

# Amateurs and professionals

THE EXCAVATION OF ANGMERING ROMAN VILLA 1935–1947

by Oliver J. Gilkes

*In recent decades, amateur, or independent, archaeology has suffered from a perceived exclusion from active and major archaeological fieldwork owing to the increasingly professional nature of British archaeology. The situation is sometimes contrasted with a past where amateur archaeology was the mainstay of the discipline, without problematic relations with professionals. This paper assesses the actual situation in the interwar period, a presumed golden age of amateur archaeology, via the examination of a case-study, the excavation of Angmering Roman villa. The organization and progress of the excavation project are discussed. It will be seen that while independent societies were in the past far more active in terms of fieldwork, the tension between amateur and professional archaeologists has always existed and is a function of their differing perspectives and objectives.*

‘A bjure voluntary labour’ wrote Mortimer Wheeler in his archaeological text book, *Archaeology from the Earth* (Wheeler 1954, 172). This comment might be considered strange, coming as it does from a figure who did so much to encourage volunteers and students on his excavations (Biddle 1991, 124–5). However, the words of the consummate professional that Wheeler represents are symptomatic of a tendency in British archaeology, one that has hardened into the discipline since the war: the professionalization of archaeology. In the letter pages of a popular journal such as *Current Archaeology*, it is easy to find complaints concerning the difficulties faced by amateurs and others in acquiring practical experience in the field. Similarly, in *The Archaeologist*, the journal of the Institute of Field Archaeologists there is apparently little room for amateur or independent archaeology, or indeed, as some might argue, for archaeology *per se*. In 1995, the Council for Independent Archaeology (CIA) published *The Role of Local Societies in PPG 16*, a booklet which was a brave attempt to encourage a dialogue between amateur archaeologists and the increasingly commercial professional groups, in order to provide a framework which might allow both parties to participate in what has become an increasingly symbiotic relationship between archaeology and the local government planning process (Biddle 1994b).

The climate in which the CIA launched its campaign was increasingly bureaucratic. The

progressive professionalization of archaeology since the 1970s under the dual influence of high-pressure development and economic stringency has created a world of deadlines, contracts and liabilities which, with some exceptions (*Current Archaeology* 138, 231–7), has largely excluded independent groups from participation at a local level. The increasing lack of archaeological projects to which independent archaeologists can contribute, the growing maturity of local society memberships which, starved of new recruits, reflects a national trend, and the disregard shown to local groups by professional units are all topics which have been aired in the letter pages of national journals over the past few years. Yet these complaints presuppose a time when amateur archaeology flourished unchallenged. If one had to select a specific span of time for this independent ‘golden age’ in Sussex the inter-war period would surely be a prime contender.

Sussex was especially fortunate during this period, occupying a prime position nationally. This was a time when momentous discoveries were made: the identification and excavation of the first Neolithic causewayed enclosure in Britain at Whitehawk, the extensive examination of the flint mines of the Sussex Downs, and, perhaps most significantly, the surveying of the extensive surviving earthwork sites of the 1st millennium BC and accompanying ceramic studies. A succession of talented archaeologists worked in the county during the 1920s and 30s, Herbert Toms, formerly an

assistant to General Pitt Rivers, L. F. Salzman, John Pull, Robert Gurd, Hadrian Allcroft, Ivan Margary and, most importantly for the legacy that they left for Sussex archaeology, Eliot Curwen and his son Eliot Cecil Curwen.

Yet, from a postwar perspective, one is left wondering at the extent of the role assumed by these amateur groups and the nature of their relationship with professional practitioners. What follows is an attempt to review these questions by examining a local case-study, the excavation of Angmering Roman Villa in West Sussex, to see how all these elements interacted. It is possible to do this in some detail owing to the preservation in Littlehampton Museum of almost all the documentation relating to the organization of the excavations. Of interest are: the organizing body itself, the level of 'professional' involvement, and the practical organization and technical execution of the excavation in the field.

#### THE SOCIETY

The Littlehampton Nature and Archaeology Circle (N&AC) was founded in 1924. Its avowed aims were ambitious:

To enable persons interested in Natural History and Archaeology to meet and interchange communications and specimens; to explore the district; to develop a taste for the study of Zoology, Botany, Geology &c., and Architectural and other Archaeological works; to form a cabinet of Zoological, Geological and Mineral specimens, a Herbarium of plants found in the locality, and an album of photographs of subjects of local interest (*N&AC Proceedings* 1924–25, 2).

Despite the emphasis placed on the natural sciences, it was the archaeological activities which proved to be the most ambitious and which brought the Circle firmly into the public gaze.

The response to the creation of the Circle was encouraging. By the end of the first year the membership roster stood at 93 and had sufficiently increased by 1931 for the name to be changed to the Littlehampton Natural Science and Archaeology Society (NS&AS). Membership numbers had risen to 203 by 1937 when the excavation of the Angmering villa commenced. Its composition was fairly typical for societies of the time being recruited mainly from the middle classes, local businessmen

and professionals, some retired professionals and a smattering of those with independent means. Members of some of Littlehampton's most influential families, the Smarts, Ockendens and Butts, joined at the outset and remained prominent throughout the first 14 years.

Attendance at the Society's functions was generally high, with an average turnout of 59 at the lectures and excursions during the first few years. However, as with all such societies, there was a central core of dedicated members who shouldered most of the running and organization. Some of this core group were scholars of more than local significance, such as H. L. Foster Guermonprez, the Bognor naturalist, who was a founder member. Amongst others were Dr William Fraser Hume, a well-known geologist specializing in the study of Egypt, for a long time president of the NS&AS; Edward Wyndham Hulme, formerly the chief librarian of the Patent Office who placed his considerable organizational skill and erudition at the Society's disposal by heading the exploration committee for many years; and Lt Colonel R. R. Barber who was responsible for many of the fine surveys of local earthworks still to be seen in Littlehampton Museum. However, the pivotal figure of the NS&AS was E. J. Frazer Hearne, the Society's secretary who became the curator of the Society's museum when it was opened in Maltravers Road.

A vigorous start was made to the archaeological programme with the examination of a medieval pottery kiln in the Binstead woods. Thereafter attention switched to the investigation of a number of sites on the estate of the Duke of Norfolk north of Arundel. Nanny's Croft, a late Roman site, was excavated in 1926–27 (*N&AC Proceedings* 1926–27, 17–23) and was followed in 1930 by the cutting of the first sections across the 'War Dyke', which was interpreted as part of a Late Iron Age defensive system (*N&AC Proceedings* 1928–30, 24–34) (Fig. 1). Publication in the Society's proceedings, which appeared annually or bi-annually throughout the 1920s and 30s, promptly followed excavation. Though limited in scale, the contributions reveal the serious scientific intentions behind the archaeological activities of those years. Surviving photographs show neatly cut trenches; excellent drawings and plans by Lt Colonel Barber illustrated the reports and for the excavations at the 'War Dyke' section drawings were presented. Short finds reports



Fig. 1. Excavation about to commence at the War Dyke, Arundel Park.

were produced and included the coarse ceramics and animal bones discovered. The vertical positions of finds in the excavations were carefully noted. Substantial background research was undertaken and numerous correspondents were consulted. For example, in September 1927 Hearne was in communication with a Mr Owen Adames, a resident of Havant, who had excavated a Roman villa in his back garden. Adames had identified what would now be called Rowland's Castle ware storage jars amongst the finds from Nanny's Croft, relating them to his own finds.

In 1931 the NS&AS embarked on its most ambitious project: the excavation of a Romano-British site at Shepherd's Garden in Arundel Park. The site had been identified first by Hadrian Allcroft and was proposed as a worthwhile exercise in excavation by Dr Eliot Curwen, who together with his son took a close interest in the NS&AS activities. The excavation of the site continued seasonally until 1935 and surviving photographs show Society members hard at work (Fig. 2). In fact the site proved

to be too ambitious for the Society to tackle alone, there were never sufficient volunteers despite repeated appeals to the membership, and the narrow trenching technique utilized was quite unsuited for this complex early Roman site. The confusion of the published report, so different from the earlier small-scale work, tacitly admits that the Society was out of its depth at Shepherd's Garden, a realization that was to be an important consideration at the commencement of the Angmering villa excavations in 1937 (Frazer Hearne 1936). Despite some interesting finds and an avowed intention to return to Shepherd's Garden, 1935 was the last season of excavation, for shortly after the NS&AS was to become involved in far greater things.

The fulcrum of the Society's activities was provided by its museum, the end result of the 'cabinet of specimens' envisaged at the foundation of the Society. This was established with the help of a private bequest and the co-operation of Littlehampton Urban District Council who agreed to house it in an annexe built for the purpose to the



Fig. 2. Trenching in progress at Shepherd's Garden, Arundel Park.

rear of the public library in Maltravers Road. A museum committee was appointed to manage this new civic asset, but the real impetus came from E. J. Frazer Hearne. Hearne was retired and living in Rustington, and although his professional background is obscure, he was well-connected with several of the national museums. Consequently he was in a good position to act as Curator, to which office he was appointed with a small stipend from the Urban District Council. Hearne, who almost always signed his name Frazer Hearne, seems to have been an amiable and capable figure. Under his guidance the small premises soon became filled with exhibits arranged in glass cases and fine wooden storage chests. It was a sort of Aladdin's Cave for many of the local residents who recall the *mélange* of items on display ranging from a great stuffed brown bear which guarded the entrance, to mummified cats and 'Queen Victoria's stockings' which resided in a corner (Fig. 3). Despite the impression of clutter, all was well catalogued. The museum registers were meticulously maintained by Hearne, who upon

acquisition of an object, firstly noted details into rough books and then copied them into a great leather-bound register. Full notes gave provenance, donor, and dimensions, often with a small sketch and other comments. Cross-references were given to supplementary notebooks and museum correspondence.

Not content with his role as curator, Hearne went out in active search of antiquities. The museum registers are full of his discoveries made during walks or excursions with the Society. These included: Neolithic ground flints from Barnham; medieval pottery brought to light through the erosion of a well by the sea at Clymping; a Bronze Age hoard from Flansham and Roman pottery and coins from fields, ditches and building sites all over the town. Further items were collected via his extensive contacts with other Sussex archaeologists, and the collections still contain items donated by Dr E. C. Curwen, John Pull, S. E. Winbolt and H. S. Toms, providing a miniature cross-section of Sussex archaeology.





Fig. 3. The Society's Museum to the rear of the library in Maltravers Road; a photograph taken in the 1950s.

### ANGMERING ROMAN VILLA

Angmering Roman villa lies on the edge of low-lying marshy ground around the Black Ditch, a kilometre to the east of Angmering village. The Black Ditch is one of a number of tributaries that feed the Arun and which isolate a series of islets of higher ground where medieval and modern settlement developed. Whilst today these low-lying areas are well-drained, in centuries past they were decidedly marshy and even until the 1950s were prone to seasonal flooding (M. Haynes pers. comm.).

By the 1930s the presence of a villa on the site had long been known. Excavations in the early years of the 19th century had exposed parts of the bath-house with its great vaulted drain, then intact, along with a series of burials (Dallaway 1832, 72–3).

The site formed part of the estate of the Duke of Norfolk who leased the land to a local tenant farmer, a Mr J. Uridge. To Mr Uridge the villa represented

an asset of dubious value, proving a hindrance to ploughing and an irresistible attraction to the local antiquaries. Various solutions were postulated, ranging from the deep ploughing of the whole site so as to remove it completely, to Mr Uridge suggesting that he might excavate the villa on his own behalf. In the end a compromise that seemed to satisfy all parties was reached and in 1937 the villa site was leased by the NS&AS for a period of 10 years at £10 per annum.

Nevertheless, the relationship between the archaeologists and the farmer were never entirely happy. Having disposed of the problematic field for a period, Uridge was keen to exploit the flurry of activity that followed. The farm road which led to the site was resurfaced following its utilization by the archaeologists and Uridge presented the bill to the NS&AS. Hearne wrote that Uridge had told him that “we should have to pay him”, and he is so sure of us doing this that he is beginning now. Of

course I told him that the matter must come before my committee, but he fell back on his usual "I know you'll treat me like gentlemen" — very exasperating!' (LMC Hearne to Sherriff, 26/4/1938).

The NS&AS had long considered taking up where the antiquaries of 1819 had left off. The question of excavation had been raised at the inaugural meeting in 1924, but the realization that substantial funds would be necessary had forced the shelving of the project. In 1934, however, the NS&AS had a good ten years of practical experience behind it and was keen to attempt something on a grander scale. Consequently, that summer a series of trial pits were opened in the field containing the remains. In charge of the work was Mr G. R. Cutler, an employee of Hillyards, the Littlehampton boat-builders, and another of the NS&AS's most active members. Cutler was to play a prominent part in the salvaging of Littlehampton's prehistoric and Roman past in advance of the town's postwar expansion. While many of the techniques that he employed later were instilled into him during the villa excavations, his initial notes for 1934, a plan of trial trenches with a brief description of the layers and finds from each, show an appreciation of archaeological technique. These initial efforts were sufficiently successful for more extensive soundings to be arranged for 1936, and a temporary agreement was made with Uridge. A sondage uncovered the top of the drain, found originally in 1816, and work proceeded along this removing the 19th-century backfill and uncovering the drain's entire length.

At this point the magnitude of the undertaking seems to have been realized. Perhaps the difficulties experienced at Shepherds Garden prompted a pause for thought; in any case it was decided that further assistance would be required. Wyndham Hulme was charged to write to Richard Ward, one of the excavators of the villa at Southwick for advice. Ward in turn, contacted Eliot Curwen at the Sussex Archaeological Society and Christopher Hawkes, then an assistant keeper at the British Museum. On his own account Hearne wrote directly to Hawkes, laying out the NS&AS's strategy so far, to allay concerns over the safety of the site, and adding a phrase which was to have far-reaching consequences 'We have simply been removing 1819 backfill and the one place where we have found intact levels these were left and filled in again, and we reserved the spot for the future when I *hope* we may obtain some expert guidance' (LMC Hearne to Hawkes, 1935).

#### OFFICIALS FROM LONDON

The advice that the NS&AS received from all quarters was encouraging, but urged that the uncovering of the villa should be undertaken as a major excavation project rather than as 'preliminary scratching'. Curwen wrote to the Council of the Sussex Archaeological Society: 'This is work that I should very much like to see our Littlehampton friends take up, and I should like to suggest that they do their best to collect the necessary funds . . .' (LMC Curwen-SAS, 21/2/1935). Christopher Hawkes replied to an enquiry from Richard Ward in a similar vein, suggesting that a professional excavator ought to be appointed to oversee the work:

I know Mr Hearne and from what he has told me it is clear that his Society cannot take adequate action on its own. I am sure it ought therefore to 'pass the buck' up to the County Society, and thence if necessary to London . . . I hope our friends in Littlehampton won't think this advice distasteful, and that I want them to be 'ordered about by officials from London'. Of course I want nothing but what everyone ought to want with any sense of spirit, namely, sane co-operation and pulling together between local and county and central (LMC Hawkes to Ward, 5/1/1935).

Evidently the advice was not considered distasteful and although the finances had yet to be resolved, the NS&AS was sufficiently keen to commence enquiries as to the availability of an excavator. At that time this was not an easy task: professional archaeological technicians did not exist and it was unlikely that a university department could be tempted by a dig such as Angmering. Christopher Hawkes had a solution, however, and put the Littlehampton Society in contact with Mortimer Wheeler, at that time Director of the London Museum. Wheeler had a growing reputation as a field archaeologist and was widely known to be concerned with the technical development of archaeology. Very much the showman, Wheeler was considered to be something of a boulder by some of the more academic elements of the discipline for his extrovert, and sometimes outrageous, style. Nevertheless, he had a spark of genius which drew people and possibilities to him.

Wyndham Hulme had been despatched to Lancaster House in London to talk to Wheeler about the possibility of finding an assistant. This was not to be a problem as Wheeler already had someone in

mind. As to the other outstanding problem, that of finance, Wheeler also held the solution.

Wheeler had been approached a short time previously by R. C. Sherriff, then an established playwright who also had archaeological ambitions. In particular he wanted to run an excavation. On the advice of the great Oxford historian of Roman Britain, R. G. Collingwood, Sherriff made arrangements to meet Wheeler in London early in 1937. Sherriff was far from sure what to expect in this encounter: 'He had invited me to lunch at the Athenaeum, and that in itself was enough to scare me. The Athenaeum was the most exclusive of all clubs, hotbed of bishops, and scientists and scholars of the highest order'. Wheeler's charm was duly applied, 'He didn't treat me as a groping amateur in a world beyond my reach: he received me as a fellow traveller in a great adventure' (Sherriff 1968, 311–12).

There remained the problem of the supervisor, but here Wheeler already had a candidate and a meeting was arranged in the foyer of the Ritz between Sherriff and Leslie Scott, one of Wheeler's

students at the University of London. Nigel Nicolson, an Oxford colleague of Sherriff's, was with him on this occasion:

Sherriff and I sat for half an hour eyeing each young man as he entered, expecting some sort of bearded Ayatollah acolyte. None seemed suitable. Then it dawned on me that 'Leslie' might be female, the girl who had been sitting in the far corner for the same half-hour. She was beautifully dressed, and seemed engagingly modest. I still remember the mauve saucer hat she wore, from which a light veil descended to her nose. She might be someone's niece or fiancée. She was neither. She was Leslie Scott (Nicolson 1992).

Leslie Scott was born in Scotland in 1914 and is remembered by many as having a typically dry Scottish sense of humour combined with an occasional fiery temper, some of which at least was to show itself at Angmering. Had Sherriff known Wheeler better, then his nomination of one of his female students would have occasioned no surprise.



Fig. 4. Wyndham Hulme (left) and Frazer Hearne (right) working at Angmering Roman villa.

Wheeler's chief assistants were invariably women (Hawkes 1982, 169) and Leslie Scott in particular was at this point deeply involved in his projects. She had worked for him at *Verulamium* and Maiden Castle and then gone on to undertake the preliminary survey for his excursion into Brittany and Normandy as well as running his excavation sites during the two campaigns in France. She was also no stranger to Sussex, having worked, again at Wheeler's behest, with E. C. Curwen at Whitehawk Camp in 1935. There was, it seems, another side to their relationship.

She was not only competent, but devastatingly attractive. Wheeler, whose visits to the site were more frequent than was strictly necessary, was obviously in love with her, and soon most of us were too. We spent memorable evenings with them in the local pubs, he acting Odysseus, she Nausicä (Nicolson 1992, 156).

Till now much of the organization of the project had happened at third hand in London out of sight of the NS&AS. Consequently, Sherriff's interest in the Angmering villa was the cause of some surprise and, realizing that the perceived interference of 'officials from London' might be taken amiss in Littlehampton, Sherriff was quick to establish a

direct link with the Society. At a special meeting of the committee on 8 March 1937, he was elected to the membership setting the stage for the excavation itself.

#### THE EXCAVATION

To organize the excavation of the villa, an excavation committee was formed which immediately spawned an executive committee consisting of C. A. Butt, Frazer Hearne, Wyndham Hulme, R. C. Sherriff and Richard Ward, the latter presumably as a villa expert, to oversee the actual work. The initial problem to be faced was that of finance, the stumbling block which had dissuaded the Society from attempting excavations in 1924.

Sherriff was prepared to underwrite a large proportion of the cost of the excavations, and eventually made £150 (which would be the equivalent of £4624 in 1998) available for the 1937 season. Despite this further finance needed to be raised. An appeal was launched, which brought in the large total of £135 (1998: £4104) during 1937. Some contributors were most generous: 'One lady sent £25 (1998: £759), thanking us for courtesy shown on a recent visit. We are wondering *who* took



Fig. 5. A guided tour being shown the bath house of Angmering Roman villa.



her round! . . .' (LMC Hearne to Sherriff 3/9/1937). The experiment was sufficiently successful to persuade the executive committee to issue a special brochure in 1938, appealing for further funds. At the excavation, collection boxes were positioned around the site. Visitors' attention was directed to these at the conclusion of guided tours which were frequent during the summer months (Fig. 5). One such group in 1938 was attended by Philip Burstow who was disappointed with the site: 'There is not very much to see except the edges of rooms in the villa proper . . . I understand that they are really disappointed with the "dig" as there seems little hope of any mosaic pavements' (Society of Antiquities MS 949/7 MR 12A). Nevertheless, the tours brought in a regular trickle of money: 'The collection boxes have done well. Here are the weekly totals since you left, £2.6s.1d., £1.8s.3d., £1.4s.6d., £1.18s.7d.' (LMC Hearne to Sherriff 3/9/1937). However, on one occasion the temptation of the collection boxes proved too much for some of the local lads who were caught one weekend in July after breaking into the excavation hut to the side of the site and removing 1/6d. from the collection boxes.

For 1937 we have all the particulars of the

project's accounts. The total income for the excavation was some £326 (1998: £9903) while expenditure was only £204 (1998: £6197), apparently leaving a healthy surplus. The largest call on expenditure was the wages of the workmen, of whom up to four were employed during the summer of 1937, and Leslie Scott. The workmen were paid £2 each a week, later raised to £2.11s.6½d., and the foreman, Mr Squires in 1937, was given an extra shilling. Money was also paid for finds recovered. This system of 'baksheesh' was extensively employed by British excavators before the war, both within Britain (Winbolt 1925, 36) and abroad (Woolley 1952, 39–42). At Angmering the scale of payment seems to have been 3d. for marble objects and unusual pottery including spindle whorls, while coins and bronze objects netted 6d. each. Leslie Scott was considerably more expensive. Her weekly wage of £5.5s.0d. totalled £60.5s.0d. (1998: £1822) over the summer of 1937. It had been decided at the outset that even with Sherriff's help the NS&AS could not afford to employ her full time and so she was effectively retained on a consultancy basis to visit the site at intervals to direct and advise.

While less detail is available for the 1938 season,



Fig. 6. Leslie Scott and her husband Peter Murray-Threipland on the day of their wedding.

once again it seems that the greatest call was for wages. Three workmen were employed for two weeks, together with Leslie Scott, who seems to have been employed in a similar capacity as 1937, for four weeks in July.

Whilst workmen were employed to undertake the heavy labour, and some consolidation work during the winter, volunteers were a significant factor in the excavation. The core of the volunteer workforce seems to have been formed of a varying number of Society members. In 1938 this was a hard core of six to eight, working under the supervision of Wyndham Hulme and Frazer Hearne (Fig. 4). During the main summer months, these might be reinforced by undergraduates brought down from Oxford by Sherriff; twelve such volunteers worked at the site during July 1938, including a young Leo Rivet, who later moved on to work with Wheeler in Brittany. At other times Sherriff provided members of the Balliol rowing team who appeared periodically for a weekend's work, staying at his house in Bognor. Excavation work continued out of season with work by local volunteers occurring at weekends.

There were other more casual local volunteers, some of whom became regular members of the team. Mrs D. Craven recalled her time working on the villa:

I became interested through talking to a group of people at Yapton aerodrome about aerial photographs. I was interested in the results [of aerial photos taken at the villa site] and so one Saturday after the 'dig' had started I made my way to Angmering . . . I was set to wash pots and sherds, being shown by Mr Cutler or else Mr Hearne. So, for the first few weeks that's all we were allowed to do . . . (Daphne Craven, pers. comm.)

Many of the volunteers camped in the vicinity of the excavation; others put up in local hostels. In 1938 Leslie Scott stayed at The Lamb at Angmering; 'The rooms are quite nice but as she charges £2.2s.0d. with lunch, and we won't require that, it would be fine if you could get her to take 5/- off (only 1 bathroom in the whole house!)' (LMC Scott to Hearne, May 1938).

The technical side of the excavation was skilfully executed. Whilst specializing in Palestinian archaeology at the Institute of Archaeology in London, Leslie Scott had gone through the mill of Wheeler's field training, an experience which could be quite disconcerting for some of his favoured supervisory staff (Hawkes 1982, 169). It is unsurprising

to find typical Wheelerian methods in use. Whilst the 'Wheeler box' system was not employed in its fully developed form at Angmering, photographs show neatly laid out trenches, well-revetted spoil heaps and the generally neat appearance of the site which were such a mark of excavations directed by Institute-trained archaeologists from this point on (Fig. 7).

It has not been possible to consult the site notebooks, but it is clear from the finds that close control was kept over the stratification. In Leslie Scott's absence, supervision was generally the responsibility of Hearne, Hulme, Cutler or Miss Phoebe Keef, a regular volunteer from 1938. When there was no digging to be done there was plenty of finds-cleaning and marking, carried out in the wooden shed provided by Mr Butt which was the dig's field headquarters. The finds were all recorded with care: the pottery, for example, is all clearly marked with trench, layer number and other detail which can be related to the surviving section drawings. Not surprisingly Leslie Scott was quite emphatic about the importance of sections: 'she wants her precious sections-a *second* one-preserved' bemoaned Hearne, having been prevented from demolishing a particularly crucial example (LMC Hearne to Sherriff, 12/6/1939). A certain conflict of technique is clear from the surviving correspondence. Leslie Scott was employing what was for the time a precise methodology, especially in comparison with the less controlled excavation techniques employed by the Society at sites such as Nanny's Croft and Shepherd's Garden: 'we hope to see Leslie Scott on Sunday, Cutler is feverishly tidying up. We have tried to be good boys, but we shall no doubt catch it for all that', wrote Hearne towards the end of the 1937 season. The give and take between Leslie Scott and the local directors had by the end of 1937 become something of a joke amongst them. Hearne wrote a farewell note before Leslie Scott departed for Brittany at the end of July:

No longer is the eye of the headmistress on her bad little boys. When I go up to villa this evening, I'll cast my eye around, spit on my hands, and begin to enjoy myself. 'Come on', says Hulme, 'let me get my fork under it and *Heave!*' (Hearne to Scott, 28/7/1937) (Fig. 4)

Nevertheless, ensuring that there were sufficient numbers of volunteers working on the site seems to have been a problem. 'I was thinking . . . of the hope that professional supervision would stimulate



Fig. 7. A general view of the excavations at Angmering Roman villa.

local interest, and bring along more volunteer workers . . . this has, unfortunately, not been fulfilled', wrote Sherriff to Hearne in October 1938 (Fig. 5). The same problem that the Society encountered at Shepherd's Garden had occurred at Angmering, namely the difficulty of encouraging enough dedicated volunteers to keep a large site running. Part of the problem may have lain with the choice of supervisor, 'I felt that not only did local members not avail themselves of this opportunity [of professional supervision], but some unfriendly criticism was the only payment received' (LMC Sherriff to Hearne 7/10/1938). Sherriff himself seems to have been rather ambivalent in his opinion of Leslie Scott. In 1938 he wrote to Hearne that 'having seen some of the other lady experts I think we are all agreed that we are very lucky to have one so pleasant to work with' (LMC Sherriff to Hearne, 20/1/1938), while virtually removing her from the otherwise lengthy account of the excavations in his autobiography (Sherriff 1968, 309–16). Conflicts of interest between amateur and professional archaeologists were by no means unknown in the

late 1930s. In fact, there was a steady series of small but significant clashes, over the copyright of photographs, the purchase of items of equipment without agreements, over the visits of journalists and finally over the Society carrying out work outside of Leslie Scott's supervision. There had been a gentle struggle between Leslie Scott and her team at the villa over excavation strategy. In particular she requested that building B, the so-called 'main house' — 'an extremely important early building and of real importance and value to the study of Roman Britain' (LMC Scott to Hearne 1939) — be left, if necessary until after the war which had by that time commenced. However, in 1940 and 1941 more work on behalf of the Society was carried out at the villa by Miss Phoebe Keef. News of this intervention was not well received by Leslie Scott (LMC Scott to Hearne 20/10/1941).

It is possible to be overly negative when considering relations between the amateurs and the professional, the 'generally half jocular — well, call it dissent' described by Hearne (LMC Hearne to Sherriff undated). There were distinct advantages in

the relationship and Hearne was convinced of the need for some professional involvement, especially in regard to producing the vital annual reports on the villa excavations which he did not think it possible to present 'without professional superintendence, or at least editorship' (LMC Hearne to Sherriff, 12/10/1938). Also, there was at least one major success arising from the training aspect of the course, which was the postwar work of George Cutler, the employee of Hillyards the Littlehampton boat-builders, who had a strong interest in archaeology and who had been involved in the Angmering project from its inception. Cutler is mentioned frequently in the letters of Hearne, Sherriff and Scott as directing work on various parts of the site. His handwriting is to be found on much of the pottery and the stratigraphic lessons dished out by Leslie Scott were obviously well learnt.

### THE LONG SUNSET

Barely four seasons of excavation were fitted into the ten-year lease taken out on the villa. The last major season was in 1939, although this was on a modest scale compared to the great efforts of the previous two years. At Angmering, as with projects in Britain and France, the threat of war overshadowed all else. In his autobiography Sherriff described the final days of the excavation:

The digging party broke up at the end of August . . . I packed my bags to go home, but broke the journey for a last visit to our Roman villa to say goodbye . . . It was a lovely evening, with a sunset that lingered in the sky long after it had usually gone: as if it were loath to leave another of the few days of peace that remained to us. When I stopped to look back at those desolate Roman ruins it seemed as if history had made full circle (Sherriff 1968, 314–15) (Fig. 7).

The lives of all the major participants were caught up in the Second World War. Frazer Hearne and other members of the NS&AS became involved with civil defence. Hearne became a senior sector warden, although he still managed to work two mornings a week at the museum. He fell ill in 1943 and seems to have withdrawn from an active role in the Society's affairs. He was still living in Rustington in 1947, but may have died shortly afterwards. Wyndham Hulme died in about 1951. In 1939 Leslie Scott was married, to another of Mortimer Wheeler's archaeological acquaintances, Peter Murray-

Thriepland (Fig. 6). The match made the national newspapers, much to the surprise of Hearne, and Leslie Murray-Thriepland eventually went to work in air photographic intelligence (Daniel 1988, 109). Despite her avowed intentions, she never returned to complete the work at Angmering or produce a full report. The published accounts were never intended to be more than interim statements (Scott 1938; 1939). After the war she worked closely with John Ward-Perkins, the director of the British School at Rome from 1948, excavating in Southern Etruria (to the north of Rome).

The Natural Sciences and Archaeological Society also suffered from the war. Though it has survived, it has never resumed its former scale of activities. The museum was moved by the Urban District Council from Maltravers Road to River Road in 1965, an event which resulted in the ill-advised sale of much of the wonderful collection assembled with such enthusiasm and the mismanagement of the rest (a situation now happily resolved thanks to the commitment of local Councils and the efforts of curators and volunteers since 1983).

Ironically the real need for an active local society was in the postwar period, during the rapid expansion of Littlehampton during the building boom of the 1950s. The challenge posed by the massive surge in building activity was not, however, taken up by the NS&AS, but by George Cutler. Working without the support of the Society, Cutler carried on the recording work of Frazer Hearne, virtually all of it salvage archaeology of the most desperate kind. Despite the pressure of circumstances, Cutler managed to record valuable sequences at Wickbourne and Gosden Road, where he recovered the plan and part of the sequence of a small Roman villa (Gilkes 1993). During this work the lessons learned by Cutler under the tutelage of Leslie Scott were well and rationally applied. Some of the fine plans and detailed section drawings of this work survive in Littlehampton Museum and despite the partial dispersal of the finds during the 1960s and 70s, the neatly marked provenances have allowed the reconstruction of an important late Iron Age to late-Roman sequence.

What of the site itself? Some intermittent work was undertaken during the early war years, and in 1941 a small season of work was directed by Miss Phoebe Keef, occasioning a last clash with Leslie Scott (Keef 1945). Work was continued periodically in 1942, but thereafter the villa was covered by



tarpaulins and effectively abandoned. A last impression of the villa was recorded by Richard Wyndham, who visited the site in 1940:

over five acres stretched waterlogged trenches and rectangular patches of foundations — black tarpaulins kept down with stones covered the more important finds . . . I looked through the window of a little wooden shack and saw shelves of oddments, everything precisely labelled even down to 'Large Empty Tins'. Outside the shed on a rickety table, lay a selection of tile and brick fragments . . . still offered for sale at a penny or twopence apiece . . . On this winter evening these relics seemed more lost than during all their seventeen hundred years under Sussex soil (Wyndham 1940).

This is not quite the end of the story. The lease on the site was due to expire in 1947 and consideration was given to having the Sussex Archaeological Society take this over and organize a final major season. A campaign of excavation planned for 1944 did not materialize. Following the close of hostilities Dr A. E. Wilson was commissioned to undertake some excavations, uncovering and recording a previously undiscovered series of buildings to the south of the bath house and a possible canal (Clare Wilson pers. comm.; Wilson 1947). While it was the last effort on the villa site, Wilson's excavations posed more questions than they answered. The archaeological sequence is complex, and probably more extensive, than Leslie Scott realized. The site also seems to be larger and extends to the north, south and east of the area explored in the 1930s. The full story of Angmering Roman villa remains to be uncovered.

#### AMATEURS AND PROFESSIONALS

The account of the excavation of Angmering Roman villa reveals that tensions and conflicts of interest existed between amateurs and professional archaeologists even at this early date. The problems are familiar: lack of locally-based support; a certain concern on the part of the local society concerning their own competence; and the conflict of interests between the professionals with their own concerns elsewhere and amateurs operating from a local base. That these difficulties are not more apparent in the period before the late 1960s is perhaps due to the comparatively tiny number of professional field archaeologists active in the country at the time. A

more serious difficulty was that of inconsistency. The project was effectively abandoned following the deaths of the principal movers during the 1940s. The same might be said of the finds and records from the site which suffered badly without the diligent eye of an able enthusiast such as Hearne to maintain them.

Such a lack of consistency is a criticism which has been levelled at amateur societies by professionals, and although it has some basis, such criticism would ignore, in Sussex at least, the fundamental role of amateurs in internationally important research work. The work of the two Curwens in prehistoric studies shows what could be achieved. In fact, here indeed is another element which ensured some continuity that might otherwise have been lacking. The meeting of Philip Burstow and E. C. Curwen at Thundersbarrow Hill in 1932 established what might be considered as a distinct 'school' of archaeology in Sussex, one which maintained its impetus into the late 1960s.

Nevertheless there is an important lesson to be learnt. Essentially this might be summed up as 'societies which do not dig, die'. Certainly the NS&AS, despite maintaining itself as a going concern has fallen prey to this malaise. However, it is possible to be too critical and pessimistic. Despite various problems, the excavation of Angmering Roman villa was generally a success. The fact that it was not brought to a full conclusion was in part due to the outbreak of war in 1939. It stand as an example of what an active amateur group could achieve. If this was possible in the 1930s, then surely in the 1990s, with the vastly increased resources available, such projects should be within the reach of dedicated independent archaeological societies.

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**Author:** Oliver J. Gilkes, The Institute of World Archaeology, University of East Anglia, Department of World Art and Museology, Norwich, Norfolk NR4 7TJ.

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## OTHER SOURCES

Documentary sources, letters, accounts and minute books of the Angmering villa excavation committee and the NS&AS are stored in Littlehampton Museum. It appears that that almost all the records of the NS&AS for the prewar years have survived, and together with the various notebooks of Frazer Hearne they constitute a vitally important archival source for the history of Sussex archaeology. Of similar importance recently made available are the diaries of Philip Burstow in the library of the Society of Antiquaries of London, MS 949/1-20 MR12A.