



T. B. MITFORD

TERENCE BRUCE MITFORD

1905-1978

TERENCE MITFORD was not a man to fit easily into the patterns of the scholarly world. During the final phase of the German occupation of Crete he led a group of Greek partisans in the White Mountains. The diary he kept then is the true epitome of the man: lists of weapons and equipment, records of enemy positions and partisan movements are interspersed with notes on villagers needing help and transcriptions of Greek inscriptions (as on 4 January 1945: 'rough stele of blue grey limestone: *EYKPINHΣ ΜΕΓΑΛΟΚΑΗ*. Letters prob. late 2nd or early 1st B.C.'). Not a few classical scholars from Britain in both wars combined action and scholarship, sometimes in rather unexpected ways. We will never know whether Mitford saw himself a heir to such a tradition. But men like D. G. Hogarth or J. N. L. Myres may well have been an inspiration to him.

Terence Bruce Mitford was born in Yokohama on 15 May 1905, the eldest son of C. E. Bruce Mitford, journalist and writer, and of Beatrice Jean, née Allison. As he rarely, if ever, talked about his childhood, it is difficult to assess in which way family atmosphere (his mother seems to have been a remarkable person) and life abroad formed certain traits of his character in those years. Dulwich College, to which he was sent towards the end of the First World War, opened the way to Oxford when he won a scholarship in Classics to Jesus College.

Life at Oxford unfolded diverse and fascinating prospects. It also revealed already in the undergraduate a contrast that made itself felt throughout Mitford's life: the contrast between his deep love for the Classics and his ardent passion for active life. At first the Senior Classical Scholar for Jesus seemed to live up to his promise, taking a First in Mods. But gradually sports took up so much of his time and energy (he very nearly won a Rugby blue in a 'vintage year') that his final degree could not exactly be described as a good one.

Fortunately for Mitford athletic prowess counted as much as scholarly achievement with the Principal of St. Andrews University at that time. Thus he was appointed temporary assistant to the great Latin scholar W. M. Lindsay, who was Professor of Humanity at St. Andrews until 1936. The move from Oxford to

Scotland was a more momentous decision than Mitford can possibly have imagined at the time: it marked the beginning of an association with the Department of Humanity at St. Andrews which lasted for half a century. After a four years' term as Warden of St. Salvator's Hall Mitford was appointed Lecturer in Humanity in 1936. The bonds with Scotland were strengthened greatly when he married in the same year Margaret, daughter of Professor P. T. Herring of St. Andrews. Serving herself on the staff of the University as a Demonstrator in Anatomy, she proved to be through all his life a staunch partner in his many activities—kind, humorous, firm, and quietly distinguished.

There is a strange divide between the teacher and the scholar in Mitford's academic career at St. Andrews. His duties as a Lecturer and later (from 1952) as a Reader in Humanity and Classical Archaeology were confined nearly exclusively to teaching Latin prose composition and to lecturing on Latin texts—prose authors mostly, but sometimes also a poet such as Catullus. Mitford was a painstaking and conscientious teacher, assessing shrewdly the individual talents and merits of each pupil. He kindled a love of the Classics even in students who were frankly uninterested in the beginning, and he took special pains with his lame ducks. For these he founded the famous 'Gamma Club' which saved quite a number of its members from being sent down. Much of Mitford's impact as a teacher rested on his personality. His warmhearted and compassionate humanity, although sometimes hidden under a bluff manner, attracted even those who did not share his strong opinions and won him the lifelong devotion of many of his pupils. They used to come regularly to the Mitfords' large house, being made to feel at home by Margaret Mitford in the lively and delightful household where the five Mitford children grew up.

Mitford's interests as a scholar were focused on Greek epigraphy. He was attracted early by the study of inscriptions, and after his first travels in Cyprus in the mid-thirties (characteristically by bicycle) he devoted most of his energy to research in Cypriot epigraphy. At that time neither history nor classical archaeology was part of the St. Andrews curriculum, but Mitford was fortunate in that successive Professors of Latin encouraged him to pursue his particular scholarly interests. Although he sometimes felt this strongly marked separation of teaching and research rather acutely, he never applied for other posts and never seems to have contemplated seriously moving from St. Andrews. He had taken roots in Scotland where his family now lived and where he had formed a wide circle of friends. St. Andrews gave

him a kind of life that suited him very well and the Preface to his last major work (*The Nymphaeum of Kafizin*), written in 1975, expressed once more his strong attachment 'to the University of St. Andrews which I have the honour and the pleasure still to serve'.

The long summers in Scottish Universities enabled Mitford to pursue one of the most constant aims of his life: to travel and to explore abroad in Classical lands. His achievements as a scholar in the field and his war experiences were closely interwoven. Although the war was for him a decisive phase of life, he retained an extraordinary reticence about it; of his experiences he would rarely speak. Yet what we know of his service has the ring of a heroic tale of old. Commissioned into the Dorset Regiment in 1939, he was soon seconded to Special Air Services and sent to serve under Pendlebury in Greece. During the German attack on Crete in 1941 he commanded a troop of raiders based on an island in the mouth of Suda Bay. He managed to escape to Egypt, one of the last to leave the island. Transferred to Special Operations Executive, he was given the task of raising and maintaining a force of Kurds in Syria—meeting there N. G. L. Hammond as an expert in demolition, Patrick Leigh Fermor as chief weapon instructor. A very tough, cheerful lot, enormously strong, with huge moustaches and lambskin kalpaks, these Kurds were trained to sabotage the Turkish railway route into Iraq in the event of Turkey joining the Axis powers, one of the reconnoitred objects being the suspension bridge over the Euphrates at Deir-es-Zor. As Turkey remained neutral, there was no chance of performing Lawrentian feats. Mitford then took his Kurds to Iraq on a mission still shrouded in mystery, thus gaining an opportunity to explore the desert route down to the eastern shore of the Persian Gulf in the steps of Alexander.

He returned to the Aegean theatre with the Special Boat Service. When the Italian armistice seemed to offer an easy chance to occupy the Dodecanese islands, Mitford led an SBS patrol in a minute caique and captured Patmos with a crew of four. His rule there—parleying with the venerable abbot of St. John's monastery, distributing food to starving islanders, reopening the local school—lasted a few days only. But SBS gave him another opportunity for secret and daring service: he was one of those preliminary invaders of Sicily who greatly facilitated the task of the first landing formations.

Late in 1944 Mitford returned to Crete, landing one night by parachute in the Omalo plain in the heart of the White Mountains.

He trained partisans with the machine gun, cleared mines in the Chania and Rhethymnon areas, and at the same time looked around for inscriptions. 'Pistol in one pocket, squeeze paper in another', as he once casually told me—and his diary bears out the tale. Quiet, thoughtful and imperturbable, he had a strong hold over his *andartes*, amongst them the famous Paterakis brothers (it was Antonis Paterakis who with Leigh Fermor captured the German GOC). In the high villages up in the White Mountains he is remembered to this day with affection as 'Mitsos'.

Mitford's war record shows the extraordinary courage, resilience, and endurance of the born soldier. And the war strengthened his innate love of hardships and simple life. His craving for the open air and his utter disregard for comfort were such that in Athens, rather than spending the night in the British School, he would take a bus out of the city in the evening to sleep under an olive-tree. What made him the model of a travelling scholar was the combination of such war-trying habits with a natural sympathy for all manner of men and an unusual talent for forming easy relationships with the most diverse people—a talent which owed a good deal to his command of Modern Greek and Turkish.

The love of the wild grew even stronger over the years, and so grew his dislike of the changing world of today with all its 'modern contraptions'. His marked distrust of mechanical contrivances reflected this attitude. When he transferred his field of activity from Cyprus to Turkey, this was due primarily to the Enosis crisis. But it was also a retreat into the wilderness—a wilderness which (as he once complained) was in the end also 'softened up by the arrival of the bus, the Landrover, and the transistor radio'.

Cyprus and Cilicia were the two areas to which he exclusively devoted his post-war field-work. Cyprus has cast her spell over many visitors to the island, captivating and firmly holding their interests. So it was with Mitford. The island's classical past, at that time rather neglected by scholars, had aroused his curiosity already in the years before the war. The title of the first article he ever published defined his future field of study: 'Contributions to the Epigraphy of Cyprus' (*Journal of Hellenic Studies*, 1937), and there he outlined his research programme: 'studying the Greek and Roman inscriptions of the island, with the intention of ultimately producing a small Corpus'. Edition and interpretation of the epigraphic texts of Cyprus indeed retained the central place in Mitford's scholarly interests throughout his life. Constant travel, often in very primitive conditions, and meticulous study of the original texts over many years made him the unrivalled master

of Cypriot epigraphy. A long series of learned articles on Hellenistic, Roman, and early Christian texts contributed to a better understanding of the history, culture, and economy of the island during these periods. Mitford did not attain his original aim of producing a corpus for the whole of Cyprus (which would have formed volume xv of *Inscriptiones Graecae*). But he edited in a comprehensive way the inscriptions of two of the island's most important Greek cities: *The Inscriptions of Kourion* (1971) and *The Greek and Latin Inscriptions from Salamis* (with I. Nicolaou, 1974).

When the political situation in the island put a temporary end to his activities there in the late fifties, he began another ambitious research project: the collection and edition of the inscriptions of Rough Cilicia. This plan was not simply an *ad hoc* expedient. Mitford had set his eyes on southern Turkey a long time before; as early as 1953 he advised a young epigraphist to work in Pamphylia, promising him a rich harvest of new texts. The inscriptions of Rough Cilicia were to be published as volume vi of the *Tituli Asiae Minoris*, edited by the 'Kleinasiatische Kommission' of the Austrian Academy. Mitford thus established a connection with that learned body which meant much to him in the later years of his life. He spent long months in Vienna working through his squeezes, photographs, and field notes, profiting from the Academy's copious archives.

The epigraphic journeys into the rough mountains and valleys of western Cilicia and Pamphylia he undertook first with the late Professor G. E. Bean, an explorer of the same fibre and an indefatigable walker. Later he was accompanied by his wife and by his son Timothy, himself an ancient historian. Well over fifty, he had not lost his powers of resilience and endurance. He walked quite literally into the Taurus and existed off the land for weeks, undaunted by the roughest conditions. His courage and physical stamina, his genial habits and sense of humour won him the respect of the originally suspicious Turkish villagers. Such a mode of travel (which very few of his colleagues would care to imitate) had its rewards, presented in two volumes with the title *Journeys in Rough Cilicia*, published with G. E. Bean as *Denkschriften der Wiener Akademie* (1965, 1970). These volumes show that Mitford's method of field-work enabled him to discover many hitherto unpublished inscriptions and to locate for the first time a number of Classical sites in a region notoriously difficult for archaeological explorers—quite apart from the enjoyment he drew from the hard life and the beautiful wild country.

As an epigraphist Mitford was painstaking and infinitely

patient in his factual scholarship—revising (as his notebooks show) again and again the inscribed stones down to minute detail, and building up over the years a vast store of information about the intricate problems of Cypriot inscriptions. He belonged with that school of epigraphy which thinks it both possible and desirable to restore even severely mutilated texts to a large extent, if not completely. Consequently he did not always escape the hazards inherent in this method. Once Mitford had convinced himself of a certain solution to a textual problem, he could not easily be induced by arguments of other scholars to change his mind. In matters of scholarship as in many other respects he set great store by his independence.

It was to 'Nikokles, King of Paphos' that one of Mitford's earliest articles was devoted (*Anatolian Studies* Buckler, 1939). Again a note was struck which was to be an important and recurrent theme in his field-work. It was one of the minor side effects of the war that Mitford met in the Middle East J. H. Iliffe, director of the Palestine Archaeological Museum, but at that time seconded to the staff of Sir Alec Kirkbride in Amman as Assistant British Resident. Bicycling through Cyprus in the full heat of August 1949, Mitford and Iliffe learnt about the discovery of some Archaic limestone statues in a mound outside the village of Koukليا, the ancient Old Paphos. Once more an excavation project was sparked off by a sheer accident occurring at the appropriate moment. From 1950 to 1955 the Koukليا Expedition of the University of St. Andrews and the Liverpool Museums (of which Iliffe had become the director) excavated at Old Paphos, until work had to be suspended due to the growing unrest created in the island by the Enosis movement. At a time when Cypriot archaeology had not yet gained its present interest and importance, the Koukليا Expedition did vital pioneer work, discovering *inter alia* the first Late Bronze Age cemeteries of Old Paphos and a unique siege ramp dating from the Ionic Revolt.

The overall archaeological direction of the Expedition's work rested with Iliffe, while Mitford was responsible for the actual policy in choosing the staff, selecting the sites, and taking care of the dig's organization in general. He cheerfully bore the burden of arranging labour and procuring supplies at a time when the island was far from offering the easy commodities of today. Mitford was the driving spirit of the Expedition, both respected and beloved in the village by Greeks and Turks alike (some of his Homeric tales are still told in the *kapheneion* today). He soon became a well-known figure in the whole Paphos district, equally

well at home with the Colonial Secretary as with the local *mukhtar* or the poorest of workmen.

Mitford, although not trained as an archaeologist, took an active part in the excavation of the Late Bronze Age necropolis and of a Roman house next to the Temple of Aphrodite. But at Kouklia as elsewhere inscriptions, and now especially Syllabic inscriptions, remained his dominating interest. Syllabic texts occur sporadically already in his earlier articles. But it was only in the late forties that his growing involvement with that particular domain of scholarship began. The Classical Cypriot script had played some part in the decipherment of the Cretan Linear B texts. But the Syllabic inscriptions are also of intrinsic value for the history of Cyprus, where the Greek alphabet was only adapted (and hesitatingly at that) from the end of the fourth century BC.

Mitford not only revised or published a number of isolated Syllabic inscriptions, many of these from the collection of the Cyprus Museum: he had the good fortune to discover (or to re-discover) three large and important groups of Syllabic texts. At Kafizin, a small cone-shaped hill near the Nicosia-Larnaca road, Mitford excavated in 1949 together with the then Curator of the Cyprus Museum, the late P. Dikaios, the remains of a sanctuary of Nymphs. In this project he also profited from the dedicated support of an English hotel proprietor at Nicosia who would rush out his slightly inebriated customers in a fleet of taxis for emergency operations when heavy rains had washed inscribed sherds down the steep slope of the hill. The graffiti with dedications and prayers, left by the worshippers at Kafizin, constitute important new evidence for the religions of Hellenistic Cyprus. They prove at the same time that the Syllabic script was used in the island right down to the end of the third century BC, at least for cult purposes.

At Rantidi, a few miles south-east of Kouklia, a number of Syllabic inscriptions from a Sanctuary site were excavated by R. Zahn in 1910 on behalf of the Prussian Academy. During his last campaign at Kouklia, in 1955, Mitford carried out (with the help of M. R. Popham) a survey of the area which produced twenty-two new inscriptions from the site. At the same time he began a thorough study of the surviving 1910 texts which he caused to be assembled at the Kouklia Museum.

Finally, his own excavations at Kouklia yielded an unexpected harvest when more than 250 Syllabic texts were discovered in the siege ramp which had been erected in 498 BC by a Persian army outside the North East Gate of Old Paphos. Many of the

inscriptions are fairly short dedications. But it is of prime importance that all these texts have a definite *terminus ante quem*—the more so, as the Archaic Paphian syllabary represents an intermediate stage between the Cypro-Minoan script of the Late Bronze Age and the Classical Syllabic script. The tenacious study of these documents made Mitford a leading authority on the Syllabic texts of Iron Age Cyprus with all their intricate problems. Thus it seems most appropriate that during his last visit to Kouklia, in April 1977, mosaic restorers in the North Hall of the Temple of Aphrodite accidentally discovered a large fragment of a Syllabic text dating from the reign of King Nikokles, of which Mitford published a first description and short commentary (*Bulletin de correspondance hellénique*, 102, 1978).

Fortune was less kind as far as the publication of these three important text groups was concerned. Battling already against ill health, he was able to see through the proofs of *The Nymphaeum of Kafizin. The Inscriptions of a Hellenistic Cult Site in Central Cyprus* (1980), although the volume was published only after his death. Of the Rantidi texts he left a nearly complete manuscript, of the Paphian siege mound inscriptions a very thorough documentation. (Both texts groups will be edited by O. Masson in the series 'Ausgrabungen in Alt-Paphos': a series destined, by agreement with Mitford, for the publication of all excavation results from Kouklia since 1950.) But although Mitford's untimely death on 8 November 1978 prevented him from finishing these tasks, the debt the history and epigraphy of Cyprus owe to his untiring work is immeasurable.

Yet recognition of his scholarly work came slow and late; this may have been because he concentrated so exclusively on a fairly circumscribed field of research. In 1961 and 1967 he was a member of the Institute of Advanced Study at Princeton. The German and the Austrian Archaeological Institutes elected him a Corresponding Member; Oxford gave him a D.Litt. in 1973. He was made an FBA in 1974, and a few months before his death the Austrian Academy elected him a Corresponding Fellow.

His own university gave him the title of Honorary Emeritus Professor and Research Fellow when he retired in 1973. It was a well-earned honour: that ancient history and classical archaeology are taught at St. Andrews is in no small way due to the efforts of Mitford. He created the little Museum of Archaeology at St. Andrews, providing a number of exhibits from his own excavations in Cyprus. He also took a great interest in the Committee of the Scottish Universities for an Archaeological Field School, of

which he was chairman for a time. But his most important contribution was the time and energy he devoted over long years to the St. Andrews Archaeological Society. Under his inspiring guidance the Society, with its lectures and its annual archaeological picnic, created an ever-increasing interest in the subject, both in university and town. That the Society attracted for many years scholars of international repute as visiting lecturers to distant Scotland, was not only due to Mitford's wide network of acquaintances in the scholarly world. It was at the same time a proof of the strong incentive formed by the combination of Margaret Mitford's generous hospitality and of Terence Mitford's strong personality.

He was a man of very individual character; and yet it seems difficult, if not impossible, to evoke the impression he made on those he met or worked with. It is certainly significant that one never remembers him in a city or in a library, but out in the country: striding down the hill below the Chiftlik of Kouklia, or walking up Lucklaw Hill in Fife. On such walks he would point out rare birds, as bird-watching increasingly became his key interest besides epigraphy. Ardlogie, the solitary house far out in the country into which the Mitfords moved in later years, was an ideal place for such an occupation. But his ornithological interests were not confined to Scotland. He took part in the study of migratory movements in Scandinavia, and in 1975 he acted as 'Adviser to the Jordanian Government on Bird Conservation'.

A first impression of the man, with his marked reticence and his military bearing (which was underlined by a certain facial likeness to Vespasian), could be misleading. His true character was far from being one-sided. Mitford could of course be direct, laconic, and sometimes stern; for small talk he had no taste. But he could also be a most delightful companion, a great raconteur with an unflinching sense of humour. And he was always sensitive and kind, showing in small acts or gestures how he cared for others.

Yet, with all his humanity and understanding, he was in certain respects set and unyielding in his ideas, disdaining what he considered 'the modern vice of flexibility at all costs'. He was deeply conservative, not only in a political sense: averse to change which seemed to him nowadays almost everywhere change for the worse, *teste* his introduction to the Kafizin publication: 'As universities proliferate, so do seats of learning become the rarer and more precious'. There would, however, be exceptions when he had convinced himself of a cause being just—as when he, a firm believer in the infinite superiority of a classical education, supported Principal

Sir Malcolm Knox against conservatives in St. Andrews in his fight for scientific expansion of the University.

Terence Mitford will always be remembered for the man he was: single-minded, courageous, independent. The lament of pipes that ended the simple burial service in Kilmany church has gone: but his deep laughter is still with us.

FRANZ GEORG MAIER

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