after his 98th birthday. He was buried at Uffculme. Raleigh's life (and influence) spanned a century that saw the emergence of all branches of real archaeology, our own included, from that lost era of ecclesiology and Earthworks Committees. The outline of his career can only be summarized here. After graduating in modern history from Exeter College, Oxford (1921), there was a spell in Cornwall as a private tutor, interspersed with work (1920–25) at Whitby with Sir Charles Peers and visits abroad. In 1924 he was a student at the British School at Rome, and subsequently at the British School at Athens; this was in 1928, the year of his election to the Society of Antiquaries where he overlapped with certain Fellows who had been admitted before the 1875 move from Somerset House. Raleigh's first official post came in 1929 as Inspector of Ancient Monuments in Wales and Monmouthshire (but only until 1934). He took up a three-year appointment as Director of the British School at Rome in 1936. When war broke out he served, in as-yet unspecified capacities, with the B.B.C., Air Ministry and the

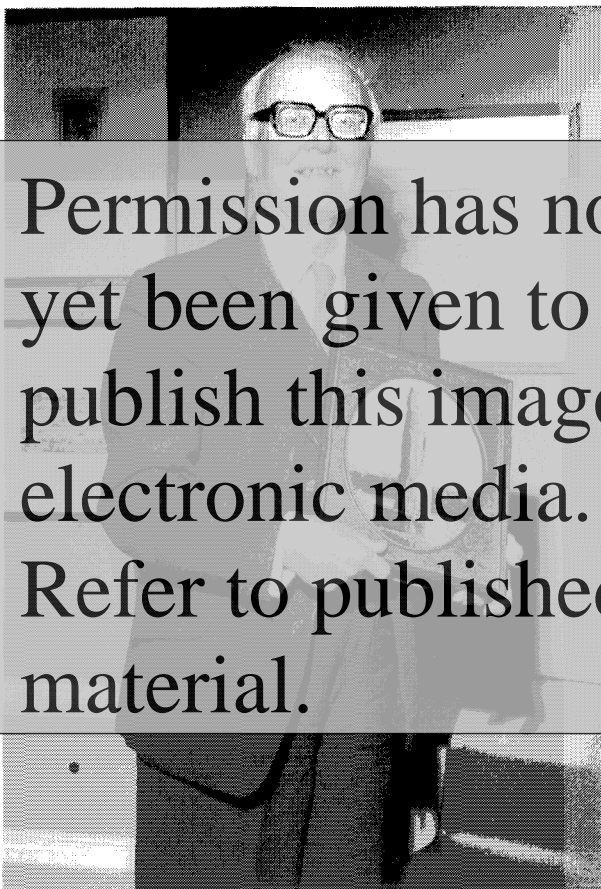


PLATE IV

C. A. Raleigh Radford at 80: birthday celebrations, Royal Institution of Cornwall, Truro.
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Foreign Office (Political Intelligence) and, from 1943 onward, was in Algiers, Naples and Rome with a Psychological Warfare Branch, apparently ranking as a colonel. There was a brief resumption of the Rome directorship when Italy capitulated; Raleigh then came back to the Welsh Royal Commission, on which he had been a commissioner since 1935, and for a short while was its Secretary. In 1948 he was awarded a (civil division) O.B.E., an honour that rather oddly he never cited, nor included in any personal entry.

Effectively from 1950 to his death, almost a half-century, he was by choice unemployed or marginally self-employed, the last of the Gentlemen Antiquaries. But with a difference; that life was devoted to the service of archaeology in dozens of capacities. For 24 years he was on the Welsh Ancient Monuments Board, for two seven-year stints (1953–76) he served on the English Royal Commission. His vast involvement with most of the national, and many of the regional, societies, his exemplary attendance-record, prodigious breadth of interests and expertise and above all his manifest skills on committees and councils simply increased the demands for his presence. In 1954 he became simultaneously vice-president of the Antiquaries (whose Gold Medal he was to be awarded later, in 1972) and President of the Prehistoric Society; in 1960, again simultaneously, President of the R.A.I. and the Cambrians, shortly followed by a decade on the Scottish Ancient Monuments Board and presidencies in Cornwall (Royal Institution of Cornwall; Cornwall Archaeological Society). There was contemporary involvement with various other official boards and standing committees, from Scotland down to Devon. For our own Society he was, naturally, elected a Founder Vice-President along with W. F. Grimes and Dorothy Whitelock at the first (5 December 1958) A.G.M., and served as our President a decade later, 1968–71. Academic honours accrued; the first honorary D. Litt. from Glasgow in 1963, the second from the University of Wales in the same year and then rather belatedly in 1973 from Exeter (to which university most of his library has been bequeathed).

The Radford family is of immense antiquity in the west country, as many early notes in *Devon & Cornwall Notes & Queries*, and the names 'Courtenay' and 'Raleigh', indicate. 'Arthur' was from his father Arthur Lock Radford (d. 1926), a wealthy man with antiquarian tastes who bought Bradninch Manor at Exeter, Raleigh's home before eventual settlement slightly to the east of Uffculme. C.A.R.R., 'Raleigh' to his friends, was however a Dumnonian rather than just a Devonian and for the best part of 70 years deeply enmeshed — as excavator, interpreter, guide-writer and practical guide — in the related protohistoric archaeologies of Somerset, Devon and Cornwall. That did not preclude other, almost as intense, involvements with more distant regions of the Celtic (and then Norse) west and north, particularly the many years in Galloway, and the interests in the Isle of Man and the Orkneys. From 1936 to 1938, too, he was exploring Brittany with Wheeler in the context of the hillforts projects. (Ireland seems to have held little appeal for him; his interests were firmly Brittonic rather than Goidelic.) The so-far known list of all his publications — notes, reports, mature papers, synthetic essays, guidebooks, contributions and tributes; several hundreds — spans 1928 to 1995. Possibly just as influential was his record as a lecturer or (favourite stance) on-site exponent from a church pulpit, and the mind boggles at the likely total of deliveries.

What can one say, without expanding comment into several dozen pages? From our first meeting in 1949, I came progressively under his influence and I suppose knew him, and served with and under him, all my employed life; but how well did any of us know this intensely private man? 'I am a High Anglo-Catholic' was his declared doctrinal position, and the unique blend of experience, highly retentive memory, those years in Rome and seemingly endless reading in three or four languages meant that, in a nascent Early Christian archaeology alone, his informal disciples regarded him as a sort of ultimate arbiter. This is not to overlook a very real concern with the Iron Age, the phase when his own Dumnonia presumably took shape; or, as an encyclopaedic ecclesiologist, his devotion

to medieval art and buildings; or (underestimated) a tremendous ability as an epigrapher. Raleigh's life presents us with unexplored paradoxes. I leave aside, first, the Christian human, a whole side that he deliberately kept hidden; the many secret kindnesses and generousities, strange and wholly honourable activities before and during the War, all those amateur as well as national societies permanently indebted to his guidance (more than once, his rescue) at critical junctures. The first paradox is that he should, unconsciously, have shaped so much of the development of Insular post-Roman or early medieval archaeology — policies, foci, new classifications, fresh identifications — without ever having written a complete book, or having summarised his own findings and conclusions in volume format. This may have been deliberate, though more probably it was because he was not prepared to find the time. The second is that his post-1921 working life, first in employed posts and then as an independent scholar, occurred outside the University world (honorary degrees apart, contact was limited to set-piece lectures), yet most of his friends, associates and followers were understandably within the university sector. The third is that, concealed within a man who could peer at a crumbling buttress and confidently assign it to the third quarter of the fourteenth century, there was a romantic, a Matter-of-Britain visionary, a stubborn believer in things that have no part in post-modernist archaeology. *Pace* the vulgar commercialism of English Heritage, Raleigh never linked the supposedly historic Artorius behind the medieval literary King Arthur with Tintagel, but he did entertain (unshakeably) related beliefs at Glastonbury, beliefs that were rarely and incautiously revealed. A fourth paradox concerns Radford the Excavator, his techniques grounded in the age of Bushe-Fox and Peers. Alone, or in concert with the odd colleague, but never if he could help it with amateurs instead of his preferred hired workmen, Raleigh dug any number of sites, many of them describable as key sites — Castle Dore, Tintagel, Glastonbury, Whithorn, Peel and Birsay will do as a first list. With the possible exception of the Galloway sites, no project was brought to the state of a full final report and accessible archive, and the destruction of his records in the wartime Exeter bombing explains the lacuna only up to that time. Lastly, in its way a related paradox, almost all the conclusions from these works as contained in partial reports, or lectures, or commissioned guidebooks have been upset or replaced by subsequent investigations. Readers of my *Tintagel: Arthur and Archaeology* (1993; subtitled under protest!) may guess to what lengths I went in explaining, excusing, and avoiding direct criticism of his original, but Peers-directed, interpretation of the Island as a monastery. Readers of Peter Hill's magisterial *Whithorn* will see why Radford's little foundations were not, and could never have been, some 5th-century Ninianic aedicule.

Does all or any of this matter? In the longer view, no. Some future chronicler of the birth and establishment of medieval archaeology as a discipline will show how Radford's influence was as powerful and formative as his own rôle was unique. Those of us who knew him would not have it otherwise, and we will preserve our particular memories and indebtedness. A closing vignette may depict him to a great many. In 1991 the (mainland) Tintagel churchyard excavations were being televised and the company's filming visit, complete with a helicopter, coincided with Radford being driven from Uffculme to inspect the site. Happily, the helicopter was then offered to airlift the Master to the top of the Island, scene of his 1934–38 campaigns. By then aged 90, short-sighted, far from nimble, Radford was delighted to accept this chance of his first(?) helicopter trip, if only of three or four minutes. As, Jove-like, he slowly descended to the Island's turf he was greeted with obvious awe and affection by the uniformed custodial staff, who then escorted him down many steps to sign a special book. The procession was like a Greek vase-painting. Radford, reminiscing non-stop, was at his very best, and the occasion itself had an epic tone. It was his final field outing. But could anywhere else have been more fitting?

CHARLES THOMAS