

Reviews

Judy Powell, 2013 *Love's Obsession: The Lives and Archaeology of Jim and Eve Stewart*, Kent Town, South Australia: Wakefield Press, ISBN 978-1-74305-235-8, pp. xvi + 308, 8 pls, 1 map A\$29.95

Reviewed by Graeme F. Bourke, University of New England, NSW; gbourke2@une.edu.au

Judy Powell is an Australian archaeologist whose PhD research at the University of Queensland was published in 1996 under the title *Fishing in the Prehistoric Aegean* (*Studies in Mediterranean Archaeology*: Göteborg). She has worked on excavations in Cyprus, Greece and Jordan and on Indigenous and historical archaeology projects in Queensland.

Archaeology is a young discipline in Australia, even when the relative brevity of European occupation of the continent is considered, and the archaeological establishment, such as it was in the post-WWII period, appears to have held the material record of the continent's pre-European inhabitants unworthy of study. Powell, while making it sufficiently clear that she deplors this neglect, weaves a record of the discipline's development from the early twentieth century into a biographical tale of two of its most enigmatic personalities, the Australian Jim Stewart and his English second wife, Eve Dray.

The body of the book is divided into three Parts, comprising twelve chapters in all. There is also a short prologue, along with an epilogue and appendix.

The five chapters in Part One are set mainly in Cyprus and England and recount the lives of Jim and Eve Stewart before they made Australia their permanent home in 1947. Chapter One deals with the lives of Eve's parents in Egypt and Cyprus and her privileged upbringing in England, where, despite an undistinguished academic record, she developed a love for practical archaeology. In Chapter Two, we hear of Eve's work in the late 1930s for the Cyprus Museum with Joan du Plat Taylor and later with Jim Stewart and his then wife Eleanor. Chapter Three focuses on Stewart: his education at Cambridge; his return journey from Australia to England in 1932, which was conducted partly overland through the Middle East, where he acquired a passion for archaeology; his marriage to Eleanor and their first visit to Cyprus; and their subsequent excavations at Vounous. Chapter Four mainly concerns the impact upon Stewart's life of WWII, during which he enlisted as an officer in the Cyprus regiment, was evacuated to Crete when Greece surrendered, but was captured in 1941 and spent the rest of the war as a POW in Germany, dreaming up plans for a large-scale archaeological survey of Cyprus. In Chapter Five, we hear of Stewart's attempts to make a reality of his archaeological plans and his and Eleanor's decision that he should accept the offer of a position in the Nicholson Museum at

Sydney University. Before his rendezvous with Eleanor and their newly-born son at Port Said *en route* to Australia, it is nevertheless revealed, an extended visit to Cyprus led to a love affair with Eve Dray.

Part Two concerns the lives of Jim and Eve Stewart in Australia and Cyprus. Chapter Six recounts their passage to Sydney and establishment of a home there, and Stewart's continued efforts to organise and fund large-scale archaeological work on Cyprus. Here, too, the negative effects of wartime experiences upon his personality and health become clear. In Chapter Seven, we learn of Stewart's own privileged background and early life, his marriage to Eve and their residence at the family property, Mount Pleasant, near Bathurst in central western New South Wales. Stewart's failed attempt to turn this ancestral mansion over to Sydney University as an Archaeology Centre is also reported. In Chapter Eight, we find, the couple spent much of 1955 on Cyprus, excavating at Vasilia and Ayia Paraskevi, after which they travelled in western Europe. By the late 1950s, we learn in Chapter Nine, Stewart continued to make grandiose plans while neglecting his failing health and leaving urgent work undone. Chapter Ten relates his appointment, despite further deteriorating health, failure to complete work and a tendency towards indiscretion when discussing colleagues in correspondence, to the inaugural Chair of Near Eastern Archaeology at Sydney University. There is, too, another positive: highly successful excavations around Karmi in Cyprus. The Chapter ends, however, with Jim Stewart's predictable death at Bathurst on February 6, 1962.

Part Three tells of Eve's life after Stewart's death. Chapter Eleven relates her completion for publication of some of Stewart's work, negotiations with Sydney University relating to his library and archaeological material and arrangement of various family estates. Chapter Twelve concerns her life at Wentworth Falls in the Blue Mountains, between Bathurst and Sydney, where she completed more of Jim's work and continued to negotiate with various museums.

The Epilogue, entitled 'Legacies', reports Eve's death on December 8, 2005, at 91 and provides a broader picture of her later years. It also outlines the fate of much of Jim's collection of books and coins and the subsequent careers of many of the figures who appear in the book, including Basil Hennessy, Laila Haglund, Paul Åström, Robert Merrillees, Peter Megaw, Vassos Karageorghis and Alexander Cambitoglou. Money from the sale of Eve father's estate in Cyprus, we find, helped to purchase a building in Nicosia for the Cyprus American Archaeological Research Institute, now known as the J.R. Stewart Residence. The Epilogue ends with a final assessment of the characters of both Jim and Eve Stewart. The Appendix consists mainly of a reflection upon the use of written correspondence as a source of evidence for the book.

With considerable success, Powell employs a wide range of sources to weave together two interrelated narrative strands, the personal lives of her main characters and the

development of archaeology in Australia and beyond over several decades. In addition, occasional passages provide highly useful background information, setting a context for scholars whose interests lie in other fields as much as for more general readers drawn by the romantic elements of the story.

Powell's Jim Stewart is a complex figure. In the chapters that deal with the pre-war period, we are presented with a privileged and politically conservative young man who, nevertheless, shows little sign of intolerance and whose exuberant spirit of adventure leads him to a passion for archaeology. During a flight from Karachi to Persia in 1932 that includes a nude dip on the Persian Gulf with his fellow passengers, Jim, not yet 20, writes to his father: 'Beautiful asparagus, cold chicken and ham, cheese and a bottle of beer, Imperial Airways do you well.' Even on Crete after the allied withdrawal from mainland Greece and on to Egypt, Stewart's appropriate decision to stay with his Cypriot troops when other officers choose to flee earns their undying gratitude. Four years as a POW however, take their toll, and like so many others Stewart returns to civilian life a changed man. A process of ongoing physical and psychological deterioration, apparently exacerbated by an obsessive sense of perfection, has been set in motion.

Eve, on the other hand, grows steadily stronger over time. 'Aged twenty,' we are told, she 'appeared a serious young woman, beautiful but reserved' (p.24). Though only one year younger than Stewart, after his death at 48 she is both fit and well enough to live alone at Wentworth Falls for four decades, and we find her finalising her and Stewart's affairs, holding her own in negotiations with influential individuals and institutions. Eve Stewart clearly takes an independent interest in public affairs: although a supporter of his own party, she writes to Liberal Prime Minister Malcolm Frazer asking him to reverse the party's policy on building a dam across the pristine Franklin River in Tasmania.

The personal stories of these and a host of figures well-known in archaeological circles, however, is not Powell's only concern, and some readers might find more interest in the passages in which she records various aspects of the development of the discipline, including: the foundation of the Institute of Archaeology in London; the establishment of foreign schools of archaeology in Rome and Athens; the Swedish Cyprus Expedition of 1927-31; Woolley's excavation at Ur and Petrie's last at Gaza; the relationship between romance and reality in archaeology; the establishment and development of the discipline in Australia; and, of course, the excavations of Stewart and others in Cyprus.

There are also valuable though brief contextual passages concerning such matters of intrinsic interest as: the history and geography of Cyprus (pp.10-12); the lives of British expatriates in Cyprus in the 1930s (pp.17-19); the nature of the British Cyprus Regiment (pp. 67-69); the effects of WWII on participants (pp.86-88); Australian politics

and society in 1947 (pp.104-105); and political developments in Cyprus, which appear as they become relevant to the narrative.

Some readers, I for one, might enjoy more of this and a little less, for example, of the activities of the Stewarts' cats, but this is simply a matter of taste. There are, on the other hand, some faults that must be eliminated from any second edition. The first provides the reader with unintended amusement: Powell states (p.32) that Tom Dray and his friend William Routledge 'agreed that whoever died first would inherit the other's estate.' Less forgivable is the doubly incorrect description (p.71) of Thermopylae as 'the pass held heroically by Athenians during the Persian Wars'. There is also some confusion over the date of Stewart's appointment to the chair of Near Eastern Studies at Sydney: apparently August 2, 1960 in the text (p.192), but 1961 in the timeline (p.270). Certain aspects of Powell's syntax may cause concern to some readers.

A surprising omission is the fate of Stewart's private collection of Cypriot finds. Eve's protracted and difficult negotiations with Sydney University over this issue are reported, but we do not learn that, thanks largely to both Eve Stewart and Basil Hennessy, much of this collection is now held at the University of New England Museum of Antiquities, providing the Museum with the most chronologically comprehensive collection of Cypriot artifacts held anywhere in Australia, and ensuring its international reputation thanks to the publication in the Swedish series *Studies in Mediterranean Archaeology* of much of the Cypriot material by Jennifer Webb and David Frankel.¹

All in all, however, this book succeeds on a number of levels. It provides a gentle introduction for the general reader to Mediterranean archaeology interwoven with an engrossing tale of romantic love. It also brings us closer to the world of the British Empire during its dying days, spanning the globe from England to Cyprus, Egypt and Iraq and on to Persia, India and Australia. Although primarily a prehistoric archaeologist, Powell has produced a significant work of popular modern history, played out on a wide stage, that should appeal to those with an interest in archaeology at any level.

1. Webb, J.M. 1997 *Corpus of Cypriote Antiquities 18, Cypriote Antiquities in Australian Collections, vol. 1* SIMA XX.18; Jonsered: Åström; Webb, J.M. and D. Frankel, 2001 *Corpus of Cypriote Antiquities 21, Eight Middle Bronze Age tomb groups from Dhenia in the University of New England Museum of Antiquities*, SIMA XX.21, Jonsered: Åström; Webb, J.M. 2002 *Exploring the Bronze Age in Cyprus. Australian Perspectives*, UNE Museum of Antiquities Maurice Kelly Lecture 5; Armidale; Frankel, D. 2008 *A thousand and one tombs. Survey, sampling and ceramics in Bronze Age Cyprus*, UNE Museum of Antiquities Maurice Kelly Lecture 12, Armidale