BEATRICE EILEEN DE CARDI

Beatrice Eileen de Cardi
1914–2016

Beatrice de Cardi, who died on 5 July 2016 aged 102, achieved the remarkable feat of filling in many of the gaps in our knowledge of the archaeological record over a vast area which stretched from the Persian Gulf to the Khyber Pass. She was able to do this mainly by survey, and then went on to establish the relative chronology of some of the new wares she identified by means of judicious excavation. In addition, she traced some of the connections between her new sites and other better-known ones which provided absolute dates for the new material. She achieved all this without the benefit of permanent institutional backing and never held an academic post, although she was generally acknowledged to be a talented and professional archaeologist. Unusually, she had a second parallel life, until her official retirement, as an outstanding administrator. After retirement she devoted herself solely to archaeology.

Beatrice was born, just before the outbreak of the First World War, on 5 June 1914, to a Corsican father and an American mother. She was the second of two daughters. She claimed that one of her earliest memories is of being in the cellar of their house in Ealing during an air raid with her mother dressed in what sounds like full evening dress. Apart from this the war had little impact on her. From an early age Beatrice wanted to be a ballet dancer and, although ill health prevented this, the training she received may well have been the reason for the upright posture and slightly imperious air which stayed with her all her life.[1]

[1] The information on B de C's life until she joined the Council for British Archaeology comes from an interview she gave to Dr P.-J. Smith of the McDonald Institute Cambridge in 2009.

Biographical Memoirs of Fellows of the British Academy, XVI, 109–118. © The British Academy 2017.
Posted 14 November 2017.

At nine she was sent to St Paul's Girls' School where Kathleen (later Dame Kathleen) Kenyon was head girl. She did so well that after two years she was moved up a whole class, not an unalloyed benefit as she missed a year and, she claimed, no one filled in the gaps in her knowledge of English grammar. In spite of this her published reports in later life were clear and precise, so she plainly overcame the problem. Ill health forced her to leave St Paul's before she reached the top form, and she became an invalid for some years until she outgrew a problem with her heart.

When her health improved she was accepted at University College London (UCL) to read for a general arts degree as she was unsure what she wanted to do in life. While there she attended some lectures by Dr R. E. M. (later Sir Mortimer) Wheeler on Roman Britain. It seems to have been these lectures and several seasons digging at Maiden Castle during her vacations that triggered the love of archaeology which was to shape much of her working life. It also taught her what were then the most advanced and 'scientific' methods of digging and recording the evidence. Wheeler was to remain a crucial figure in her life for many years. Sadly, just before she graduated, Beatrice's father died unexpectedly, leaving the family with no income and a heavily mortgaged house. The staff at UCL suggested that she took a secretarial course in order to improve her employment prospects, and it was while she was completing the course that Wheeler invited her to become his secretary at the Museum of London.

Wheeler was not an easy person to work for, but Beatrice made many friends in the museum world and helped with both the fieldwork and the secretarial work involved in compiling the museum's medieval catalogue of artefacts and buildings. With the outbreak of the Second World War all the male members of staff were called up and Beatrice became temporary Museum Assistant in charge of the storage of important objects and the arrangement of temporary exhibitions of the rest, until the air raids forced the museum to close. Amongst other duties she had to visit the coronation robes in storage in Buckinghamshire to make sure the moths were not getting at them. It was her friend Molly Cotton FBA, with whom she had worked at Maiden Castle, and who later was closely associated with the British School at Rome, who, in 1944, rescued her from this tedium; Molly was by then working in the Ministry of Economic Warfare.

Molly Cotton was looking for someone 'unflappable' to act as assistant to the newly appointed Representative in China of the Allied Supplies Executive of the War Cabinet, a Foreign Office appointment. His name was J. T. Asquith, and he and Beatrice met briefly in London where the

appointment was confirmed; an arrangement was made to meet again in Calcutta in a month's time. The Museum of London agreed to loan her for the period of the war, and Beatrice set off in a Sunderland flying boat with five army officers and an elderly rear admiral. The journey took four days, and they were able to see the aftermath of the battle of El Alamein as they flew over North Africa and to catch glimpses of Baghdad and the Makran coast of Iran before landing in Calcutta. A hectic sixteen months followed, travelling all over western China and between China and India, crossing the Himalayas in a DC3, a notoriously dangerous flight.

Asquith's brief was not only to screen all supplies to China from the Sterling Block but also to take care of the 1939–41 loans to China and the 1944 Sino-British Credit. He was confronted by irreconcilable objectives, with the British Government being anxious to keep supplies to a minimum and the Chinese determined to extract as much as possible. Applications for goods and machinery had to be investigated in relation to the projects for which they had been sought, a process involving much travelling in the interior of western China. In addition, cargo arriving in India often went astray and had to be tracked down anywhere between Karachi and Assam.

Living conditions were fairly squalid when they first arrived, and Beatrice persuaded the Embassy to move her from her first lodgings by scraping the lice off her bedroom walls and presenting them to the Chargé d'Affaires in an envelope. He quickly found her a new room at the British Council, then directed by Joseph Needham, the distinguished Sinologist and later Fellow of the British Academy. Beatrice was included in high-level meetings by Asquith and had the opportunity to meet several Chinese government ministers. Dr Wong Wen-hao, the head of the War Production Board and Minister of Economic Affairs, was a geologist by profession. He was keenly interested in archaeology and told her much about Neolithic pottery in Kansu and Shensi.

In 1945 de Cardi was sent to India alone to explain changes in loan procedures to Indian officials. She remembers that she was given a lift to Delhi in the private plane of General Carton de Wiart and was made to wear a parachute which was much too large for her. The crew pinned it together with safety pins, assuring her that they would not hold if there was an emergency. However, all went well, and while in Delhi she managed to see Wheeler who was working there.

Allied victory in Japan saw her back in London with her job in China abruptly terminated. When she went back to the Museum of London, she found, much to her surprise, that her job had been filled and there was no

vacancy for her. The museum had agreed to keep her job open for her until the end of the war, but saw VE Day as that end and so felt free to refill the post. On impulse she applied to the Board of Trade and was appointed as an Assistant UK Trade Commissioner to New Delhi, the first woman to hold such a post. After the war the promotion of British exports was of paramount importance and de Cardi enjoyed the challenge. She also managed several meetings with Wheeler, who by this time was Director General of Antiquities in India.

De Cardi spent about nine months in New Delhi, and because of her interest in archaeology was usually deputed to take visiting businessmen around archaeological sites in the vicinity. As the partitioning of India drew near, the staff of the Trade Commission office was given the choice of either staying in India or transferring to the new Pakistan. De Cardi opted for Pakistan, enticed there largely by the Indus civilisation, and found the post in Karachi an exciting one. As the capital of a new country, it was the international diplomatic centre until eventually Islamabad was built.

While there she learnt that Burmah Shell was prospecting in Baluchistan, where there was reported to be a large number of archaeological sites. During the war Stuart Piggott, later professor of archaeology at Edinburgh and a Fellow of the British Academy, had identified some very distinctive painted pottery in the reserve collections of the Central Asian Antiquities Museum. When his next local leave came, with the help of a local taxi driver he had been able to identify the same ware on four sites in the Quetta area. His findings were published in *Ancient India 3* (1947) with the title 'A new prehistoric ceramic from Baluchistan'. Wheeler sent de Cardi a copy of the article, which triggered her interest. She determined to spend her next leave trying to establish the full range of this sophisticated and distinctive pottery.

When she discussed this with Wheeler, he told her that the region was much too dangerous for her to work there, but with characteristic determination she insisted and eventually Wheeler gave way. He also persuaded the new Department of Archaeology to lend her the services of Sadar Din for a month. Sadar Din had worked as foreman on excavations by both Sir Leonard Woolley and Wheeler and he proved invaluable, teaching her the importance of studying the local terrain closely to identify the best locations for sites.

The conditions in 1948 were rough, but it is said that de Cardi emerged from her tent every morning looking pristine with not a hair out of place and wearing her characteristic scarlet lipstick. It is also said that she slept with a pistol under her pillow. When Wheeler quizzed her about the

lipstick, she replied tartly that it stopped her lips from getting chapped. She was able to show that the so-called Quetta ware also occurred about 100 miles south from the Quetta region into the northern Jhalawan.[2] A considerable number of new sites, of all periods from the Neolithic to the Islamic period, was also identified for the first time.

The survey was finally abandoned on the advice of local officials who deemed the area too dangerous for her to work in. She was unable to return until 1957, when she continued her survey with a small team which included Pakistani representatives, David Trump as archaeologist, and George Barrington, who was in effect her 'dragoman' taking care of the car and all the practical arrangements, as well as acting as interpreter. He was later to accompany her on many of her expeditions and became an important figure in her life. The most significant excavation was that at Anjira, where a good sequence was established which at a later date was linked to the sequence at Mehrgah where C14 dates were available. These showed that the Anjira sequence probably began in the early fourth millennium.

Her carefully published exploration results and excavation reports have been at the foundation of all later work in that region. All archaeologists working anywhere in western Pakistan or the Iranian borderlands will of necessity consult her most original and detailed fieldwork. No pottery collections were made on the Islamic sites she identified, but the rest of the ceramics were closely studied and published in great detail at a later date. By then much more comparative data was available from new work by the French and the Americans in Afghanistan and Seistan, which enabled her to put the pottery in its proper context.[3] A final report appeared in 1983, by which time important connections with Baluchistan from these areas had been demonstrated. The pottery she had collected was donated to the Institute of Archaeology, now part of UCL, which handed it on to the British Museum.

Having had to leave Baluchistan in 1948 because of security concerns, she soon made a lightning dash to Afghanistan to try to find the northern limits of Quetta ware. On her return to her post she found a telegram from Kathleen Kenyon FBA, the excavator of Jericho, telling her that the newly

[2] See B. de Cardi, 'The British Expedition to Kalat 1948 and 1957', *Pakistan Archaeology,* 1 (1964), 20–9; B. de Cardi, 'Excavation and reconnaissance in Kalat West Pakistan – the prehistoric sequence in the Surab region', *Pakistan Archaeology*, 1.i (1965), 86–183; B. de Cardi, 'A new prehistoric ware from Baluchistan', *Iraq*, 13 (1951), 63–75.

[3] B. de Cardi, *Archaeological Surveys in Baluchistan*, Institute of Archaeology Occasional Publications no. 8 (London, 1983).

created Council for British Archaeology (CBA) was advertising a post as Assistant Secretary and suggesting that she applied for the job. As her mother had become seriously ill and de Cardi wished to return to London, she applied and was appointed.

Her twenty-four years at the CBA saw it develop from a small, largely unpaid group of people concerned about the state of British monuments of all sorts after the war, into a fully professional body, with professional staff, which today plays a major role on the national scene. When asked what her proudest achievement was at the CBA, de Cardi replied that it was having helped many students to pursue their interest in archaeology. Key to this was a number of publications, such as the *Calendar of Excavations* which listed all the digs up and down the country that were looking for staff, both amateur and professional. Many students got their first taste of fieldwork in this way. Later, the *Calendar* expanded to include some overseas excavations as well. In addition, there was the *Archaeological Bibliography* and a growing number of Research Reports. De Cardi was also instrumental in the recognition of industrial archaeology as an integral part of British Heritage and co-ordinated a conference on this theme. Her post was upgraded and she became the Secretary with a very large S, often acting as spokesperson for the Council. It goes without saying that the CBA office and the council meetings worked without a hitch and, partly as a result of this achievement, she was universally admired. On her retirement in 1973 she was awarded the OBE in recognition of her work, and on her 100th birthday the CBA's main office building in York was renamed after her as Beatrice de Cardi House.

While in London she became a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries in 1950 and remained an active member until her death. She became a Director in 1980 and a Vice-President of the Society in 1996. She also saw the importance of the Society's own collections and was instrumental in reorganising and cataloguing them. She was awarded the Society's Gold Medal in 2014 in recognition of her contributions. She was also a member of the Antiquaries' 'Cocked Hat' dining club, and is remembered as 'very convivial' by a fellow member. Some of de Cardi's papers were bequeathed to the Antiquaries.

One of the attractions for de Cardi of the job at the CBA was the fact that they were happy to let her accumulate her leave so that she could return to Baluchistan for a reasonable period in the summer, as she did in 1957 when her second survey was carried out (see above). She was to confess that she preferred survey to excavation and had an insatiable

curiosity about what lay beyond the horizon. She was also curious to establish the links westwards into Persian Baluchistan of her Baluchi pottery and to explore some of the east–west valleys of southern Iran, which she felt had been important arteries of communication.

With this in mind she decided to excavate at the site of Bampur in south-east Iran with a small team which once again included George Barrington, two archaeologists and a representative of the Iranian archaeological service. The site lay on the river of the same name in the fertile Bampur valley which ran east–west, and which had first been recognised as an important route by Sir Aurel Stein in 1932. The site was dominated by the ruins of a fine fortress on an impressive tell or mound. It was not possible to explore the main mound, but Stein had sunk a trial trench into its lower flanks where he had identified some interesting painted pottery. De Cardi expanded and completed his trench to ground level and sunk a second one nearby. Six prehistoric levels were identified with badly disturbed later levels above and a few Islamic graves. No complete architectural units were identified, but a number of rooms with mudbrick walls, one of which contained a fine kiln, was found. It was clear that the figurative pottery of the four lowest levels had many similarities both to the pottery from her earlier surveys to the east and further afield to wares from Afghanistan, especially with Mundigak in the south-east of that country. The Italians excavating in Seistan, north of Bampur, were soon to find another link in this chain of contacts at the site of Shahr-i-Sokhta.

Level V at Bampur saw a marked change in the direction of the external contacts of the site from approximately north to east–west. The painted pottery now had some similarities with Kulli/Harappan wares to the east. Grey incised pottery and one or two pieces of grey stone jars appear for the first time and belong to the so-called Intercultural style, at home to the west. This pottery seems to be a copy of similar stone vessels and has designs which could be matched to those on containers found in the Persian Gulf and into southern Iraq. The Danes were finding very similar sherds on Umm-an-Nar island off the north coast of the Emirates and at Hili and Bat inland. The network of contacts which linked southern Iraq, the Persian Gulf, south-eastern Iran and even the Indus valley in the third millennium BC was coming slowly into focus in part at least owing to de Cardi's work. Later, the links were to be extended to central Asia.

Professor Lamberg-Karlovsky, Professor of Archaeology and Ethnology at Harvard University, who was surveying another section of the Bampur valley and was later to dig at nearby Tepe Yahya, knew

de Cardi and her work well and admired her as a pioneer in regions that were, at the time, an archaeological no-man's land. He also praised her rapid and complete publication of her results.[4] As always, her main interest was in the pottery which was meticulously recorded with admirable drawings.

It was natural that de Cardi decided to follow her grey ware into the Gulf, and 1968 found her in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). It was fortuitous that as a result of a conference in Bahrain to mark the opening of the new museum there, a decision was taken to set up the Committee for East Arabian and Gulf Studies with Sir Mortimer Wheeler as its president and Richard Barnett FBA of the British Museum as its chairman.[5] The committee was later to become the Society for Arabian Studies and is now called The British Foundation for the Study of Arabia. Its aim was to facilitate British expeditions to the region. De Cardi served as President to the Society and the Foundation for a considerable length of time. The new committee was approached by Michael Rice who had been commissioned to build a museum in Qatar, although little was known about the archaeology and history of the state and there was nothing to put in such a museum except for some stone tools discovered by a Danish expedition. Rice asked for help in setting up a survey, to be paid for by the government of Qatar, to remedy this situation, and Wheeler had no hesitation in suggesting de Cardi to lead the project. Needless to say, this had to be achieved in a very short period of time so that the museum could open on schedule.

De Cardi set to work in 1972 to gather together a team, which comprised her long-time friend, George Barrington, as before in charge of all the practical arrangements, Professor Claudio Vita-Finzi FBA, geomorphologist, and three archaeologists. The government of Qatar provided Land Rovers, buses and even a caravan, advice on local conditions and help with recruiting labourers. In spite of a personal tragedy, when George Barrington was killed after falling from a horse, de Cardi once again proved her professionalism by concluding the survey successfully and providing the necessary artefacts for the museum. Perhaps the most significant find was the presence of distinctive Ubaid pottery at a coastal site called al-Da'asa. This pottery originated in Mesopotamia,

[4] B. de Cardi, 'Bampur 1966', *Anthropological Papers of the American Museum of Natural History*, 50 (1970), 233–70.

[5] M. Rice, 'Beatrice de Cardi: an appreciation', in C. S. Phillips, D. T. Potts and S. Searight (eds.), *Arabia and its Neighbours: Essays on Prehistorical Developments Presented in Honour of Beatrice de Cardi* (Turnhout, 1998), pp. 233–6.

southern Iraq, and dates to the fifth millennium BC. It had never been found so far south before, and the find raised questions about the nature of the contacts.

A glance at the final publication,[6] which is dedicated to George Barrington, illustrates the range of the finds made, from Stone Age tools to the remains of an Islamic town. The book also includes articles by major scholars who had not been members of the original expedition on additional aspects of history and archaeology. It is still an important resource after forty years.

After the completion of the Qatar survey de Cardi continued to survey and excavate in different parts of the UAE and Oman, often in difficult terrain, sometimes alone and sometimes with other scholars like Brian Doe. She was to develop a special fondness for Ras al Khaimah, whose ruler was the same age as she was. Even after she ceased to excavate she made annual visits to the museum there until she was well into her nineties, helping to analyse and catalogue the material in its collection. In the early days she also assisted in survey work. She will be much missed by the museum staff—and its cats!

In recognition of her enormous contribution to the study of the heritage of Ras al Khaimah she was awarded the Al Qasimi Medal in 1989. Other awards followed, including that of a golden dhow in full sail which was presented to her in 2009 at a conference to mark fifty years of archaeology in the Emirates. Regrettably, she was to find that she had a new role towards the end of her life, that of reminding the governments and rulers of the Gulf States of the importance of preserving their unique heritage, which faced many threats in the face of rapid and sometimes uncontrolled development.[7]

Towards the end of her life many other honours were awarded in recognition of her work. In 1994 she was made an Honorary Fellow of University College London, where she had been an undergraduate, and an honorary Visiting Professor at UCL's Institute of Archaeology. In 1998 a Festschrift was published in her honour, including contributions from scholars across Europe on a wide range of topics.[8] In 2002 she was elected a Fellow of the British Academy, sealing her acceptance by the academic establishment, something she must have relished.

[6] B. de Cardi, *Qatar Archaeological Report. Excavations 1973* (Oxford, 1978).

[7] B. de Cardi, 'Overview', in D. T. Potts, Hasan Al Naboodah and P. Hellyer (eds.), *Archaeology of the United Arab Emirates* (London, 2003), pp. 18–21.

[8] Phillips, Potts and Searight, *Arabia and its Neighbours*. This Festschrift contains a list (possibly incomplete) of de Cardi's publications.

De Cardi was a brave, determined, fiercely independent and somewhat formidable woman. She maintained her interest in her field all her life and was attending lectures until shortly before her death. She also had highly developed managerial and diplomatic skills, but there was another side to her. After the death of her elder sister she lived alone in a flat just off Kensington High Street where she entertained her circle of friends of all ages with cake and conversation. She wrote a pamphlet about Corsica where her father was born, and asked for the Corsican 'anthem' to be played at her funeral. She was one of the rare people of whom others said that when talking to her they completely forgot the age difference. She had a special gift for relating to younger people. She loved cooking and cats, and had an extensive collection of recipe books. She also made many of her own clothes with material usually bought from souks in the Gulf. She was always immaculately turned out with her make-up carefully applied. She apparently liked kippers for breakfast and watching professional wrestling.

It is difficult to summarise the main achievements of such a long and varied life, but there are perhaps three areas for which she will be specially remembered. She played an important part in making the CBA an integral part of the British heritage sector and was responsible in large measure for the rediscovery of the prehistory of the southern Gulf and for its preservation. More broadly, she played her part in beginning to clarify the complex network of connections over an area which stretched from Arabia to the Indus valley. Her work will remain seminal for many years.

HARRIET CRAWFORD
McDonald Institute, University of Cambridge

Note. This memoir would have been impossible without the help of many people. My warmest thanks to Dr P.-J. Smith for the transcript of her interview with B de C and for permission to use it. Many thanks too to Mike Heyworth, Mike Pitts and Cherry Lavell at the CBA, Dr Bob Knox, Professor Rosemary Cramp FBA, Professor Norman Hammond FBA, Professor Lamberg-Karlovsky, Carl Phillips, Sarah Searight, Kamil MacLelland and Christian Velde, all of whom illuminated different aspects of Beatrice de Cardi's extraordinary life. I am also grateful to the librarian of the Ancient India and Iran Trust in Cambridge for her help with books.