

# VRONWY HANKEY: OBITUARY

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There will be many in the Lebanon and the rest of the Levant, as well as the Aegean world, who will mourn the death of Vronwy Hankey at the age of 81 in England. It was in Beirut where her husband, Henry, served with the British Embassy from 1962 to 1966, that Vronwy became actively re-engaged in her archaeological pursuits after the years spent following her marriage in 1941 as a diplomat's spouse and mother of four children. Though she began and ended her fieldwork in Greece, especially Crete, she developed and retained a professional commitment to the study of interconnections in the ancient Near East, and it was through this that I first became acquainted with her work and with Vronwy herself.

A graduate in Classics from Cambridge University, Vronwy was awarded a studentship which took her in 1938 to the British School at Athens. As a resident member she took part in excavations at Knossos and Mycenae before the German invasion and occupation of Greece in April/May 1941 put an end to normal academic activities. Her first archaeological publications after the War were all concerned with the Bronze Age Aegean, but following her introduction to the Levant, and the opportunity it provided to widen her horizons, her interests, and bibliography, diversified. As a result she became involved for the rest of her working life in the study of the finds of Minoan and Mycenaean pottery in the Near East, and embarked on a long term project to compile a gazetteer of sites in and around the eastern Mediterranean, including the Nile valley, where Aegean pottery and other exports had been uncovered. To her great relief, and manifest pleasure, she found in Al Leonard a valued collaborator.

From Vronwy's time in Beirut came a number of links which persisted throughout the rest of her archaeological career. She was long associated with the planned publication of the finds from the Bronze Age tombs brought to light in 1954 in the Kharji district of the port area of the city and wrote about them in *National Museum News* 3 Spring 1996, pp. 10-16. These included two Middle Minoan eggshell ware cups, as well as Mycenaean and Cypriote pottery, which have now appeared in a posthumous article by Roger Saidah in *Berytus* Vol. XLI, 1993-1994, pp. 137-210. She took part in Professor Basil Hennessy's clearance in 1966 of the Bronze Age Temple at Amman airport, following its accidental discovery in 1955, and made and published studies of the pottery and small finds from both periods of excavation. One of her papers on Mycenaean trade with the Levant appeared in the *Mélanges de l'Université Saint-Joseph* Tome XLVI, 1970, pp. 9-31, in honour of Maurice Dunand, and she, like me, contributed to the memorial volume for Roger Saidah, himself a tragic loss for archaeological research in Lebanon.

Having served in Beirut with the Australian Embassy in 1975, I too came to appreciate the special role which Phoenicia played in the evolution of Eastern civilisation and was inspired, like Vronwy, to study old material and new discoveries with historical implications far beyond the geographical confines of the country. This inevitably led us both to investigate the relative and absolute dates of the cultures around the east Mediterranean through the synchronisms supplied by exported artefacts, and brought us into contact with each other on this issue. My experience, I am sure, was no different to that of all others who came to consult her, for she was unfailingly generous with her time, knowledge and hospitality, as those of us who visited Hosey Croft can attest, and gave her advice freely but fearlessly. I shall always cherish, and use, the copy of *Aegean Bronze Age Chronology* which she co-authored with Peter Warren and sent me in 1990.

Vronwy was not only a hard working participant in archaeological field work but a conscientious contributor to seminars and conferences. It was a source of particular regret to Al Leonard and myself that she was unable in April 1997 to attend the major conference on "The Aegean and the Orient in the Second Millennium" organised by the University of Cincinnati Classics Department in Cincinnati by Dr. Eric Cline and Dr. Diane Harris-Cline. There she was to have spoken with Al on a paper whose title can only have come from her pen: "Aegean LB I and II Pottery in the East : who is the potter, pray, and who the pot?". It has now appeared in the published proceedings of the symposium, together with "A Personal Reminiscence" submitted by Vronwy at the request of the organisers (*Aegaeum* 18 (Liège 1998), pp. xxi-xxvii).

It was only at the end of another meeting, this time in Vienna in May 1998, that Al told me of her death, which came as something of a shock as I had spoken to her some weeks before, seeking her comments on British archaeological activities in Crete during the Second World War. She was, as always, welcoming, enthusiastic and willing to help, but had not yet got her study set up in their new home. She had in fact been asked to contribute to the same volume on British research in Crete as I had and was working on it when she died. We are all the poorer for her passing.