

John Bryan Ward-Perkins CMG, CBE, FBA, FSA; 1912–1981

We have lost our president in mid-office, for John Ward-Perkins died on the 28th May, peacefully, after some months of illness throughout which, steadily weakening although he was, he continued to take a concerned interest in Libyan studies.

He had come to know Libya during the war, when he was an officer in the 42nd Light AA Regiment (commanded by R. E. Mortimer Wheeler, under whom he had worked at the London Museum). He was of course an experienced archaeologist when war broke out, with important work to his credit, both in the museum and in the field (in Britain, France and Malta). Not surprisingly, with his observant eye and his sure insight into the archaeologically — and historically — important, his attention was caught by what he now saw, whether in a fleeting and frustrated glimpse from a military vehicle (as of a Roman pottery-kiln near Lepcis Magna, whose exact location was all that could be recorded; it was later sought and excavated by R. G. Goodchild), or one achieved in slightly more leisured circumstances (as when his duties took him, with Wheeler, to the Sabratha amphitheatre, in which the civilian population of the area had taken refuge). When (on Wheeler's initiative) he was seconded from his regiment in order to arrange for care of antiquities under the Military Government, he had an opportunity for closer inspection; and it is remarkable how much he saw and understood in the brief period that was available. Beautiful and careful drawings, made especially at Sabratha and Lepcis, showed how quickly he had grasped the essence of what he was later to study seriously, or to persuade others to study.

His post-war appointment as Director of the British School at Rome provided him with a good base for furthering these Libyan interests (his work elsewhere will not be considered here). He established co-operative relationships with Italian archaeologists who had worked or were working in Libya (the names of Salvatore Aurigemma, Giacomo Caputo, Pietro Romanelli spring to mind), as with the staff of the Department of Antiquities (at that time a Superintendency), and attracted able help from Britain, both from established scholars such as Kathleen Kenyon and Jocelyn Toynbee and from keen students at the start of their careers (it is instructive to note how many successful archaeologists now in their middle years received an important stimulus from the training and opportunities which his projects provided); after a time he developed very fruitfully also the possibilities of long-term collaboration with R. G. Goodchild.

He began in Tripolitania, with a series of expeditions skilfully devised to throw light both on the local world in antiquity and on the Roman empire of which it was part and for which he saw that it could provide important evidence in a variety of fields, notably the development of architecture, of artistic motifs, of trade (especially the marble trade), as well as political, military and social history. He will be particularly remembered for his studies of artistic motifs and of architecture at Lepcis Magna (several made with Jocelyn Toynbee), for the systematic collection of inscriptions of the province (with which I was fortunate to be associated) and for the surveys of the hinterland (which he undertook with R. G. Goodchild). These last broke virtually new ground, in revealing the essential character of the Roman frontier systems at different periods and something of the society which developed in their shelter, based on fortified farms. He contributed also, and very heavily, to the important survey of Christian monuments in the province published with Goodchild. They formed the stimulus and background for much further work by others for instance that of David Oates on the Gebel oil farms, of Olwen Brogan in her pre-desert forays and particularly in her study of Ghirza (now in press) and for Charles Daniels' exploration in the Fezzan; they have as their latest descendant the current work of Barri Jones and his teams for the UNESCO Libyan Valleys Survey, which John helped to negotiate in the early stages and by which he was as excited as it so rightly

deserves. That Kathleen Kenyon's excavation at Sabratha, which was a main feature of his original programme, still remains unpublished is due to circumstances beyond his control. He had made a great effort to bring it to completion since her death, which the Society will strive to maintain.

When he moved to Cyrenaica at Goodchild's invitation, it was mainly with the aim of producing a survey of Christian monuments there to parallel what they had published for Tripolitania. Goodchild's premature death complicated the situation. By agreement with the Department of Antiquities John undertook to organise publication of Goodchild's unpublished excavations, which, in most cases, would require some additional excavation. The scheme started well with the work of Barri Jones and David Smith at Tocra (now being prepared for press). Then, however, came the local problems which culminated in the call for diversion of resources to the rescue excavation on the Sidi Khrebish site at Benghazi and so in an interruption of the orderly programme in John's mind. Earlier this year there appeared a book on the Justinianic mosaics of Cyrenaica in which he had collaborated with Elisabeth Alföldi Rosenbaum in order to publish one section of the material collected for the survey of Cyrenaican Christian monuments; but the main programme had only recently been resumed. At the time of his death he had in press an article covering Goodchild's excavation in the area of the Market Theatre at Cyrene; and he had taken in hand the problems of Goodchild's excavations at Ptolemais which he has left in the competent hands of John Little. There is, of course, much still to be done there and elsewhere.

It is too soon to offer an adequate assessment of his work; but I think it may be said that, as an archaeologist, he was marked from the first by ability to make a swift and valid diagnosis of priorities, as by a remarkably wide range of interests. These included techniques both of ancient production and of modern archaeology, art, architecture, geography, history; and in working on a site he brought all to bear on his subject. The study of Libyan monuments gained enormously; and so did those who worked with him, learning from his learning and stimulated by his vigour and enthusiasm. Not that it was all hard work to be on one of his expeditions in Libya. I remember plenty of fun, swimming, sunbathing, chatting; and have a store of intriguing pictures in my mind, as of John driving the Lepcis horse and trap to Homs to buy supplies (a splendid sight), John fiddling with a recalcitrant pressure lamp and appearing (briefly) in an aureole of fire, or John guarding the tip of his nose against the African sun with a little paper cap. It is of course true that it was part of his ebullience that he could be impatient with what he felt to be our slowness and follies, part of his drive that some felt that he mobilised us into his programmes; not less, however, that he was very generous in sharing opportunities and credit and very quick in seeing and encouraging unsuspected talent and very good at bringing the young scholar and the right job together.

I have said that there is much work that he began still to be done in Libya. The best memorial that we can give him is to endeavour to complete it as well and as soon as we can.

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A list of his books and articles has been compiled by Luciana Valentini and will be published in a memorial volume edited by G. D. B. Jones and Mollie Cotton.

Joyce Reynolds