



RUPERT BRUCE-MITFORD  
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# Rupert Leo Scott Bruce-Mitford

## 1914–1994

RUPERT BRUCE-MITFORD, archaeologist, art historian, author of *The Sutton Hoo Ship Burial*, was born on 14 June 1914 at 1 Deerhurst Road, Streatham, the youngest of the four sons of Eustace and Beatrice Jean Bruce-Mitford.<sup>1</sup> According to family tradition, the brothers were asked to suggest names for the new arrival, and from their current reading – Anthony Hope’s *Rupert of Hentzau*,<sup>2</sup> Rider Haggard’s *She*, with its hero Leo Vincey,<sup>3</sup> and Scott of the Antarctic<sup>4</sup> – they made their choice. Of these four brothers, Terence, Vidal,

<sup>1</sup>His parents’ names as on his birth certificate, 25 July 1914: see n. 30.

<sup>2</sup>Anthony Hope, *Rupert of Hentzau* (1st edn, London, 1898) was the sequel to *The Prisoner of Zenda* (1st edn, London, 1894) in which the villainous Rupert first appears. As the first filmed version of *The Prisoner* appeared in 1913, it was perhaps this which influenced the choice. For Sir Anthony Hope, see C. L. Taylor ‘Hawkins, Sir Anthony Hope (1863–1933)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford, 2004 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com.view/article/33769>> (accessed 23 March 2015). Rupert always considered himself lucky not to have been named after Rudolf Rassendyll, the English gentleman hero of both romances.

<sup>3</sup>H. Rider Haggard, *She* (1st edn, London, 1887). Leo Vincey was also the hero of Rider Haggard’s later romance, *Ayesha – The Return of She* (1st edn, London, 1905). For Sir Henry Rider Haggard, see M. N. Cohen, ‘Haggard, Sir (Henry) Rider (1856–1925)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford, 2004 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com.view/article/33632>> (accessed 23 March 2015).

<sup>4</sup>Robert Falcon Scott died in the Antarctic on or about 29 March 1912 (H. G. R. King, ‘Scott, Robert Falcon (1868–1912)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford, 2004 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com.view/article/35994>> (accessed 23 March 2015)). His diary was recovered and published in 1913: R. F. Scott (arranged by L. Huxley), *Scott’s Last Expedition*, 2 vols (London), but the brothers had perhaps read or were reading the shorter, *Captain Scott’s Message to England*, published the same year.

Alaric (Alec), and Rupert, two were to become Fellows of the British Academy, Terence in 1974, Rupert in 1976.<sup>5</sup>

## I

The history of the family over previous decades, complicated by changes of name and fortune, was to have a profound influence on Rupert's life.

The brothers' paternal great-grandfather, George Beer (1811–53), a shoemaker, and his wife Elizabeth (c.1814–1869) were Strict Baptists from Barnstaple. In 1836 they set sail for India to work as 'poor unordained Baptist missionaries' in the Godavari Delta, in Andhra Pradesh, on the Bay of Bengal. Such was their perseverance and ultimate success in the face of extraordinary difficulty that it has recently been said of them and their fellow missionaries in the Delta, William and Elizabeth Bowden, that they 'must stand among the most tenacious Christian workers of all time'.<sup>6</sup>

Their two sons, John William (1843–84) and Charles Henry (1849–1921), followed their parents' calling and both their daughters married school teachers, completing nearly a century of family association with the Delta, serving the congregations, schools, farms, and hospitals which George and his wife and their fellows in the Godavari Mission had founded. The two boys went to school initially in Madras but in 1857 John Beer, Rupert's grandfather, was sent to England for further education under Mr Page of Aylsham, near Norwich. John returned to the Godavari in 1861 at the age of eighteen and opened an English High School for high caste students in Narsapur. Eventually there were over 200 pupils, with 'excellent results in securing Matriculation passes and good Government posts'.<sup>7</sup> Something of a scholar, founder of *The Witness*, compiler of the Telugu hymnbook and

<sup>5</sup> F. G. Maier, 'Terence Bruce Mitford, 1905–1978', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 67 (1981), 433–42; obituary, *The Times*, 25 November 1978.

<sup>6</sup> For the Beer family in India, see E. B. Bromley, *They Were Men Sent from God* (Bangalore, 1937), passim [copy in the John Rylands Library, University of Manchester; not in the British Library or the Bodleian Library, Oxford]. See also W. T. Stunt et al., *Turning the World Upside Down* (Eastbourne and Bath, 1972), pp. 24–5, 91–9, 151, 611; F. A. Tatford, *That the World May Know*, iii, *The Challenge of India* (Bath, 1983), 91–101, 114, Appendix III, and index; see also *ibid.*, x, *The Islands of the Sea* (Bath, 1986), index. See also R. B. Dann, *Father of Faith Missions: the Life and Times of Anthony Norris Groves (1795–1853)* (Waynesboro, GA, 2004), pp. 232, 241 n. 7, 351–5, 442, 489, 507–9, from which the quotation here comes (p. 352). I am most grateful to Professor Alan Millard for his help in directing me to these and other sources for the missionary activity of the Christian (Plymouth) Brethren; and to Professor John Prag for arranging for photocopies from E. B. Bromley's book.

<sup>7</sup> Bromley, *They Were Men Sent from God*, pp. 66, 177–8.

catechism, John's knowledge of the language was acknowledged by his appointment to the Telugu Bible Revision Committee.<sup>8</sup>

On New Year's Day 1866 at Dummagudem John Beer married Margaret Anne Midford (1851–88), then fifteen, of an English family living in Masulipatam.<sup>9</sup> They had five children, including Herbert Leonard (born 1871) and Charles Eustace (born 1875), Rupert's father.<sup>10</sup> Tragedy struck early. In 1884 John Beer had 'a touch of the sun' followed by a complete breakdown. The family went home to Devon but scarcely had they arrived when John died in Exeter on 16 October 1884, aged forty-one, the same age as his father had been.<sup>11</sup> Mrs Beer returned to India but died at Narsapur on 13 May 1888.<sup>12</sup> Rupert was later to record that his father Eustace was 'himself twice orphaned while still a small boy'.<sup>13</sup>

By the date of the 1891 Census, three of the children had returned to (or had never left) England, and Eustace was at school in Exeter. He became a licentiate (equivalent to a first-class) of the College of Preceptors in 1894,<sup>14</sup> and by 1898 was an assistant master (one of only three) at Blackburn Grammar School in Lancashire, at which the archaeologist John Garstang (1876–1956) had still been a pupil a year before.<sup>15</sup> Eustace taught English

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., pp. 56, 176–7. *The Witness*, later the *Rayabhari*, was a journal for scripture exposition to help in building up the extending Christian community.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., pp. 34, 176. British Library, Oriental and India Office Collection (hereafter BL/OIOC) N/2/47/346.

<sup>10</sup> BL/OIOC N/2/52/113 (HLB); BL OIOC N/2/57/374 (CEB).

<sup>11</sup> General Register of Deaths: Exeter, Devon, 1884, vol. 5b, fol. 54.

<sup>12</sup> Bromley, *They Were Men Sent from God*, p. 179. Mrs J. W. Beer had taken up her husband's missionary work in 1886: Tatford, *The Islands of the Sea*, p. 534. No registration of her burial has been found in BL/OIOC.

<sup>13</sup> For the source of this quotation, see n. 25. Rupert continued with the words, '... when his missionary parents were killed in India'. This is manifestly incorrect, but Rupert can only have heard it at second-hand from his mother or from one of his older brothers. It emphasises the break with his Indian missionary past which Rupert's father seems to have made before leaving Wei-Hai-Wei for Japan, see pp. 63–4.

<sup>14</sup> The records of the College of Preceptors, later the College of Education, are at the UCL Institute of Education, London. Sarah Aitchison, Archivist of the Institute, kindly searched the *Calendar* of the College for 1897 (DP/COP/B/1/14) where C. E. Beer is listed as a Licentiate as of 'Xmas 1894' but not actually a member of the College (p. 116), i.e. he took the examination but did not subscribe to the organisation and as a non-member his address is not listed.

<sup>15</sup> J. Garstang, *A History of the Blackburn Grammar School* (Blackburn, 1897); see O. R. Gurney (rev. P. W. M. Freeman), 'Garstang, John (1876–1956)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford, 2004 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com.view/article/33341>> (accessed 23 March 2015). For information on Eustace's time at the school, first recorded in 1898, I am indebted to John S. Read, Honorary Archivist of what is now Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School, for much searching and particularly for photocopies of the only known copy of the short-lived school magazine, *The Blackburnian*. See also Census 1901, and the title page of Eustace's book on Wei-Hai-Wei (n. 23).

and Classics there (and at the Municipal Technical College), and as *gubernator* of cricket and conductor of the orchestra was an evident success, but in August 1901 he left by sea from Genoa to join his brother Herbert in China.<sup>16</sup>

Herbert seems to have remained in India after the death of his mother in 1888, perhaps looked after by the Midfords, his mother's family,<sup>17</sup> or by his Uncle Charles,<sup>18</sup> but by 1895 he was at Chefoo (now Yantai) on the north shore of the Shantung (now Shandong) peninsula, where he took his examinations for the licentiate of the College of Preceptors that Christmas.<sup>19</sup> Chefoo was one of the second wave of 'treaty ports' opened to British trade and residence under the 1858 Treaty of Tianjin (as a prize of the second of the Opium Wars), and there in 1881 the China Inland Mission founded a boarding school which became 'the best-known foreign school in the Far East', counting among its pupils Thornton Wilder and Henry Luce.<sup>20</sup> Herbert was not a pupil at the Chefoo School,<sup>21</sup> but his address in 1897 suggests he was then teaching there.<sup>22</sup>

In May 1901 Herbert founded a 'School for European Boys' at Weihaiwei, a port and naval station (now Weihai) forcibly leased by the British in 1898, on the tip of the Shantung Peninsula in northern China, about 40 miles east of Chefoo.<sup>23</sup> There Eustace arrived in late September

<sup>16</sup> *The Blackburnian*, Issues 8, 9, 11, and 12 (Summer Term 1901–Lent Term 1902) printed successive (but unfinished) instalments of a long letter Eustace wrote to the boys while on his voyage to China. No later issues of the magazine are known to have appeared or, if so, to have survived.

<sup>17</sup> Whose name he adopted by Deed Poll on 31 December 1930: TNA, FO 678/2953.

<sup>18</sup> Charles Henry Beer was married to Henrietta (née Wardman), his cousin, who was also related to the Midfords (Bromley, *Men Sent from God*, pp. 196–7). For their marriage in 1876, see BL OIOC, N/2/57/395.

<sup>19</sup> In the *Calendar* of the College for 1897 (DP/COP/B/1/14; see n. 14) he appears (p. 91) as a licentiate from 'Xmas 1895'. His address is given as China Inland Mission, Newington Green, N (the Mission's London address), but in the handwritten version as China Inland Mission, Chefoo, China.

<sup>20</sup> G. Martin, *Chefoo School 1881–1951: a History and Memoir* (Braunton, 1990), 19–46; R. A. Semple, *Missionary Women: Gender, Professionalism and the Victorian Idea of Christian Mission* (Woodbridge, 2003), Ch. 5, 'The Work of the CIM at Chefoo', pp. 154–89. The College of Preceptors' Examinations were sat at Chefoo School from 1891 to 1906, with very considerable success: Martin, *Chefoo School*, pp. 30, 39–40, 46.

<sup>21</sup> The school register (University of London, School of African and Oriental Studies, Archives, CIM/CSP, Box 1, File 1) records no pupils named Beer, Bruce, Medford, Midford, or Mitford.

<sup>22</sup> Martin, *Chefoo School*, p. 26, notes that many of the staff taught there 'only for a year or two'. There is no list of the staff for this period among the records at SOAS (see n. 21).

<sup>23</sup> See Eustace's book, *The Territory of Wei-Hai-Wei: a Descriptive Guide and Handbook* (Shanghai, 1902), and his articles – C. E. Bruce-Mitford, 'Wei-Hai-Wei: some physical characteristics of our new dependency in the Far East', *Geographical Teacher*, 2 (June 1902),

1901 to teach in the first term at his brother's new school. The school was thriving,<sup>24</sup> but by the summer of 1902, less than nine months after arriving, Eustace had left for Japan 'with ambitions to set up his own school, and devise its curriculum and ethos according to his own ideas'.

The words are Rupert's.<sup>25</sup> They seem to reflect that breaking away from his family's missionary past which Eustace showed at this time by dropping the surname Beer, adopting his mother's maiden name of Midford, modified to Mitford, and adding the hyphenated Bruce-<sup>26</sup> The double-barrelled 'Bruce-Mitford' appears for the first time on the title page of his book on Weihaiwei, the preface to which Eustace signed and dated in May 1902.<sup>27</sup>

Rupert knew that his father had been 'an admirer' of 'Algernon Bertram Mitford (later Lord Redesdale), the author of *Tales of Old Japan*, with whom he was quite unconnected'.<sup>28</sup> Eustace's decision to adopt the name 'Mitford' before leaving Weihaiwei suggests that he was already contemplating a move to Japan where a name so well respected in the expatriate

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66–51, and 'Mountain and cliff at Weihaiwei', *East of Asia Magazine*, 2.2 (July 1903), 169–73. See also A. J. Herbertson and O. J. R. Howarth (eds), *The Oxford Survey of the British Empire*, ii, *Asia* (Oxford, 1914), pp. 448–53; C. B. Davis and R. J. Gowen, 'The British at Weihaiwei; a case study in the irrationality of empire', *The Historian*, 63.1 (Fall, 2000), 87–104; and R. F. Johnston, *Lion and Dragon in Northern China* (originally published London, 1910; reprinted Hong Kong and Oxford, 1986), 28, 90. [Sir] Reginald Johnston was government secretary and subsequently a senior district officer in the Crown Colony at Weihaiwei 1904–17.

<sup>24</sup> Weihaiwei, Commissioner's General Report for 1902, Sect. 11 (TNA, CO 873/65, pp. 19–20).

<sup>25</sup> This and the next quotation and the following account of the family's life in Japan come from Rupert Bruce-Mitford's (henceforth RLSB-M) typescript, 'My Japanese Background' (March 1989), included in the introduction to the Sale Catalogue of his library and archive, see n. 109.

<sup>26</sup> Documented name changes, accomplished by statutory declaration before a Commissioner for Oaths, or sworn deed poll in front of a solicitor or magistrate, are private transactions. There is no central registry of deeds poll and the only copy belongs to the person changing name. A frequent reason for such a change is to assume the family name of adoptive parents. There is no record of the change from Beer to Bruce-Mitford (note the hyphen, as in Freeman-Mitford) in the deed poll indexes in TNA, Classes C54 and J18. I am most grateful to Andrew Bennett for his great help in this matter, and to him and to Professor Robert Bickers for tracking Eustace's journey to Shanghai and on to Weihaiwei.

<sup>27</sup> The copy of the book which he sent to A. J. Herbertson (Oxford, Radcliffe Science Library, 471.C.13), presumably on or soon after publication, has the word 'Late' neatly inserted before 'of Wei-Hai-Wei School' on the title-page, apparently in Eustace's hand.

<sup>28</sup> As recorded by Rupert, apparently on the evidence of his mother: 'My Japanese Background' (see n. 25), p. 2. For A. B. Freeman-Mitford, first Baron Redesdale (1837–1916), and his adventures as a member of the British legation at Yedo (Tokyo) and Kyoto in 1866–70, see E. Gosse (rev. H. C. G. Matthew) 'Mitford, Algernon Bertram Freeman- (1837–1916)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford, 2004 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/35048>> (accessed 23 March 2015). In addition to Mitford's *Tales of Old Japan* (London, 1871), Eustace had probably also read his books, *The Bamboo Garden* (London, 1896) and *The Attaché at Peking* (London, 1900).

community would be no hindrance. The addition of ‘Bruce’ may reflect his acquaintance with Major C. D. Bruce who had raised the Weihaiwei Chinese Regiment in 1898, and had been severely wounded in 1900 in the fighting around Tientsin to relieve the foreign legations in Peking from the Boxers. Bruce commanded the Chinese Regiment at Weihaiwei throughout Eustace’s time there and was probably the author of the explicitly anonymous history of the regiment in Eustace’s book on Weihaiwei.<sup>29</sup> The names Eustace adopted in this all-important change reflect courage and a certain romance, not least for the land and peoples of Japan, characteristics he was to pass in due measure to Rupert.<sup>30</sup>

In Japan Eustace founded the Yokohama Modern School, ‘primarily for the sons of English or English speaking business men and missionaries’. The school flourished, with a school house, grounds large enough to have its own cricket pitch, and an ambitious school magazine, *The Modernian*. In 1903 Eustace was elected a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society, presumably on the basis of his work on Weihaiwei,<sup>31</sup> but his interests had now turned to the geography and vulcanology of Japan and in 1905 his second book came out, *A New Geography of Japan*, illustrated by his own photographs and drawings, and followed by several articles.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>29</sup>C. E. Bruce-Mitford, *The Territory of Wei-Hai-Wei*, 23–5; see also the Preface. For Major (later Brigadier General) Clarence Dalrymple Bruce, CBE, FRGS (1864–1934), see *Who Was Who*, his papers at the Royal Geographical Society, and A. A. S. Barnes, *On Active Service with the Chinese Regiment* (London, 1902), pp. 53–6, 227.

<sup>30</sup>Eustace was not consistent in his use of these names. By 1909 he had dropped ‘Charles’ and decided on ‘Eustace’ or ‘E. Bruce Mitford’, but on Rupert’s birth certificate (1914; see n. 1) the surname is hyphenated. In Eustace’s obituary and death notices he is ‘E. B. Mitford’, and on his death certificate Eustace and Bruce are given as Christian names and Charles is omitted (1919; see n. 44). His eldest son, T. B. Mitford, never used Bruce as part of his surname.

<sup>31</sup>Proposed by the Rev. Walter Weston of Yokohama, ‘the father of mountaineering in Japan’ (P. H. Hansen, ‘Weston, Walter (1860–1940)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford, 2004 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/64678>> (accessed 23 March 2015)) and by J. S. [later Sir John] Keltie, the secretary of the Society (E. Baigent, ‘Keltie, Sir John Scott (1840–1927)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford, 2004 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/34269>> (accessed 23 March 2015)), and elected on 10 November 1903. The certificate for his election, on which he is described as ‘C. E. Bruce-Mitford, Headmaster, Modern School, Yokohama’, is in the RGS/IBG Archives, together with letters dated 1907–8 from Japan about his forthcoming article on some of its volcanoes (later published, see n. 32) and a proposed book on the same subject which never appeared. I am grateful to Sarah Strong, Archivist at the RGS/IBG, for photocopies of these papers.

<sup>32</sup>C. B. Mitford, *A New Geography of Japan for the Upper Forms of Schools and Colleges* (Yokohama, n.d. but 1905 [listed in *The Geographical Journal*, 27 (January–June 1906), 315]); C. E. Bruce Mitford, ‘Notes on the physiography of certain volcanoes in northern Japan’, *The Geographical Journal*, 31 (1908), 187–98, 566; E. B. Mitford, ‘The active volcanoes of Japan’, *Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan*, 37 (1909), 87–111.

Shortly after Eustace founded his school, he recruited Beatrice Allison, whom he had met on the ship to Yokohama, as an assistant teacher and on 27 July 1904 they were married. Beatrice Jean Allison had been born in 1873 in the Hudson's Bay Company House at Keremeos in British Columbia, the oldest daughter of the fourteen children of Susan Louisa (Moir) (1845–1937) from Edinburgh and John Fall Allison (1825–97), explorer, gold prospector, and cattle-rancher, who had left Scotland for the USA in 1849 at the time of the Gold Rush.<sup>33</sup> The family were pioneer settlers of the Similkameen and Okanagan river valleys, living a hard and lonely life, with the father absent for long periods, during which they were both flooded and burnt out. Some of Beatrice's eight brothers married local Indians. When Rupert visited British Columbia in 1987 he was excited to meet his cousins living on a reservation, and deeply moved to hear the opera, 'The Lake', about early life in the Okanagan Valley. The Allison family remains today unforgotten, leading figures from the pioneering days of British Columbia.

Beatrice's tough upbringing had made her adventurous and indomitable, as later life was to show, a tiny woman with a dark complexion and a beak-like nose who inspired enormous admiration. She became a teacher but went first with one of her sisters to be companion to a lady on a big estate at Wonsam on the east coast of Korea. When the lady died, the sisters took ship to Japan, having agreed, so the story goes, to marry the first man who asked them. On that ship to Japan, where he was going to study volcanoes, she met Eustace and in 1904 they were married at Christ Church, Yokohama. Beatrice entered into the life of the school as assistant teacher, 'hostess, and friendly advocate for the pupils'.

My three elder brothers [as Rupert was to write] were born in Japan and brought up with good Japanese manners and taught at least elementary conversation in Japanese, in which my mother had acquired colloquial fluency. I still have two of her charmingly illustrated Japanese readers. My parents loved Japan and its people, and at one time lived in a Japanese style house with mats and thin movable walls. As a boy in London, where I was born, my mother taught me the Japanese art of flower arrangement.<sup>34</sup>

Rupert was fascinated by his family's background in Japan, by his mother's Canadian upbringing, and by his Canadian family. He was intrigued not least by his mother's sister-in-law, his English aunt Flora Sandes, 'the lovely sergeant', who came to fame as nurse, surgeon, and woman soldier in the

<sup>33</sup>S. Allison (ed. M. A. Ormsby), *A Pioneer Gentlewoman in British Columbia: the Recollections of Susan Allison* (Vancouver, 1976), 38, 60–3, 172. There are extensive papers, including family letters and memoirs, in the British Columbia Archives, MS-2692.

<sup>34</sup>RLSB-M, 'My Japanese Background', see n. 25.



Serbian service in the First World War. Her stirring accounts of the Balkan front Rupert had probably read as a schoolboy.<sup>35</sup>

By the summer of 1907 Eustace was thinking of leaving Japan. He stayed on, but in February 1908 disaster struck. On Sunday the 9th, speaking from the pulpit of Christ Church Yokohama, where the Bruce-Mitfords had been married less than four years before, William Awdry, the bishop of South Tokyo, announced that ‘certain marriages of British subjects celebrated in Japan’ since the end of the fiction of extra-territoriality on 16 July 1899 might not be valid and if so ‘the couples ... will find that they have been and are living together ... in concubinage and that their children are “illegitimate”’.<sup>36</sup> In October a list of the thirty-six marriages in question, including that of the Bruce-Mitfords (who by then had three sons), was sent to the British Ambassador in ‘the hope of having these marriages legalised by Act of Parliament’.<sup>37</sup> The necessary act was passed in December 1912,<sup>38</sup> but by this time the damage had long been done.

In the hot-house atmosphere of the British expatriate community in Yokohama, the fact that this was a legal technicality, the couples having all been properly married according to the rites of the Church of England, counted for nothing.<sup>39</sup> About 1909, as Rupert later recorded, his father ‘seems to have fallen out with his Committee of Governors. I never learnt what this was about.’<sup>40</sup> Eustace thus lost the headship of the school he had founded. He was thrown a lifeline by Captain Francis Brinkley, the doughty

<sup>35</sup>For Flora Sandes-Yudenitch (1876–1956), see J. Wheelwright, ‘Yudenitch, Flora Sandes (1876–1956)’ *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford, 2004 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/49662>> (accessed 23 March 2015). She wrote *An English Woman-Sergeant in the Serbian Army* (London, 1916) and *The Autobiography of a Woman Soldier: a Brief Record of Adventure with the Serbian Army, 1916–17* (London, 1927). Flora Sandes has become an icon of the women’s movement: A. Burgess, *The Lovely Sergeant* (London, 1963); and J. Wheelwright, ‘Captain Flora Sandes: a case study in the social construction of gender in a Serbian context’, in J. B. Allcock and A. Young (eds), *Black Lambs and Grey Falcons: Women Travelling in the Balkans* (Bradford, 1991), pp. 82–9 and xxi–xxii, and 65–81, *passim*.

<sup>36</sup>For typed extracts from Bishop Awdry’s address, quoted here, as reported in *The Japan Herald* of 10 February 1908, and other papers relating to this affair, see National Library of Australia, Papers of Harold S. Willams, MS 6681, Series 3, Section 32. I am grateful to Susan Woodburn of the NLA for her help. See also Lambeth Palace Library, Archbishop Davidson’s papers, vol. 393, ff. 1–11, kindly made available, with other help, by Clare Brown, Assistant Archivist.

<sup>37</sup>For the original list, see TNA, FO 369/390, pp. 162–9, with a certified copy of the Bruce-Mitford’s Certificate of Marriage on 27 July 1904 at p. 173. See also TNA, FO 369/308, pp. 446–65. I am grateful to Nina Staehle for her help in locating and copying these papers.

<sup>38</sup>Marriages in Japan (Validity) Act, 1912.

<sup>39</sup>H. S. Williams, *Tales of the Foreign Settlements in Japan* (Tokyo, and Rutland, VT, 1958), pp. 132–4.

<sup>40</sup>RLSB-M, ‘My Japanese Background’, p. 1. For his father’s lost ‘full-length novel, about life amongst expatriates in Yokohama, in which, according to my mother, members of the School Governors and other pillars of society were all too identifiably lampooned’, see pp. 67–8.

owner and editor of the *Japan Mail*, ‘the leading English-language newspaper, at least in Yokohama’, who took him on as Assistant Editor.<sup>41</sup>

By November 1911 Eustace had returned to England to work as a freelance journalist,<sup>42</sup> writing as E. Bruce Mitford on Japanese matters for the *National Review*, the *Fortnightly Review*, and the *British Review*, alongside such names as Leo Amery, Laurence Binyon, John Galsworthy, and Bernard Shaw. In 1913 he published his last book, *Japan's Inheritance*, quoted by Clemenceau in the French Chamber of Deputies as the work of ‘an English journalist of vision’.<sup>43</sup>

Now over forty, not judged fit for military service, and still without a permanent position, Eustace left his young family in London and returned to India in February 1917 to take up the post of Assistant Editor and leader writer on the *Madras Mail*. He died in Madras on 16 June 1919 at the age of forty-four after a short illness (little older than his father or grandfather), ‘a graceful but trenchant writer ... his signed articles in some of the leading English reviews ... marked by lucidity and clarity of diction’.<sup>44</sup>

## II

Rupert was born in 1914, three years after the family’s return to England. When his father died in India Rupert was not yet five. As he was later to write,

the family was stranded in London and fell on very hard times. My father, himself twice orphaned [as we have seen above; Rupert too was an orphan now] ... had never been able to save. My mother hoped that my father’s unpublished novel might make some money and help to pay my school fees. She left the work with a

<sup>41</sup> For Francis Brinkley (1841–1912), Royal Artillery, sometime Gunnery Instructor at the Imperial Japanese Naval College, Military Attaché, and *Times* Correspondent, see Wikipedia, ‘Francis Brinkley’, <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francis\\_Brinkley](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francis_Brinkley)> (accessed 7 August 2009); and Williams, *Tales of the Foreign Settlements in Japan*, pp. 163, 170, 173, and the same author’s *Foreigners in Mikadoland* (Tokyo, and Rutland, VT, 1963), pp. 136–7.

<sup>42</sup> On 20 November he contributed to a discussion at the Royal Geographical Society in London of a paper on ‘Volcanic craters and explosions’ by T. Anderson, *The Geographical Journal*, 39 (1912), 130–2. Letters from him about this discussion, written from 2 Bideford Mansions, Rosebery Avenue [London; now EC1R 4SJ], are in the RGS/IBG Archives.

<sup>43</sup> E. Bruce Mitford, *Japan's Inheritance: the Country, its People and their Destiny* (London, 1913), well reviewed by B.C.W. in *The Geographical Journal*, 43 (1914), 428–9. Clemenceau’s comment is quoted in RLSB-M, ‘My Japanese background’. See C. E. Bruce-Mitford, *The Territory of Wei-Hai-Wei*, p.1.

<sup>44</sup> *The Madras Mail*, 16 June 1919, p. 4, col. 2, death notice; col. 3, obituary. *The Madras Weekly Mail*, 19 June 1919, p. 504, col. 3, death notice. Registration of burial: BL, OIOC N/2/125/77.

well-placed, distant, elderly lady cousin for advice. Cousin Louisa<sup>45</sup> said that she herself would be glad to help with my school fees, but on one condition – that my father's novel, depicting life in Yokohama at the turn of the Century, should be burnt; she thought it immoral and scurrilous ... My hard-pressed mother felt she had no option but to agree. That was the end of my father's Japanese novel, but the beginning of [my] scholarly process.<sup>46</sup>

With this support Rupert was able to go 'Brightlands', an independent preparatory school for boys in Gallery Road, Dulwich,<sup>47</sup> from which his brothers Terence and Alec both got scholarships to Dulwich College. In April 1920, at the comparatively late age of nearly six, and at about the time he went to 'Brightlands', Rupert was baptised, perhaps with a view to his going on to Christ's Hospital for which baptism was a desirable if not essential condition. In June 1925, with the support of the headmaster of Brightlands, Rupert was nominated to compete in an examination for entry to Christ's Hospital, choosing, in addition to the compulsory English, Arithmetic and Practical Mensuration, and History and Geography, all three of the optional subjects, Latin, French, and Mathematics. Following success in the examinations, Rupert's mother petitioned the Almoners of Christ's Hospital for his admission 'to be Educated and Maintained among other poor Children', and on 17 September he was duly 'admitted ... and clothed'.<sup>48</sup>

Rupert's 'Presentation Paper' provides a remarkable insight into the condition of the family at the time. Beatrice Bruce-Mitford's total annual income with three children still dependent was £170 'roughly', of which £120 was 'lent to my two elder boys, to be returned when they have finished their education, and are earning', and £50 'earned from another source', apparently from nursing; from this she paid 16s. 6d. a week for rent of 'part of a house'.<sup>49</sup> A further indication of the stress under which the family was coping is that Rupert had had scarlet fever and diphtheria when he was two and influenza in 1920, just after the great pandemic.

<sup>45</sup> Probably a relative of Rupert's grandmother, Susan Louisa Moir.

<sup>46</sup> For the source of this quotation, see RLSB-M, 'My Japanese Background'. European life in Yokohama in the years around 1900 was 'sophisticated', some said 'decadent': P. Barr, *The Deer Cry Pavilion: a Story of Westerners in Japan 1868-1905* (London, 1988), pp. 236-44; J. E. De Becker, *The Nightless City* (Yokohama, 1899).

<sup>47</sup> G. Hardwicke, *Brightlands: the Building of a School* (Braunton, 1982), pp. 12, 14.

<sup>48</sup> Christ's Hospital, Presentation Papers, 29 July 1925; photocopies kindly provided by Tracey Butler, The Museum, Christ's Hospital.

<sup>49</sup> Letter, Beatrice Bruce-Mitford to the Clerk, Christ's Hospital, 5 August 1925, attached to the Presentation Paper.

Rupert was happy and successful at Christ's Hospital, the school of Camden, Cyril Fox, and John Beazley, where for his first two years one of the masters was the archaeologist S. E. Winbolt, then digging at Pulborough, Sussex.<sup>50</sup> In 1930, after his retirement, Winbolt dug the Jacobean ironworks at Dedisham, Sussex, with 'among willing helpers, mentioned *honoris causa* ... Bruce-Mitford'; 'unhappily the "dig" produced no useful results ... possibly, however, the C.H. diggers learnt something'.<sup>51</sup>

In 1932–3, in his last full year, Rupert appeared often in the pages of *The Blue*, playing rugby in a First XV which consistently lost and cricket in a First XI for which he scored 11 runs in four matches and was then dropped; acting in Galsworthy's *Little Man* in a house concert, in the intervals of which the orchestra was 'under the calm and capable direction of Bruce-Mitford'; becoming House Captain of Peele A; editing *The Outlook*.<sup>52</sup> In 1931 he appeared in print for the first time reporting on the Signals Camp held in the last ten days of the summer holiday.<sup>53</sup> In a debate at the Horsham Workers' Educational Association on 'That poverty, unemployment, and hunger demonstrate the failure of Western civilisation', 'Bruce-Mitford pointed out that economics were not the whole of civilisation'.<sup>54</sup> He crowned his years at Christ's Hospital in 1933 by winning a Baring Scholarship in History to Hertford College, Oxford (to his surprise: 'I never had a head for dates and treaties'),<sup>55</sup> having changed from classics ('I was not very good at Greek and Latin'), despite the devoted coaching of his older brother Terence.

Neither Rupert, nor probably Terence and Alaric, would have achieved distinction in scholarship were it not for their mother's determination to provide her boys with a good education. The cost had been great; she supplemented her tiny income by nursing and at one time had a breakdown, as a result of which Rupert was fostered for a while. She had been married comparatively late for those days, had borne four sons and a daughter, who did not survive, was widowed early, but by 1933 at the age of sixty had seen her oldest son Terence through Oxford and now found her youngest son there as a Scholar in History. She died in 1956 at the age of 83 but not before

<sup>50</sup> Winbolt taught at Christ's Hospital from 1877 to 1927: *The Blue* [the School Magazine], 54 (1926–7), 215–16; for his 'Apologia Pro Vita Sua', see *The Blue*, 55 (1927–8), 14–15. I am grateful to Mark Curtis, Partnership Director at Christ's Hospital, for his help in locating copies of *The Blue* and for their loan.

<sup>51</sup> S. E. Winbolt, 'Digging at Dedisham', *The Blue*, 58 (1930–1), 26.

<sup>52</sup> *The Blue*, 59 (1931–2), 63, 140, 227; 60 (1932–3), 30–2, 67–8, 108, 202–4, 206.

<sup>53</sup> 'The Signals Camp at Amberley', *The Blue*, 59 (1931–2), 5–6, signed 'E.A.M' and 'B.-M.'

<sup>54</sup> *The Blue*, 60 (1932–3), 130.

<sup>55</sup> *The Blue*, 60 (1932–3), 109.

she had seen Terence a Reader in Humanity and Classical Archaeology at the University of St Andrews and Rupert a Keeper at the British Museum.

During his second year at Oxford, an event occurred which changed Rupert's life. Already, at Christ's Hospital when he was 16 or 17 and in the Sixth, his eyes had been opened to the logic of the evolution of styles in medieval art. As he recalled it nearly fifty years later:

One day, poking about in the Library, I found a slim volume, with photographs of carved stone architectural capitals, entitled, as I remember, *English Gothic Stiff-leafed Foliage*, by W. R. Lethaby [sic]. It and its pictures interested me very much. I read it and said to myself, now I know about English gothic stiff-leafed capitals ... I suppose the significant thing about it was that the subject that had appealed to me was concrete and visual, I was using my eyes. The pre-requisite for an archaeologist, I was to discover, is a love of objects.<sup>56</sup>

Here at once are two of the great themes of Rupert's scholarship: passionate commitment and the hard art of looking. A few years later in his first year at Oxford his attention was caught by a manuscript in one of the cases displaying manuscripts which he passed daily on his way through Selden End to and from the Upper Reading Room. This was the famous twelfth-century bestiary, MS Ashmole 1511, open at the picture of an eagle shooting up into the sky with a salmon in its claws (fol. 74r). After some weeks he screwed up his courage to ask to look at it. Years later he recalled

my awestruck feeling when I was put into a recess surrounded by ancient bindings, looking down through a narrow window into [Exeter] College garden, and the closed book, containing heaven knows what, was placed in front of me.

He asked for a book to explain it all

and was given M. R. James' Roxburgh Club facsimile edition of another 12th Century bestiary, very like mine. I was already a devotee of James' Ghost Stories of an Antiquary. Lunch was totally forgotten, and when I was evicted at the end of the day I remembered every thing I had read, even if I did not understand it all.<sup>57</sup>

While he was still at Oxford, Rupert obtained a ticket to the Reading Room of the British Museum by the ruse of applying to see some manuscript or other. He had his favourite desk, close to that at which Karl

<sup>56</sup>R. Bruce-Mitford, 'The Archaeologist', in a series under the heading 'Background', *The Antique Collector*, January 1978, 68-9, at p. 68. The book was actually by Samuel Gardner (Cambridge, 1927), a copy of which was still in Rupert's library when it was sold in 1989. For the sale and its catalogue, see n. 109.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid.

Marx had reputedly written *Das Kapital* – note the ‘reputedly’, Rupert was already too good a scholar to claim too much. During the intervals from reading he walked round the building, often tacking onto the Guide Lecturers, covering every department, enjoying particularly the Chinese paintings and the Royal Gold Cup:

Little did I think [he later wrote] that one day I should be in charge of this masterpiece and even, after the passing of a special Act of Parliament, take it, with diplomatic passport and police escort, to Vienna, part of the first foreign loan ever made from the British Museum.

Here already, the range of interests, the love of the theatrical gesture, but also the innovation, the European concern.

Rupert took a Second Class in Modern History in 1936 (MA, 1961; D. Litt, 1987).<sup>58</sup> In Michaelmas Term he began a B.Litt. on ‘The Development of English Narrative Art in the Fourteenth Century’, supervised by Robin Flower, deputy keeper of Manuscripts at the British Museum, a leading scholar of medieval Irish and editor of the facsimile of the Exeter Book, a codex of the greatest Old English poetry.<sup>59</sup> The B.Litt was never finished but in working towards it Rupert had already begun to explore the possibilities of applying new scientific methods to the identification of pigments, notably ‘Egyptian Blue’.<sup>60</sup>

### III

Other and more significant events were now to intervene. In 1935 Oxford had taken the decision to build a large extension to the Bodleian Library on the north side of Broad Street, at the corner with Parks Road, on a site then occupied by a group of seventeenth-century houses. At the invitation of Bodley’s Librarian, the Oxford Architectural and Historical Society

<sup>58</sup> Hertford College, Record Cards, Reg. No. 837–33: Matriculation, 10 October 1933; Responsions, Latin, Greek, French, and Mathematics, all ‘with credit’. Hertford College, ‘Degrees’ Ledger [1876–1971], 15 October 1936 and 19 October 1961; ‘Candidates for Degrees’ Ledger [1938–65], 11 and 19 October 1961; Governing Body Minutes 30 November 1983.

<sup>59</sup> Hertford College, second card attached to the Record Card quoted in n. 58; for Robin Flower, see B. O’Donoghue, ‘Flower, Robin Ernest William (1881–1946)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford, 2004 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com.view/article/33184>> (accessed 23 March 2015).

<sup>60</sup> E. M. Jope, ‘Preface’, in J. Henderson (ed.), *Scientific Analysis in Archaeology and its Interpretation*, Oxford University Committee for Archaeology, Monograph 19 (Oxford, 1989), xii; pers. comm. E. M. Jope.

arranged for W. A. Pantin<sup>61</sup> ‘to investigate and record any features of architectural or antiquarian interest ... and also to watch for any finds that may turn up during the demolition of these houses and the subsequent excavation for the foundations of the new building’.<sup>62</sup> There were, Billy Pantin concluded, ‘some practical consideration or morals to be drawn’ from the loss of these buildings which ‘deserve to be studied as systematically and as seriously, as if they were something excavated at Ostia or Knossos or Ur’.<sup>63</sup>

Demolition finished in March 1937 and was followed by excavation to a depth of 23 ft. ‘of the greatest quantity of subsoil ... ever taken out of one hole within the city of Oxford’.<sup>64</sup> By 1937 Rupert had acquired a one-year Temporary Assistant Keepership at the Ashmolean Museum where he was re-arranging and displaying the medieval pilgrims’ badges. Now he was put in charge of watching the Bodleian site:

The medieval houses on the Broad Street frontage had each had a well, or a succession of wells, on the narrow strip of land that ran back from the frontage, dug down through the Thames gravel to the level of the London clay. The well bottoms all had fillings of two or three feet of mud. These mud cylinders were full of broken medieval pottery, handleless jugs, bowls and odds and ends. We could not hold up the mechanical diggers... Well-shafts were marked early on as they appeared. Some well bottoms were left standing up like columns and could be dug out at leisure; but often as not one waited impotently for the grab jaws to close on the well bottom, pick it up and dump it on a lorry. My job was then to jump on the lorry and sitting on the pile, as it drove through the city to some gravel hungry site at Cumnor, pick out all the bits of medieval pottery I could find, put them in a bag, and come back on the bus or in an empty lorry. I took my spoil back to the Ashmolean where in an upper room ... I washed the sherds and stuck them together. Later I would have to study them, make drawings and publish an account. This was excellent training and experience on the job, thrown in head first, dealing all the time with new and original materials, at first hand. It was a taste of rescue archaeology before that term was invented. It was also great fun.<sup>65</sup>

It was also the beginning of the great tradition of medieval archaeology in Oxford, the start in many ways of medieval archaeology as we know it today. The pottery from the various pits and wells was presented as associated groups and these were then assembled into a sequence of five ceramic groups

<sup>61</sup> M. D. Knowles, ‘William Abel Pantin, 1902–1973’, *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 60 (1974), 447–58.

<sup>62</sup> Anon., ‘Old Houses on the Site of the Bodleian Extension’, *Oxoniensia*, 1 (1936), 202; W. A. Pantin, ‘The recently demolished houses in Broad Street, Oxford’, *Oxoniensia*, 2 (1937), 171–200.

<sup>63</sup> *ibid.*, 199–200.

<sup>64</sup> W. J. Arkell, ‘The geology of the site of the Bodleian Extension in Broad Street’, *Oxoniensia*, 3 (1938), 1–5, at p. 1.

<sup>65</sup> RLSB-M, ‘The Archaeologist’, p. 68.

in their probable chronological order, the ‘first serious study of medieval pottery’ in Britain.<sup>66</sup> When I came to work in Oxford twenty years later following up Rupert’s excavations at Seacourt on the line of Oxford’s western by-pass (see below), it was to his paper on the archaeology of the Bodleian Extension, published in 1939, and to Martyn Jope’s papers building on Rupert’s work that I immediately turned.<sup>67</sup> And it was this work at the Bodleian that later led Rupert to set up the British Museum Reference Collection of Medieval Pottery.

In 1938 Rupert was appointed to an Assistant Keepership in the then Department of British and Medieval Antiquities at the British Museum, an opening to which Robin Flower may have alerted him. Including the war years 1940–6 in the Royal Signals, Rupert served the Museum for 32 years, eleven years as Assistant Keeper, fifteen years as Keeper of the old Department of British and Medieval, six years as Keeper of the new Department of Medieval and Later Antiquities, and finally two years, 1975–7, as Research Keeper. T. D. (‘Tom’) Kendrick became Keeper of the Department the same year: as Rupert’s departmental chief for the next twelve years and as Director and Principal Librarian of the Museum from 1950 to 1958, Kendrick was for twenty years the single most important influence on Rupert’s scholarship and on his career.<sup>68</sup>

Rupert was at once in at the deep end:

In a National Museum, one has of course a good deal to do with the Sale Room. One of my first assignments at the BM in 1938 was to go to Sotheby’s and bid for a fine green and red-striped medieval pot I had seen illustrated in colour in the Catalogue of the Ridout sale, and set my heart upon. I was authorised to bid up to £30. When this ceiling was reached I went up to £40 without authority, thinking I could pay the difference somehow out of my own (empty) pocket, but then gave

<sup>66</sup> M. Mellor, *Pots and People that Have Shaped the Heritage of Medieval and Later England*, Ashmolean Museum (Oxford, 1997), pp. 67–8.

<sup>67</sup> RLSB-M, ‘The archaeology of the site of the Bodleian Extension in Broad Street, Oxford’, *Oxoniensia*, 4 (1939), 89–146. The five pages of pottery profiles (figs. 22–6) were drawn to fully modern standards by Rupert’s older brother, Alaric (A. H. Bruce-Mitford; *ibid.*, 89, n. 2). See also E. T. Leeds, ‘Glass vessels of the XVI Century and later from the site of the Bodleian Extension in Broad Street, Oxford’, *Oxoniensia*, 3 (1938), 153–61. For E. M. (Martyn) Jope (1915–96), FBA 1965, see P. V. Addyman, ‘Edward Martyn Jope, 1915–1996’, *Biographical Memoirs of Fellows of the British Academy XIII* (London, 2014), pp. 295–311. Rupert had invited Martyn to help him with the Bodleian work; Martyn staying on site saving as much as he could when Rupert had to go off with the lorries.

<sup>68</sup> As his affectionate memoir reveals: RLSB-M, ‘Thomas Downing Kendrick 1895–1979’, *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 76 (1990), 445–71. See also D. M. Wilson, ‘Kendrick, Sir Thomas Downing (1895–1979)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford, 2004 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/31303>> (accessed 23 March 2015).



up. When I got back, bitterly disappointed, my chief Tom Kendrick, said ‘Oh dear, if we’d known you wanted it so much we’d have put a higher figure on it!’<sup>69</sup>

Kendrick also saw to it that the new member of his department got some proper digging experience and sent him off to work

for three weeks ... with a great German excavator, Dr Gerhard Bersu, on an Iron Age farm site, on the chalk, at Little Woodbury, near Salisbury. I learnt a lot and loved being out on the chalk, in the fresh air. There I met Charles Phillips, Secretary of the Prehistoric Society, the body for whom Bersu was doing his total excavation of the site. Phillips’ path and mine were to cross later for he was to be the emergency excavator in 1939 of the Sutton Hoo ship-burial ...<sup>70</sup>

The following year, 1939, Rupert undertook his own first excavation, at the deserted medieval village of Seacourt on the site of the proposed Oxford Western By-pass. Commenting that ecclesiastical buildings and castles were by then ‘a well known class of antiquity’, and that the medieval palace at Clarendon was then in the process of excavation, Rupert continued that

at Seacourt, the first medieval village so far as I know to be excavated, the archaeologist’s attention is turned for the first time to the other end of the social scale. The excavations thus initiate a fresh archaeological approach to the problems of medieval economic history, and that, too, with special reference to conditions at the end of the 14th century, when important changes were taking place in the status of the English peasantry.<sup>71</sup>

The results were promising. The site was difficult to excavate and interpret, but Rupert thought that it should be possible to recover complete ground plans of domestic buildings and of the church. ‘As a dated site’ deserted by 1439, excavations at Seacourt would have much to contribute to the ‘notoriously vague’ dating of medieval small objects, and promised ‘results of first rate-importance’ for the dating of later medieval pottery.<sup>72</sup>

<sup>69</sup>RLSB-M, ‘The Archaeologist’, p. 68.

<sup>70</sup>Ibid., 69. G. Bersu, ‘Excavations at Little Woodbury, Wiltshire. Part I; The settlement as revealed by excavation’, *Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society*, 6.1 (1940), 30–111. In an earlier note on the first five-week season in June and July 1938, Bersu acknowledged: ‘The younger colleagues to whom the undertaking gave an opportunity to gain experience in the technique of excavations also deserve mention’, but none was named: *Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society*, 4 (1938), 313.

<sup>71</sup>RLSB-M, ‘The excavations at Seacourt, Berks., 1939’, *Oxoniensia*, 5 (1940), 31–41, Pls. VIII-X.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid., pp. 40–1. The excavations were continued after the war with results that confirmed Rupert’s expectations: M. Biddle, ‘The deserted medieval village of Seacourt, Berkshire’, *Oxoniensia*, 26/27 (1961/2), 70–201. Those parts of his excavations which lay within the line of the by-pass, and all the 1939 finds, were published with the later work; the materials are all now in the Ashmolean Museum.

Excavations at Seacourt ended on 15 July, seven weeks before the outbreak of war. Rupert was soon in uniform: as a one-time signaller in the school corps at Christ's Hospital he joined the Royal Signals as a L/Cpl, initially in a territorial unit in Essex, reaching the standard Army Morse speed of twelve words a minute and after his day-time job fire-watching in the dome of St. Paul's.<sup>73</sup> By the autumn of 1940 he was at Catterick Camp in Yorkshire where 'Cadet R. L. Bruce Mitford, late of the British Museum, spent his leisure from military duties ... in clearing out the Hypocaust' of a Roman house at Middleham first examined in 1881.<sup>74</sup> He 'and his friends cleaned out all the undergrowth and rubbish, made plans and took photographs, and ... added several important details'. It was to be his last archaeology for over five years. Commissioned into the Royal Signals in April 1941, a captain two years later, by 1943 he was on the publications staff of the School of Signals at Catterick.<sup>75</sup> There he wrote a booklet on wireless communication and reputedly (but apparently with little success) reorganised the signals system of Northern Command. He did trips around Yorkshire 'on a very dashing motorbike and the uniform to go with it' laying wireless [!] cables. For two years from 1943 to 1945 he led parties from the School of Signals to archaeological and other sites near Catterick, visiting among others Richmond Castle and the Theatre Royal, Easby parish church, Jervaulx Abbey, Stanwick St. John, and Middleham Castle.<sup>76</sup>

In November 1941 Rupert married Kathleen Dent at St. George's, Hanover Square, in London. Although by then for some months a commissioned officer, he put himself down as a civil servant, for his Assistant Keepership in the Department of British and Medieval Antiquities at the British Museum had been confirmed the previous year. Myrtle, their first child, was born in 1943, Michael in 1946, Miranda in 1951.

<sup>73</sup> C. E. Browne (ed.), *Christ's Hospital Roll of Service*, 2nd issue 1939–40 (Horsham, 1940), 3; 3rd issue (1942), 4; 4th issue (1944), 5. Reminiscences of Rupert's war-time life were provided by members of the family.

<sup>74</sup> *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal*, 35 (1940–3), 226; *Journal of Roman Studies*, 31 (1941), 131, pl. XIII.

<sup>75</sup> Army List, April 1941 and subsequent quarters, p. 692z, Regular Army emergency commission 2nd Lieutenant, 1 February 1941, Lieutenant 1 August 1942, Acting Captain 20 November 1942; *Army List* January 1944 and subsequent quarters, p. 2821, Temporary Captain 26 February 1943; seniority date (substantive rank) 17 August 1943, on staff of the School of Signals.

<sup>76</sup> His handwritten and typed notes, some with plans, are Item 5584 in the catalogue of his library sale, see n. 109. A photograph of Rupert working in some army office and wearing battle dress with his captain's 'pips' appears in Mellor, *Pots and People*, fig. 76.

## IV

Rupert was released from the army early in 1946, returning at once to the Museum.<sup>77</sup> Already in 1940 Kendrick had written to say that when ‘eventually’ he returned, he would be responsible for the collections of Anglo-Saxon antiquities, for the European Germanic collections, and for the Late Celtic collections of the British Isles, the three covering roughly the period from 400 to 1100: ‘You will also be responsible for Sutton Hoo. Brace yourself for this task.’<sup>78</sup>

Kendrick’s commission for Sutton Hoo was the defining moment of Rupert’s life, his greatest challenge, the source of almost insuperable difficulties, and his greatest achievement. Rupert took Sutton Hoo as a sacred trust which he was resolved to complete whatever the difficulties, but it was to be played out against his full-time responsibility for the care and presentation of ‘his’ collections, and eventually for the keepership of the whole Department of British and Medieval Antiquities. An account of Rupert the museum man must therefore come first, before turning to the saga of Sutton Hoo.<sup>79</sup> As Assistant Keeper, Rupert was responsible for ‘Dark Age’ antiquities, the post-Roman Celtic, Anglo-Saxon, Viking, Germanic and Slavonic collections of his department. At the end of the war, the Museum was in a sorry state. Staff was lacking, accommodation inadequate and unsuitable, an appreciable portion of the collections wrapped and stored in boxes so that he was unable to see much of the material in his care. He had four bays and three table cases for display in the King Edward VII Gallery, half the then closed Iron Age Gallery for storage, ‘nowhere to lay anything out, and virtually no publicly available catalogues’. In an appreciation written to A. B. Tonnochy, then Keeper of the department, in 1953, Rupert set out the scale and nature of the problems he faced: ‘his’ collections were ‘magnificent and growing, and arrangements for housing and dealing with them are archaic’.<sup>80</sup> Appointed Keeper himself the next year, he became responsible for achieving the solutions and over the next decade achieved them. By 1969 he had divided the department in two, creating a new Department of Prehistoric and Romano-British Antiquities, himself remaining Keeper of

<sup>77</sup> *Army List*, April 1946, with honorary rank of Captain.

<sup>78</sup> RLSB-M’s typescript memorandum, ‘Forty Years with Sutton Hoo’ (March 1989), included in the introduction to the Sale Catalogue of his library and archive, see n. 109.

<sup>79</sup> See pp. 82–4.

<sup>80</sup> RLSB-M, Assistant Keeper, ‘Report on the post-Roman, Celtic and Germanic and Slavonic Collections’, submitted to A. B. Tonnochy, Keeper, British and Medieval Antiquities, 6 August 1953: see *Note*, p. 86.

the now re-named Department of Medieval and Later Antiquities.<sup>81</sup> The budding medieval archaeologist had become curator.

Rupert's twenty-one years as Keeper were a time of outstanding curatorial acquisition, including the Rothschild Lycurgus Cup and the Ilbert Collection of Clocks and Watches, his greatest coup, and one in which he took immense pride and pleasure. The great Ilbert collection of 210 clocks, 2,300 watches and watch movements, and many other pieces was about to be sold and split up. The sale catalogues had been printed. The Treasury turned down a request for funds. Rupert turned to the Worshipful Company of Clockmakers who found a donor to buy the clocks, but the money for the rest had still to be found. The Company raised some by public subscription, but it was far from enough. With time running out the Court of the Clockmakers Company went as a deputation to the Treasury. As a result the Chancellor of the Exchequer agreed to petition parliament to provide the money in the form of a special grant. The Ilbert Collection was saved for the nation – the greatest collection of horology in the world – and Rupert became a Liveryman of the Worshipful Company of Clockmakers.

By far the most dramatic, however, was his attempt to secure one of great treasures of English medieval art, the twelfth-century ivory, later (and probably wrongly) known as the 'Bury St Edmunds' cross. Rumours of its existence had been around the museum world for many years but it first emerged on 5 December 1960 when it was shown at the British Museum by its then owner, Ante Topic Mimara, a wily Yugoslav of dubious background. Peter Lasko (later Director of the Courtauld), on duty that day to deal with enquiries from the public, sent an 'URGENT' note up to his keeper, urging Rupert to come and see 'what appears to be a 2' [two-foot high] Winchester style morse ivory altar cross carved back and front'. By the summer of 1961 Bruce-Mitford and Lasko, 'fully equipped with reference books and photographs', had spent four days studying the cross in the bank vault in Zürich to which it had been taken back. Meanwhile, a panel of experts brought together by the British Museum concluded, using the photographs Bruce-Mitford and Lasko had obtained, that the cross was 'one of the finest and most impressive objects of the 12th century they [had] ever seen ... and should find its resting place in the National Museum'.

<sup>81</sup> G. de G. Sieveking (ed.), *Prehistoric and Roman Studies Commemorating the Opening of the Department of Prehistoric and Romano-British Antiquities* (London, 1971) [reprinted from *The British Museum Quarterly*, 35 (1971), Numbers 1–4], especially RLSB-M, 'Envoi', 8–16, Pls. I–V.

The British Museum, specifically its Keeper of British and Medieval Antiquities, had then to persuade the Treasury to find £195,000, an unprecedented sum at the time for an artwork not a painting. Delaying tactics emerged: the cross ‘was too good to be true’ and because Topic Mimara refused to say where it came from, it ‘might be Nazi loot’. The report of the panel of experts laid the first canard to rest, but on the second the Treasury could not be moved. Topic Mimara’s deadline was 31 January 1963. Late that day, with the funds agreed by the Treasury, the British Museum again asked Topic Mimara to disclose where the cross had come from. He again refused and the Museum bid failed. How and when this English Romanesque cross came to be in Central Europe or the northern Balkans remains unclear. No claim to ownership has ever been made. But the cross was now available, and Tom Hoving, then Director of the Metropolitan Museum in New York, untroubled on his own admission by scruple, obtained it for the Metropolitan where it is now known as ‘The Cloisters Cross’.<sup>82</sup>

## V

These years of connoisseurship, of pleasure and love of objects, of care, persistence, and attention to the running of a great department, were also years of scholarship. As we have seen, Thomas Kendrick, then Keeper of the department, had written to Rupert already in 1940 to say that when he returned from the forces he would in addition to his other duties ‘be responsible for Sutton Hoo. Brace yourself for this task.’<sup>83</sup> The finds from the Anglo-Saxon ship-burial excavated at Sutton Hoo in 1939 had spent the war in a disused tunnel of the London Underground. In 1944 they returned to the Museum and Herbert Maryon began work on them in the Research Laboratory that November. Rupert took charge of them immediately on his release from the army early in 1946 and began the preparation of a full catalogue:

There followed great days for Sutton Hoo when new, often dramatic discoveries were being made in the workshops all the time. Built from fragments, astonishing artefacts – helmet, shield, drinking horns, and so on – were recreated.

<sup>82</sup>T. Hoving, *King of the Confessors* (New York, 1981); M. Biddle, ‘Tom Hoving’, in ‘Lives Remembered’, *The Times*, 6 January 2010.

<sup>83</sup>See n. 78.

In these words that Rupert wrote later, it is as if we hear Caernarvon to Carter: ‘Can you see anything?’ And Carter’s reply ‘Yes, it is wonderful.’<sup>84</sup>

The next few years were full of Sutton Hoo. By 1947, when he was elected a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries, some of the objects had already been restored and put on display in the King Edward VII Gallery and the first edition of *The Sutton Hoo Ship-Burial: a Provisional Guide* had been published. But the pace began to slacken. The Research Laboratory had other tasks. Rupert’s work as Assistant Keeper was mounting. In May 1949 Rupert reviewed the position for his Keeper, Thomas Kendrick, setting out the urgent need for time and resources, but above all the true scale of the task.

Three large volumes are planned, in consultation with the Research Laboratory. A fourth volume (interpretation) is a possibility. The fullest place will be given to metallurgical analysis and description ... and to a formidable array of technical reports obtained at my request from outside scientists.... We hope that the publication will set a new standard in archaeological publication, and be worthy of its material.... I cannot see, however, any real prospect of getting the catalogue out the way things are at present.<sup>85</sup>

Few men can ever have built for themselves so hard a cross to bear, nor nailed themselves to it quite so firmly. No reply was received and for the next decade no progress was possible. There followed locust years for Sutton Hoo, but these were also the central years of Rupert’s intellectual life, as he turned to other projects. The young family, a small top-floor flat, the great commission of Sutton Hoo accepted, the *Provisional Guide* written and produced almost entirely at home in the evenings on the kitchen table, the excavations at Mawgan Porth begun, interest in the Celtic hanging bowls aroused: all these go back to the later ’40s and ’50s. In many ways the rest of his life was spent in working out these personal and intellectual strands. In 1949–52, 1954, and 1974 he excavated a settlement of the late Saxon period at Mawgan Porth on the north coast of Cornwall,<sup>86</sup> and in 1955 he

<sup>84</sup>T. G. H. James, *Howard Carter. The Path to Tutankhamun* (rev. edn, London, 2001), p. 257; cf. P. Collins and L. McNamara, *Discovering TutAnkhAmun* (Oxford, 2014), pp. 28–32.

<sup>85</sup>RLSB-M, ‘A confidential but important document relating to the needs of the Sutton Hoo catalogue and research, and reviewing the position as at 28.5.1949’ submitted to the Keeper [T.D. Kendrick] on 30 May 1949: Para. 8 (pp. 2–3) and Addendum, dated 30.5.1949 (p.7). Eight years later on 14 June 1957 Bruce-Mitford added a note on ‘Action taken’, beginning ‘There was no reply to this report ...’. See *Note*, p. 86.

<sup>86</sup>RLSB-M, (ed. R. J. Taylor), *Mawgan Porth: a Settlement of the Late Saxon Period on the North Cornish Coast. Excavations 1949–52, 1954, and 1974*, English Heritage Archaeological Report 12 (London, 1997).

investigated the chapter house graves at Lincoln Cathedral.<sup>87</sup> These were also the years of his principal works on early medieval manuscripts, on the *Codex Lindisfarnensis* (1956), ‘a turning point’,<sup>88</sup> and the *Codex Amiatinus* (1967), ‘never superseded’,<sup>89</sup> the collection of material on Late Celtic hanging bowls (published posthumously in 2005),<sup>90</sup> the study of the Ormside Bowl, sadly never concluded. And behind and above all this, the rebuilding of the department, the great acquisitions, his active years as Secretary of the Society of Antiquaries.

These fallow years, which coincided exactly with Sir Thomas Kendrick’s directorship of the British Museum (1950–58), cannot be passed over for they form too large a part of the delay in publishing Sutton Hoo for which Rupert was to be severely censured. Kendrick’s interest in and commitment to Sutton Hoo were total: ‘More than anyone, [Kendrick] was in 1939 thrilled by the ... discovery, central to his field of Anglo-Saxon art and archaeology.’<sup>91</sup> He visited the excavation of the ship burial in August, attended the inquest, and sitting by Mrs Pretty began an approach which in due course led to her donation of the finds to the Museum (for the department indeed of which he was then Keeper). An exhibition of some of the finest objects was at once arranged in the Front Hall of the Museum, but the outbreak of war meant they almost immediately had to be taken to a place of safety in the Aldwych Tube. It was Kendrick too who ‘organized, with admirable expedition, a preliminary publication of the discovery in the *British Museum Quarterly* issue on Sutton Hoo (1939) and in *Antiquity* (1940)’.<sup>92</sup>

In 1944/5 when the finds were brought back to the Museum, Kendrick at once arranged for Harold Plenderleith to make a start on their treatment in the museum laboratory so that Rupert (to whom as we have seen Kendrick had entrusted their publication) was able to get to work as soon as he returned from the army in the spring of 1946. In 1947 when the only

<sup>87</sup> RLSB-M, ‘The Chapter House vestibule graves at Lincoln and the body of St. Hugh of Avalon’, in F. G. Emmison and R. Stephens (eds), *Tribute to an Antiquary: Essays Presented to Marc Fitch by Some of his Friends* (London, 1976), pp. 127–40.

<sup>88</sup> RLSB-M, ‘Decoration and miniatures’, in T. D. Kendrick (ed.), *Evangeliorum quattuor Codex Lindisfarnensis* (Olten and Lausanne, 1956), i, pp. 109–260. See further pp. 81–2.

<sup>89</sup> RLSB-M, ‘The art of the Codex Amiatinus: Jarrow Lecture 1967’, *Journal of the British Archaeological Association*. 3rd ser., 32 (1969), 1–25; republished 1978 in the series of Jarrow Lectures.

<sup>90</sup> RLSB-M with S. Raven, *A Corpus of Late Celtic Hanging Bowls with an Account of the Bowls found in Scandinavia* (Oxford, 2005).

<sup>91</sup> RLSB-M, ‘Thomas Downing Kendrick, 1895–1979’, p. 462.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.* See also *British Museum Quarterly*, 13.4 (1939), 111–36, and *Antiquity*, 14 (1940), 1–5 and 6–87.

gallery then fit for use, the King Edward VII Gallery, was re-opened to the public, to display the cream of the collections of all the departments, stunning finds from Sutton Hoo were in the first case on the left, where I seem to remember seeing them on my first visit.

Rupert's *Provisional Guide*, published in 1947, turned out to be one of the Museum's most successful publications ever.<sup>93</sup> Rupert himself wrote a series of articles on aspects of Sutton Hoo, visited Sweden to study finds from the graves at Vendel and Valsgaerde, learned Swedish, and prepared the proposal for the full publication of Sutton Hoo already mentioned. When that fell on stony ground, nothing of any significance was done with Sutton Hoo for a decade.

As Rupert wrote in his affectionate Academy memoir, the situation facing Kendrick from the time of his appointment as director in 1950, already parlous, was seriously hampered by the financial demands of the Korean war.<sup>94</sup> Kendrick was changed for ever.<sup>95</sup> His overriding concern was to keep the Museum going, the departments in improving shape among the demands of the repair of war damage, and the galleries open.

Rupert's task as Kendrick's successor as Keeper of the Department of British and Medieval Antiquities was to play his part by restoring and reorganising the department. To great effect he did this over the next decade.<sup>96</sup> These duties might have left some official time for Sutton Hoo, but there was no money for a research assistant or any of the other support that was to prove necessary – and to be funded when the time came. Somewhat surprisingly, however, Rupert was given both time and resources to work on the publication of the Lindisfarne Gospels, one of the British Library's greatest treasures. This turned out to be both intellectually demanding and time-consuming. For Lindisfarne, Rupert was given four months special leave from the department, something he was not to receive again until he was made Research Keeper to complete the publication of Sutton Hoo in his last two years at the Museum in 1975–7. Rupert's work on Lindisfarne was his first major publication, an outstanding achievement, for which he worked in the Royal Library in Copenhagen and in the Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana in Florence.<sup>97</sup> There was much of

<sup>93</sup>RLSB-M, 1st edn (London, 1947), 10th impression (1968); new edition as *The Sutton Hoo Ship-Burial: a Handbook* 1st edn (1968), 3rd edn (1979).

<sup>94</sup>See n. 91.

<sup>95</sup>Ibid.

<sup>96</sup>See p. 76.

<sup>97</sup>See n. 88. Because Kendrick's name appears first in the list of seven authors, although he contributed only the half-page preface, the volume is often catalogued under Kendrick's name



relevance for the Sutton Hoo ship-burial, ten of the pieces from which were illustrated in colour for comparison with the manuscript,<sup>98</sup> while Rupert's work in Florence on the Codex Amiatinus, the Ezra-Cassiodorus painting in which was important to discussion of the image of the scribe in the Lindisfarne manuscript, led to his 1967 Jarrow Lecture on Amiatinus.<sup>99</sup>

Others were to allege that Rupert's work on Lindisfarne and the Codex Amiatinus was simply another diversion from Sutton Hoo. In a way of course it was, but I doubt Rupert had any choice in the matter. The offer from Urs-Graf Verlag to publish the entire Lindisfarne Codex in one magnificent facsimile volume accompanied by a volume of commentary was too good to turn down. Kendrick was now Principal Librarian as well as Director of the Museum – an archaeologist with no library experience – and he wanted it done, and may well have felt he had done his bit for Sutton Hoo as keeper of the department at the time of the discovery and in the later '40s. Above all, perhaps, it cost the Museum little: those involved were already on the staff, with the exception of outside contributors like Alan Ross. *Codex Lindisfarnensis* was published in 1956.<sup>100</sup> Work on Sutton Hoo involving new and unbudgeted expenditure could wait. And wait it did.

Rupert was much criticised then and later for what were seen as diversions from Sutton Hoo, but this fallow decade, when there was no progress inside the museum, was for Rupert a time of preparation and consolidation of the immense scholarly range that was to be crucial when things began to move again, as they did in 1960. As Kenneth Painter has said, 'the delays in the publication of Sutton Hoo were in reality a honing of skills'.<sup>101</sup>

## VI

In 1960, following the appointment of Frank Francis as Director of the Museum, two floors of a house in Montague Street were at last made available and into this Rupert moved the whole Sutton Hoo operation. A

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alone. In fact RLSB-M's contribution was by far the largest consisting of 152 pages with 38 plates, 63 figures, and maps, plus a joint chapter of 16 pages with T. J. Brown.

<sup>98</sup> Pl. 16a, Colour pl. XVII, a-j.

<sup>99</sup> See n. 89.

<sup>100</sup> See n. 88.

<sup>101</sup> Pers. com. in lit.

Research Assistant was agreed in 1962 and eventually there was a team of thirteen people at work.

From 1965–70 Rupert directed a new campaign of excavations at Sutton Hoo, primarily to recover and record the remains of the ship, for which there had been no time on the eve of war in August 1939. He was determined to publish ‘the greatest treasure ever taken from the soil of England’ to what he saw as the necessary standard and in appropriate detail, recognising ‘the responsibility for faultless and complete publication resting upon us all’. Rupert faced a great deal of incomprehension, concern at the cost involved, and impatience at what was seen as his slow progress, particularly on the part of certain of the Museum trustees following the retirement of Frank Francis as director in 1968 and the departure of Mortimer Wheeler as a trustee in 1971, both of whom had been fully supportive.

Nothing on this scale had been attempted before in British archaeology. Whole new programmes of research had to be arranged, for example in the scientific analysis of the gold coins of the period and in the techniques of gold working. Until 1975 Rupert continued as Keeper of his department, with all the duties that involved, but in that year he was appointed to a Research Keepership, a post he held for two years, the only period over which he was ever able to devote himself full-time to Sutton Hoo.<sup>102</sup>

The first volume of *The Sutton Hoo Ship-Burial* appeared in 1976, fifteen years after the setting up of the unit, Volume 2 in 1978, and Volume 3, in two large parts, in 1983. Arnold Taylor, then President of the Society of Antiquaries, described the first volume as ‘one of the great books of the century’,<sup>103</sup> a verdict echoed in different ways by a long series of reviewers, but to some at the time this had seemed far too slow, and much anguish and tribulation ensued, a battle between Rupert’s dogged perfectionism and the understandable impatience of those who did not perhaps always realise

<sup>102</sup> At their meeting on 31 January 1976 certain British Museum trustees, led by Sir Eric Fletcher, tried to refuse to extend RLSB-M’s research appointment by six months to its agreed limit of two years finishing at the end of 1976. The attempt was only thwarted by the advocacy of Professor J. G. D. Clark, who had managed to see a copy of *Sutton Hoo 1* in the immediate aftermath of its publication, and was able to report how ‘impressed’ both he and Dr Arnold Taylor, then Chief Inspector of Ancient Monuments, were ‘by the copiousness and quality of the volume’ (autograph letter, JGDC to AJT, dated 4.2.76). The more nuanced, although not uncritical, view of RLSB-M and his work and character provided by David Wilson (*The British Museum: a History* (London, 2002), p. 289) does not perhaps take adequate account of the Museum’s own slowness in making adequate provision for the needs of a publication of this kind or the many other demands on their keeper’s time described in previous pages of this memoir.

<sup>103</sup> A. J. Taylor, ‘Anniversary Address’, *Antiquaries Journal*, 56. i (1976), 1–10, at p. 4. For a review by seven authors, see M. Biddle, A. Binns, J. M. Cameron, D. M. Metcalf, R. I. Page, C. Sparrow, and F. L. Warren, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 6 (1977), 249–53.

quite what was involved.<sup>104</sup> But that is now long ago, and the great volumes stand as testimony to the Museum's support of scholarship, to the many who shared in the work, but above all to Rupert's attention to detail and unmatched breadth of knowledge and sensibility.

Sensibility and high purpose, but also a sense both of drama and of fun. One evening in the early 1970s Rupert was to address the *Sachsensymposion* in London on Sutton Hoo. The meeting was in the Chemical Theatre at University College London. Right at the start the lights in the lecture theatre dimmed. Down the side aisle came a small procession. At its head, an acolyte, moved Nigel Williams, bearing a replica of the Sutton Hoo whetstone. Behind him, entering the light as he mounted the stage, followed Rupert, clad in a carriage rug, hands hieratically crossed, as Leslie Webster remembers, wearing the new replica of the Sutton Hoo helmet, never before revealed, and declaiming the opening lines of Beowulf:

Hwæt! We Gardena	in geardagum,
þeodcyninga,	þrym gefrunon,
hu ða æþelingas	ellen fremedon.

Lo! The Spear-Danes' glory through splendid achievements  
The folk-kings' former fame we have heard of,  
How princes displayed then their prowess-in-battle.<sup>105</sup>

Taking off the helmet Rupert laughed self-consciously, enjoying a theatrical joke of the kind in which he delighted.

By this time Rupert's marriage to Kathleen Dent had been long in trouble. He had left home in the later 1950s, formed a series of relationships, at least one of long standing within the Sutton Hoo unit itself, and was often in poor health and financial difficulty. On 11 July 1975 he married Marilyn Roberta Luscombe (born 1945; marriage dissolved 1984), formerly his research assistant on the Sutton Hoo unit, with whose help he had in 1974 published a collection of his papers.<sup>106</sup>

<sup>104</sup> An indication of contemporary feeling in certain quarters is provided by a trenchant review written after the appearance of Volume 2 in 1978 by Joachim Werner ('Das Schiffsgrab von Sutton Hoo', *Germania* 60 (1982), 193–209). To make sure this was brought to wider attention, it was translated by Christopher and Sonia Hawkes, privately printed by them as *The Sutton Hoo Ship-Burial. Research and Publication between 1939 and 1980*, and distributed to colleagues. The copy sent to the Ashmolean (now Sackler) Library, University of Oxford, is 530.33 pamph.

<sup>105</sup> <<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/126328/16328-h/16328-h.htm>> (accessed 12 October 2013).

<sup>106</sup> RLSB-M, *Aspects of Anglo-Saxon Archaeology: Sutton Hoo and Other Discoveries* (London, 1974)

He was elected a Fellow of the British Academy in 1976 and retired from his Research Keepership at the British Museum in 1977. Rupert was Slade Professor of Fine Art at Cambridge and Professorial Fellow of Emmanuel College in 1978–9, Visiting Fellow of All Souls College, Oxford, in the same year, and elected an Honorary Fellow of Hertford, Oxford, his undergraduate college, in 1983. His last post was as Faculty Visitor in the Department of English at the Australian National University, Canberra in 1981. Despite continuing ill-health and financial problems, Rupert was now working steadily to bring earlier work to publication. He completed his report on the excavations at Mawgan Porth (published posthumously in 1997)<sup>107</sup> and took up again his major project, *A Corpus of Late Celtic Hanging Bowls AD 400–800*, begun already in the 1940s, published posthumously by Oxford University Press in 2005.<sup>108</sup> Following the end of his second marriage in 1984, Rupert found it necessary to sell his great library, which went to Okinawa Christian Junior College in Japan.<sup>109</sup> He lived at Woodstock in 1984–6 by courtesy of Marc Fitch, and then in Cheltenham. In 1988 he married Margaret Edna Adams (1916–2002), a noted child psychiatrist and published poet, whom he had first met at Oxford fifty years before, and went to live with her at Bampton in Oxfordshire. There, during the next few years, he brought his Hanging Bowl Corpus to near completion. Rupert Bruce-Mitford died of a heart attack following many years of inherited heart disease on 10 March 1994 at the John Radcliffe Hospital, Oxford, to which characteristically he had driven himself two days before. He was buried on 18 March 1994 in the Bampton Burial Ground by the church of St Mary the Virgin, Oxfordshire.

When we last met for more than a moment, in October 1993, Rupert wanted to talk about what he should do next: should it be something on his forebears, about his parents in Yokohama, or his mother's family in British Columbia? Should he perhaps do something autobiographical? Should he even write, as he put it, 'the secret history of Sutton Hoo'? What was one to say? The message was clear: the great tasks had been completed, his long pilgrimage to the Early Middle Ages had reached its conclusion. In the time

<sup>107</sup> See n. 86.

<sup>108</sup> See n. 90.

<sup>109</sup> Merrion Book Co., *Anglo-Saxon and Mediaeval Archaeology, History and Art with special reference to Sutton Hoo. The ... Working Library and Archive of more than 6000 Titles formed by Dr Rupert L. S. Bruce-Mitford* (Wickmere, Norfolk, [1989]), with 'Introduction' (Martin Biddle), 'Forty Years with Sutton Hoo (RLSB-M), and 6008 items (including his own works, his reference library, off-print collection, guide-books, maps, and archive [Items 5301–5956], with his photographic and slide collection).

remaining he wanted to reflect on family, friends, and courses run. Had he been able to look back with detachment, which being Rupert, I doubt, he would fairly have seen a life well rounded, an odyssey completed with humour, honour, friendship, and the distinction of scholarship.

MARTIN BIDDLE  
*Fellow of the Academy*

*Note:* The extensive archive gathered before and during the writing of this memoir will be deposited in the Bodleian Library, Oxford. It comprises personal letters to and from RLSB-M and the writer, and includes (among many other items) copies of official memoranda written by RLSB-M from 1949 onwards during his years at the British Museum, as well as a letter about a meeting of the Trustees of the Museum held on 31 January 1976 found inserted into one of RLSB-M's offprints purchased by the writer from the library of the late Dr A. J. Taylor FBA (see n.102). The 656 archive items, both private and official, forming part of RLSB-M's library now at Okinawa Christian Junior College in Japan (see p. 85 and n.109), form part of the history of archaeology in Britain in the second half of the twentieth century and should be scanned for deposition in Britain, perhaps with the papers used for this memoir, in the Bodleian Library, Oxford.

I am particularly grateful to members of RLSB-M's family, and to Sir David Wilson FBA, William Oddy FSA, Kenneth Painter FSA, and Leslie Webster, FSA, for their wise counsel, comments, and advice: they are in no way responsible for the opinions expressed here. My friend Andrew Bennett's generous help with all matters genealogical has been essential.

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