

## G.R.H. (Mick) Wright: A remarkable Australian archaeological architect

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**Abstract:** The life of Mick Wright is described drawing on the reminiscences of his friends and himself, his personal documents and published papers. The role of the archaeological architect is briefly commented upon in the context of Mick's published perspectives.

George Roy Haslam (Mick) Wright was born in Perth, Western Australia, on 4 March 1924. His parents, William James and Violet Amy (née Hardwick), lived in what was then the working class suburb of Subiaco, his father was involved in horse racing as a bookmaker and part owner of a number of horses. Mick was an only child and, while he does not remember his childhood warmly, he does consider Perth to have been an excellent place to grow up because of its opportunities to play sport and to enjoy a drink with friends. On 3 April 1930 Perth's *Western Mail* listed the registration of a Rugby sedan by V.A. Wright of Churchill Ave. revealing that his family was not poor and that his mother would appear to have been fairly independent; indeed Mick would be chauffeured by such women for much of his life.

Mick attended the Perth Modern School, an academically-selective co-educational public high school, which was only a short walk from his home. The school has many notable Australians amongst its alumni, including Robert Hawke (b.1929), Rolf Harris (b.1930), H.C. Nugget Coombs (b.1906), Sir Paul Hasluck (b.1905) and Janet Holmes à Court (b.1943).

On 4 April 1941 Mick matriculated as a student in the University of Western Australia to study law. After his second year World War II intervened and Mick enlisted in the Royal Australian Air Force training to be a navigator in Australia at places including Mount Gambier, where navigation was taught, and Port Pirie for gunnery and bomb-aiming instruction. In late 1943 he was transferred to England where he flew in Wellington bombers based at Lichfield, Staffordshire. No. 27 Operational Training Unit (OTU), to which Flight Sargeant G.R.H. Wright was posted, trained crews for Bomber Command and undertook 'Nickel' raids, the dropping of propaganda leaflets over German cities. Another Australian navigator and member of the Unit in 1944 was Don Charlwood who later wrote the wartime classic *No Moon Tonight* about his earlier tour of duty in No. 103 Squadron and his time at Lichfield in 27 OTU in 1944 (1956); Mick does not remember meeting him.

At the end of the war Mick returned to Australia and was demobbed at Cunderdin Air Force base, Western Australia in 1945. He went back to his studies at the University of Western Australia graduating on 1 April 1948 with a



**Figure 1:** Mick Wright August 2013. Photo: the author

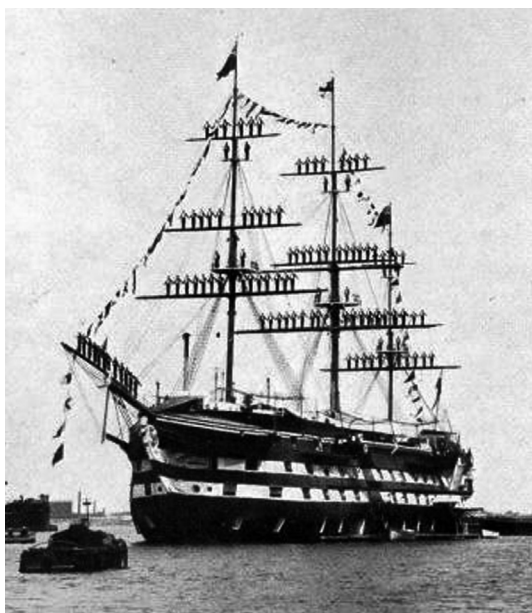
Bachelor of Arts majoring in medieval history and on 14 April 1950 he was awarded a Bachelor of Laws. Again he was fully committed to sport, playing Australian Rules for West Perth and the University, for which he also played rugby and cricket. In the final year the University team's wicket keeper was one Robert Hawke, a later labour union leader and Labor Prime Minister of Australia. The University is the main beneficiary in Mick's will revealing the importance and appreciation he has for this time.

Mick's future career was at this point uncertain. He went to Sydney where he was employed by the Colonial Sugar Refinery, who sent him to work for a short term on Fiji. In 1951 he set sail for England on the P&O liner *SS Orontes*. On board he met a young man, Basil Hennessy, who introduced himself as an archaeologist travelling to work in Turkey and Cyprus. The two spent much of the trip together often talking about sport, Basil had served in the Navy and was a shot-putter and Mick had his Air Force experience and was a high jumper, both played Australian Rules football and of course they enjoyed a drink. When Basil left the ship at Port Said on his way to Turkey it was agreed that if he needed a person to plan and draw at his proposed excavation at Stephania, Cyprus, he would contact Mick.



**Figure 2:** *The University of Western Australia football team at the Inter-varsity Carnival, Hobart 1947. 'Mick Wright' is standing in the second row fifth from the left. Photo: the Wright Archive.*

In England Mick was employed at the Thames Nautical Training College, HMS *Worcester*, a merchant navy officer training ship near Greenhithe on the Thames. This establishment is known for 'manning the yards', where cadets stand on top of the yards, and while Mick does not admit to dancing on the yardarms like some of the cadets, he certainly spent time aloft. His later exploits, climbing and falling off ancient Middle Eastern buildings, are remembered by many colleagues. Mick attempted to embark on a career at sea, but the Maritime Union refused his application for membership, it seems that a 27 year old ex-serviceman with two university degrees was considered inappropriate union material. The call from Basil Hennessy came and Mick set off for Cyprus to begin what was to become a lifetime in archaeology.

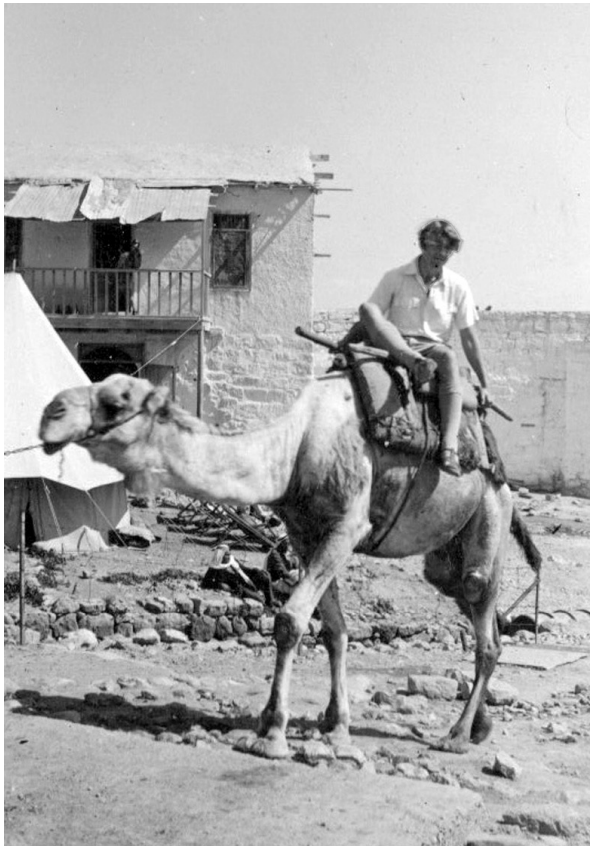


**Figure 3:** *HMS Worcester, Founders Day 1913, with cadets manning the yards. Photo: Wright Archive.*

In 1950 and 1951 the Ashmolean Museum sponsored an excavation at Myrtou *Pigadhes*, Cyprus, directed by Joan du Plat Taylor. The largest financial contributor to the excavation was the Australian Institute of Archaeology. In 1951 Walter Beasley, the founder of the Institute, agreed to contribute additional funds for the second season so that Basil Hennessy could direct his own excavation of tombs at nearby Stephanía. In July and August 1951 Mick did the plans and drawings for both Stephanía and Myrtou *Pigadhes* (du Plat Taylor 1958: 1 note 1; Hennessy 1964: Preface) and then moved on to Sphagion in September (Hennessy 1964: 22). The people Mick worked with at *Pigadhes* included an experienced Australian archaeologist, Veronica Seton-Williams and beginners, James Mellaart and Diana Kirkbride.

After completing the *Pigadhes* work Basil and Mick met up again in Jordan to participate in the first season of excavations at Jericho directed by Kathleen Kenyon in January 1952. Mick undertook the planning of the tombs and remembers again working with James Mellaart and Diana Kirkbride. Mellaart oversaw the tomb excavations in 1952 (Kenyon 1952: 62), but neither men returned to Jericho for the following seasons. Mick was not enthusiastic about Kenyon's trench-focussed archaeology.

In May Mick travelled north to work with Seton Lloyd at Sultan Tepe and to begin an association with the British Institute for Archaeology in Ankara (Lloyd & Gökçe 1952; 1953: 27); between 1952-55 Mick was described as the Ankara Institute's 'Field Architect'. Other participants at Sultan Tepe that year included Oliver Gurney from Oxford, John Evans, later Director of the Institute of Archaeology, London, Burhan Tozcan and Hydie Lloyd. Seton Lloyd said of Mick that he 'proved adept as a surveyor' (1986: 139). With these contacts Mick was becoming a significant participant in post-War British Middle Eastern and Mediterranean archaeology.



**Figure 3:** Jericho 1952: Mick (a) riding 'the camel' he never passed up an opportunity for an exploit and (b) relaxing with one of Kenyon's dogs. Photos: courtesy of Linda Hennessy from the archives of Basil Hennessy.

For the next six years Mick would spend much time on Cyprus working in and around the Museum. If Peter Megaw, the Director of Antiquities, or Joe Last was not available to survey and plan a site, Mick would be assigned to the task. For example, he undertook some drawings at Kourion acknowledged by Benson (1961: ix).

Later in 1952 Mick spent a season at the Liverpool University sponsored excavations at Kouklia with Terence Mitford and Harry Illife, as had Hennessy the previous year (Megaw 1953: 133). He remembers planning tombs with Anne Battershill the daughter of Sir William Denis Battershill (1896 – 1959), who had been Colonial Secretary, Cyprus, 1935-1937, Governor of Cyprus, 1939-1941 and had subsequently retired to Kyrenia. His wife, Joan Elizabeth, was a daughter of Major-General Sir John Gellibrand (1872-1945) (Bazley 1981), and had grown up in Tasmania and Victoria; Mick found her pompous. Anne would later marry the Dutch archaeologist Hendricus Jacobus Franken, with whom Mick became close friends (Wright 2005a; 2005b).

At Kouklia Mick also met Pauline Morton, a young nurse who was working as matron at the new Paphos hospital. She was the daughter of a senior British officer, Major Victor Morton, who had been second-in-command of the Gloucester Regiment and had been killed in Burma during World War II. Pauline Alys was born on 27 April 1921 at Southend-on-Sea. She visited the excavations regularly in her Morris Minor complete with beverages

for the team to enjoy in the evening. Mick and Pauline became a couple.

Mick became known to the British legal fraternity on Cyprus and found himself assisting in legal matters as well as boarding with Judge Cyril Griffith-Williams and Chief Justice Sir Eric Hallinan. Living with servants and dressing for dinner were new experiences, but so too was the beginning of hostilities on Cyprus. Hallinan was an important symbol of British rule and was therefore a potential target, in spite of his strong Irish heritage (Crawshaw 1978).

Mr Justice Griffith-Williams retired to live in a house he had built at Myrtou and Mick occasionally stayed with him. In 1953 the Department of Antiquities sponsored the excavation of two large looted tombs in the northern part of the cemetery at Dhenia which was undertaken by Griffith-Williams with the 'assistance of Mr G.R.H. Wright of the British Institute of Archaeology in Ankara' (Megaw 1954: 172; Wright 1963b).

While at Kouklia, Mick received an invitation from C.N. (Dick) Johns, Controller of Antiquities in Libya, to participate in the Ashmolean Museum sponsored excavations at Euesperides, near modern Benghazi (Wright 2002a). Mick was joined on this excavation by Peter Parr, who became a lifelong friend and the director of future excavations at Petra where Mick would also serve as architect. Johns was not a trained Classical archaeologist and was not able to undertake publication of



**Figure 5:** Mick Wright planning in Field VII at Shechem.  
Photo: Wright Archive

Euesperides, however after Mick's intervention in 1991, the publication was taken in hand by Professors David Gill and Michael Vickers (Vickers et al. 1994: 128). Mick worked on the two subsequent seasons at Euesperides including the last in late 1954.

Another assignment in 1953 took Mick to Malta to join John Evans' excavations and to draw the plans of the Ggantija temple and the Hal Salfieni Hypogeum (Evans 1971: v, 45, 173, Plans 14 & 38). The hypogeum survey was the only time that Mick was called on to survey in an extensive underground environment.

When going to Beycesultan in May and June 1954 to work again with Seton Lloyd, it was necessary for Mick and Pauline to marry. The District Officer in Nicosia was Martin Clemens CBE MC, known for his exploits on Guadalcanal during World War II (Clemens 1998). Martin died recently in Melbourne. He duly married Mick and Pauline in Nicosia on 15 April 1954 in the presence of Sir Eric Hallinan and an Alys Edwards. The newly-weds then put the Morris Minor on a ferry at Kyrenia bound for Iskenderun.

Mick and Pauline worked at Beycesultan for two seasons, 1954 and 1955, with other participants including James and Arlette Mellaart, Charles Burney (1954), Satılmış Saygisiz (1954), John Carswell, a draughtsman (1955) and Maurice R. Cookson, a photographer (1955) (Lloyd & Mellaart 1955: 39; 1956: 101). Lloyd commented 'G.R.H. Wright .. reappeared - now a proficient architect/surveyor, bringing with him his charming wife' (1986: 150). Seton Lloyd was a trained architect and would have provided a good benchmark for Mick. While at the Ankara Institute, he became good friends with Hydie Lloyd and David Stronach.

In November 1953, one of Mick's duties on Cyprus had been to escort another Australian, Walter Beasley, around the Island and during their time together they discussed the possibility of Mick excavating with Beasley's financial support. As a result of his time at Euesperides, Mick had become interested in the tombs of Tocra, another city of the Libyan pentapolis, so Beasley agreed to fund Mick's excavation at Tocra and the repatriation of finds to Australia.

After the 1954 season at Beycesultan, Mick and Pauline returned to Cyprus briefly before going on to Benghazi where they lived in a flat until the end of January 1955. Arrangements with Beasley for the Tocra excavation had been set up in June 1954; Beasley had offered Mick £150 with an additional £100 if he discovered significant finds. Beasley explained to Mick that his desire for finds was to encourage Australian universities, and Melbourne in particular, to start teaching ancient history and archaeology (AIA docs 760, 761 & 762). Mick had inherited the Australian disdain for religion, he did not like the biblically-focused Beasley and did not

directly acknowledge his contribution in the subsequent publications (Wright 1963a; 1995).

Mick undertook a survey of tombs at the oasis of Jeghub in Libya during 1955 (Wright 1997), but his main work for the year was elsewhere. Theresa Goell served as assistant to Professor Hetty Goldman of the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, New Jersey, at her Tarsus excavation. She then began her own excavations at Nemrud Dağı in 1953 and, after a somewhat troubled collaboration with Professor Friedrich Karl Dörner of Münster University, she became the sole director of the excavation in 1956 (Sanders 2004). Nemrud Dağı is the mausoleum of King Antiochus I (64-32 B.C.) in southern Turkey. Mick joined the excavation in May-June 1955 and returned for a second season in 1956; these were the two main excavation seasons at the end of which site surveying and excavation was largely complete (Goell et al. 1996).

Kermit Goell, Theresa's brother ultimately oversaw the completion of the excavation report, and Goell's sister, Eva Godfrey, arranged the finance to do so. The completed two-volume report, *Nemrud Dagi: The Hierothesion of Antiochus I of Commagene: Results of the American Excavations Directed by Theresa B. Goell*, written by Donald Sanders, was published in 1996 (Goell et al. 1996) and includes many of Mick's drawings.

The American Schools of Oriental Research, the Bollingen Foundation, and the National Geographic Society all provided financial support to the Nemrud Dağı excavation at various times. Professors Frank Browne and W.F. Albright were members of a supervisory panel and would later promote Mick for other American excavations.



**Figure 6:** Kalabsha temple as originally sited 1961, left, and as now seen from the Aswan High Dam.  
Photos: Wright Archive.

The work on Malta and at Euesperides raised Mick's profile in the world of classical archaeology and led to an invitation to work at Ptolemais with Professor Carl Kraeling of the Oriental Institute, University of Chicago. Mick contributed many of the drawings and architectural descriptions to the 1962 excavation report. Kraeling clearly appreciated Mick's contribution writing,

*For the three major campaigns of [May–June] 1956, 1957 and 1958 I was fortunate to obtain as field architect Mr. G.R.H. Wright, formerly connected with the British School at Ankara. . . Mrs Kraeling, Mrs Nims and Mrs Wright performed important services for the expedition assisting with photography and ... (1962: v)*

Between 1955 and 1958 Mick was formally associated with the Oriental Institute, University of Chicago. His growing status in the American archaeological establishment led to further opportunities. In 1957 Mick joined the second season of the Drew University and McCormick Theological Seminary sponsored excavations at Shechem where he would go on to work for the subsequent seasons until 1967 (Campbell 2002: 6-7; Wright G.E. 1965: 39, 43).

By 1958 Mick felt the need for formal architectural qualifications and was pleased when the Bartlett School of Architecture, University College London, accepted him into the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of architecture enabling him to complete a Certificate in 1958/59. Subjects he covered included the history of Ancient, Classical, Mediaeval and Renaissance Architecture and practical and design subjects of surveying, construction, sanitation and structures. Meanwhile Pauline studied public health in London and was able to secure United Nations World Health Organisation (UNWHO) positions from then on.

Pauline set up house initially in Damascus and subsequently in Beirut, Lesotho, Sana and finally at Avignon providing Mick with a home base from which he would travel to archaeological assignments and to libraries where he prepared his many scholarly publications.

In 1959 Mick joined the second season of British School's excavations at Petra directed by Peter Parr (Parr 1960; Parr 1968). Mick subsequently published his own

architectural accounts of his work (1961a; 1961c) and in the early 1960s he oversaw some reconstruction of the Khazne and Qasr el-Bint at Petra (Wright 1961b).

This experience led to an offer from UNESCO to join the German Archaeological Institute in Cairo to work with the construction company Hochtief as the Archaeological Manager to undertake the relocation of the Roman Temple at Kalabsha. The construction of the High Dam at Aswan began in 1960, and between 1961 and 1963 Mick found himself pulling down, relocating and reconstructing the Kalabsha temple (Wright 1977). In the following year he also worked with Hochtief on the Abu Simbel relocation.

The temple was originally located at Bab al-Kalabsha (Gate of Kalabsha), approximately 50 km upstream of the Aswan High Dam. In order to improve its accessibility it was decided to relocate it to a site just south of the dam itself. Mick chose the site on the south end of the island of Elephantine where the temple now stands in full view of the visitors to the High Dam.

The temple of Kalabsha was the largest free-standing temple of Egyptian Nubia (after Abu Simbel) to be moved and re-erected at a new site (Wright 1972). The disassembling began in September 1961 and took two seasons totalling six months. During this time the water level was regulated by the Low Dam so that it rose and fell annually necessitating the work at Kalabsha to be carried out from barges and on dry land. The blocks were moved down-stream by barge and set out course by course in a lay-down area near the final site. The last material was removed in 1963 the final time the water was low enough to allow access. Between October 1962 and November 1963 the temple was then rebuilt in its present location (Wright 1976). When reviewing Mick's description of this work, *Kalabsha, The preserving of the temple* (1972), Hans Goedicke said of the project report,

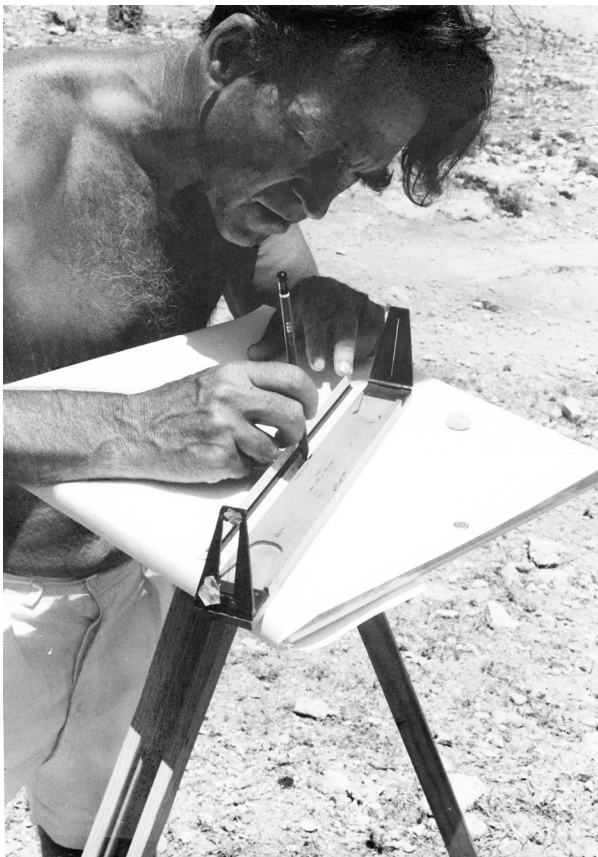
*It will for all times stand as a model of how a project of this kind is to be carried out. The careful documentation, the numerous illustrations, and the accompanying plans demonstrate every single step of the work (1974).*

In the foundation fill of the Roman temple some 250 blocks from an earlier Ptolemaic temple, many with



**Figure 6:** *The Shechem Team 1962 with Mick in 'whites' sitting cross-legged front and centre.  
Photo: courtesy of the Semitic Museum, Harvard University*

colourful reliefs, were discovered. These were removed as the water levels allowed and kept until September 1974 when the security situation improved and they, with new supplementary material, could be reconstructed into a small sanctuary building adjacent to the re-constructed Roman Temple on the south end of the island of Elephantine (Wright 1987a).



**Figure 7:** *Apollonia 1966, Mick using a plane table.  
Photo: Wright Archive*

During this time Mick was able to continue with other archaeological expeditions such as Shechem. The American archaeologists who worked with Mick at Shechem appreciated his drawing ability and were fascinated by his eccentricities. He dressed in white and without warning would disappear for days at a time, before returning also without warning as an apparition across the Tell. The workmen nicknamed him 'the ghost'.

Mick inspired the Shechem team to develop their own drawing abilities. The Shechem dig was the crucible of modern American Levantine archaeology and many leading American archaeologists began there. While the director, G. Ernest Wright, had limited recent archaeological experience, Larry Toombs and Joseph Callaway had dug with Kenyon and had knowledge of stratigraphy and site recording. Mick added to the dig's architectural expertise with his broad experience. His ability to manage his responsibilities was acknowledged in the 1963 Shechem preliminary report,

*Balancing the Shechem excavation with Kalabsha GRH Wright, presently chief archaeologist at the German Federal Republic's temple-moving operation in Upper Egypt, was chief architect, assisted by J. Stanley Chesnut and David Voelterdig (Toombs et al. 1963).*

From 1964 Dan T. Hughs was also an important contributor completing many Field IX drawings (per. comm. E.F. Campbell, January 2014).

New excavation opportunities continued to present themselves. Between June – August 1964 Mick worked with the University of New York at Mendes (Hansen 1965: 31). The following year in June he returned to North Africa with the University of Michigan to work for two seasons at Apollonia in Cyrenaica (White 1966; Pedley 1967).



*Figure 8: Mada'in Saleh 1985, Mick liked working in hot climates and 'dressed' accordingly.  
Photo: Wright Archive*

Between 1968 and 1974 UNESCO re-engaged Mick to undertake assessments of heritage building reconstruction in Iran and India (Curiel et al. 1968). The Masjed-e Shah mosque in Isfahan was one building to be assessed and in following years, Mick was involved with the Srirangam Temple in Tamil Nadu, the largest functioning Hindu temple in the world (Wright 1969), the Rameswaram Temple (Wright 1971) and finally the Sri Ramanatha pilgrimage site also on the Island of Rameswaram in Tamil Nadu (Wright 1973). He also had assignments advising on the restoration of the Amiri Palace, Doha, Qatar.

In 1978-9 Mick was engaged by the Department of Antiquities Kenya to undertake survey work on the coast of Kenya with Neville Chittick and to produce drawings of Islamic sites (Wright 1984). During this time Pauline lived in Lesotho where her employment with UNWHO had taken her. Mick enjoyed his visits there as he was able to play cricket once again, but his academic base was at the University of Munich where from 1979 he became a research professor.

UNESCO again employed Mick to be the controller of restoration work at Mada'in Saleh, Saudi Arabia, in 1985 and in the following year he was responsible for reporting on the preservation and possible restoration of the Mārib Dam in Yemen (Wright 1987b). Mada'in Saleh was recently declared a World Heritage Site.

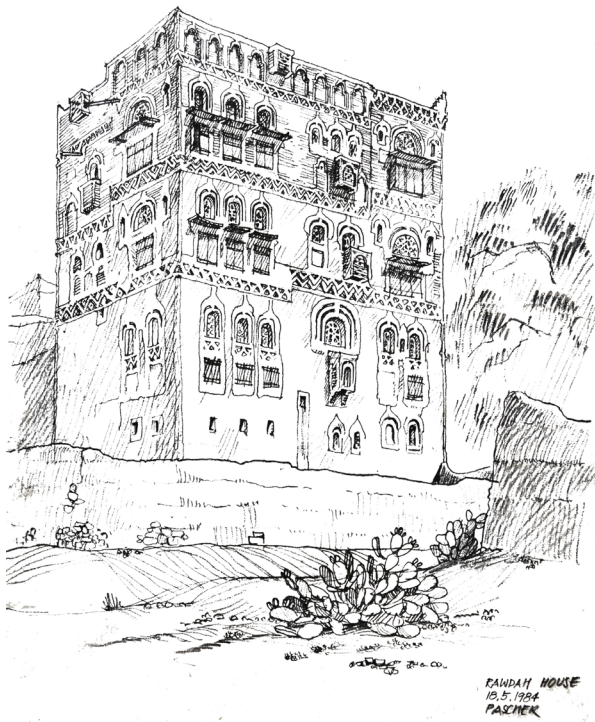
Work at Munich University was focussed on the re-commencement of the excavations at Assur, Iraq, that were directed by Walter Andrae many years earlier. Mick lived in the 'Andrae' dig house for some of 1989 and 1990 and arranged much of the first and last season of excavation in 1990 (Wright 2000). The First Gulf War ended the possibility of further work.

Partly in recognition of his prolific academic output Mick had the distinction of being a research associate at three distinguished European universities, Munich, Tübingen and Leiden. His work at the Kalabsha temple contributed to a professorial appointment at Munich and an association with Prof Arnulf Kuschke in relation to Shechem led to Mick's appointment at Tübingen (Wright G.E. 1965: 105). The Tübingen library provided the resources for the preparation of Mick's volume on the architecture of ancient Cyprus.

For many years Mick had been travelling long distances to spend time 'at home' with Pauline. At the end of the 1980s Pauline had a UNWHO position in Geneva and Mick was based at Munich, so they settled in France and eventually found their way to the Chateau de la Barthelasse, Avignon.



*Figure 9: Mada'in Saleh 1985, Hejaz Railway sheds under renovation. Photo: Wright Archive*



**Figure 10:** A sketch of Mick's 'home' near Sana, Yemen. Photo: Wright Archive

Mick's research output continued with the assistance of libraries at Leiden, Tübingen, Nicosia, Rome and Athens and a typist Lynette de Tcherepakhine. Pauline died in 2012. Mick continues to live at Avignon and occasionally returns to Australia for medical treatment where he has medical concessions as a returned serviceman.

Site work assignments reduced after 1986 giving Mick more blocks of time to prepare substantial books on the ancient architecture of Syria and Cyprus and then the monumental three volume set on building technology. The regular completion of scholarly papers continued almost to the present.

It is too early to assess Mick's contribution to archaeology and heritage management, and given the volume and scope of his published work, this will take some time. Instead I will pass on the substance of comments his colleagues have made and make some remarks about the role of the architect in archaeology as Mick saw it.

Shechem was a foundational excavation for American archaeology in the Levant. It was Mick who is credited with teaching many of the team how to record plans and sections. This made a significant contribution to American Levantine field archaeology.

The role of the site architect has not been without its controversy. Henk Franken, a close friend of Mick, was critical of sections drawn by site architects at the end of a season because they may not be related to the stratigraphy as excavated (Franken & Franken-Battershill 1963: 12ff). But Mick is equally critical of Franken's refusal to delineate building structures; plans of partially excavated

buildings are nonsensical to architects. For some Processual archaeologists, a certain level of randomness in locating trenches was thought to be 'scientific', whereas architects would advocate that common sense dictates that walls, rooms and buildings should be fully explored.

Mick encountered the issue in an earlier era and has a discussion in *Shechem III: Volume 2* (2002b: 1-17) contrasting German excavators who have 'the basic aim of resurrecting the building remains' with those who follow Albright and Kenyon, who aim to use a typological series of pottery to establish a chronological sequence (Wright 2002b: 5f). At Shechem G. Ernest Wright followed Albright and Kenyon and amassed large numbers of *loci* in the process.

The Shechem team knew that Franken's criticism was direct at them and in Appendix 1 of G. Ernest Wright's *Shechem* Larry Toombs took issue with Franken describing how all trench supervisors did draw their own sections and how composite sections involving multiple trenches were drawn by the site architect from the supervisor's drawings (1965:185-190). Both Mick and Toombs argue that this is necessary for consistency of interpretation and presentation. Mick's drawings are typical for archaeology and have limited information provided about the source material.

Mick also wrote,

*Archaeological survey drawings must show clearly what is on the ground, but they must also effectively illustrate the text of the final report* (2002b: 6).

To achieve this he thought that all *loci* should be shown, something that would render architectural drawings of limited value. The solution Mick suggested is for area plans and sections to be drawn 'with a transparent overlays giving a numbered key diagram of all the *loci*'. GIS software packages now make such an approach possible, but Mick who never even used a typewriter, let alone a Total Station or Photoshop, would not have been the person to develop such a system.

Even though it is from the pre-electronic era, *Shechem III* is a very effective record of excavation. When reviewing it, Professor Tim Harrison was able to suggest alternative stratigraphic sequences, which left him to conclude that,

*...this attention to stratigraphic detail, faithfully and successfully reproduced in Shechem III, permits an independent assessment of the stratigraphic (and cultural) sequence developed by the Expedition. In so doing, Campbell has ensured that this volume will become (and remain) an essential reference for any researcher concerned with the archaeology of ancient Shechem and its broader role in the cultural history of the region* (2004: 95).

Mick's detailed drawings and Ted Campbell's careful correlation of them with the stratigraphy accurately and usefully publishes the results of the Wheeler-Kenyon



archaeological method adopted at Shechem, something that Kenyon herself struggled to achieve. *Shechem III* demonstrates what is attainable when the work of the site architect is integrated into the archaeological analysis.

As far as I can determine Mick did not contribute anything new to the techniques of site recording. It was his thoroughness and high standard of drafting that garnered respect and inspired others to emulate. He was initially self-taught, but his early experience with Seton Lloyd would have introduced him to many traditional architectural recording and drawing methods. Like most architects he used a plane table, something foreign to surveyors; he worked within a well-established tradition of architectural archaeology. His reconstruction of buildings was systematic and was something that he learnt by experience and from his time at the Bartlett School of Architecture. Much of his work in Jordan, Egypt, Iran and in India was pioneering and is highly regarded.

In recent years he has written much about the religious aspects of architecture, but he does not seem to have been acclaimed for this. He is proud of his publishing record and his volumes on the architecture of the southern Levant and Cyprus and the three-volume set on building technology will be standard works for many years to come. The current fascination with gender, class and identity has meant that those like Mick Wright who march to the sound of a different drum are not now focal points, but any reference to original ancient architectural data cannot ignore his work.

Mick Wright is fondly remembered by many of his colleagues as an interesting and eccentric person committed to architectural drawing; the sheer volume of his drawing and writing is breath-taking. He was known for his antics, drinking and carousing, but his behaviour never prevented the job being completed and Mick will not die an alcoholic. His medical situation now forbids alcohol, although he warmly remembers evening discourses with drinks of rum and coke. After a few beers he could quote for hours from literature, ancient and modern, Ovid, Job, Shakespeare and Gilbert and Sullivan amongst many others. Mick's familiarity with Classical languages and literature, French, German and Arabic, and a broad range of philosophies was not the product of his Australian university education, but of a brilliant mind and a life time of learning. Paradoxically, while Mick worked tirelessly to banish what he saw as an uncultured Australian heritage, he retained attitudes to women and non-Europeans that unfortunately are still common amongst Australian males, especially sportsmen.

Mick was absent from Australia between 1951 and 2002. He is not derogatory about his home country, although he quotes Gibbon, 'If a man does not know his history, he is a boy', (in fact it may originally be Cicero, *Nescire autem quid ante quam natus sis acciderit, id est semper esse puerum* - To be ignorant of the past is to remain a child); he feels that Australians do not know their history.

Mick's work has been recognised by three of the world's great universities, but in Australian scholarly circles he remains largely unknown and unrecognised. This may surprise some, how could somebody so well published be unknown? The sporting enthusiast from the suburb of Subiaco, who joined the vanguard of Australia's international archaeologists, has with some justification achieved a position of worldwide scholarly distinction.

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## Sources and Acknowledgements

This biographical note relies on reminiscences of Mick Wright between August and November 2013 checked against documentary sources, papers left by Mick to the Australian Institute of Archaeology (Wright Archive) and information provided by other people. The author is indebted to the late Basil Hennessy, Peter Parr, Alan Millard, Bill Dever, Sy Gittin, David Stronach, Ted Campbell and Bernard Knapp for their recollections. Peter Parr and Ted Campbell kindly read an earlier text and made many helpful suggestions, for which I am grateful.

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