

contribution that the knowledge of First Century Galilee can make to the understanding of Jesus. In the pages that follow the topics discussed include amongst many things, Peter's House, the Galilean Boat, the Theodotus Inscription, pre-AD70 synagogues, Judas, the early church and the 'Essene quarter' of Jerusalem and 'Bethany beyond Jordan'. The sites discussed in the volume include, Sephoris, Khirbet Qana, Bethsaida, Qumran, the Herodian (before the reported discovery of Herod's tomb), Jerusalem, Ein Gedi, Ramat Hanadiv and Mount Tabor.

The birth of Jesus is discussed by Bruce Chilton, James Dunn evaluates the evidence for synagogues at the time of Jesus and the evidence for Caiaphas, Pilate and Simon of Cyrene is discussed by Craig Evans. Urban von Wahlde and Paul Anderson present substantial pieces on archaeology and the Gospel of John and its historicity. Many of these papers deserve their own reviews.

The underlying assumption of this work is that Jesus was a Jew and that he would have grown up and lived exclusively as such. This is not necessarily the New Testament story. Jesus' earliest schooling may have been somewhere like Alexandria and the Gospels sometimes quote Jesus speaking Greek, that is using Greek rather than transliterated Aramaic names. There are stories such as the feeding of the four thousand that seem to take place in Gentile regions where Jesus, unlike his disciples, was completely at home.

One slight departure is Jürgen Zangenburg's review of our knowledge of Samaria. He is right that Samaria is not directly important to the New Testament story, but that is not the point, it did contribute significantly to the cultural, religious and geographic landscape at the time of Jesus and is therefore important for those wanting to understand period. While Caesarea is mentioned, the cities of the Decapolis are not.

It is not suggested that this 700 plus page book should include more. While it may be important for some people to find Jewish remains in what is now Israel, it does not follow that any such evidence means that Jews of the first century Galilee lived in European style ghettos or contemporary Israeli cultural isolation. The complex cultural communities of pre-1917 Palestine, Baghdad and Alexandria may provide more relevant models for understanding First Century Galilee.

Jesus and Archaeology presents an indispensable resource for those wanting to study the world known to Jesus. It is a beginning to such study and while the results described here are most satisfying, significant anticipation arises from the apparent opportunities for future inquiry.

Georgina Howell, *Daughter of the Desert: The remarkable life of Gertrude Bell*, London: Macmillan, 2006, xxiv+519, maps, b/w plates, bibliography, index, ISBN 978-1405045872, AUD 60 (hb), AUD 25 (ppb). (In the USA: *Gertrude Bell: Queen of the Desert, Shaper of Nations*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, ISBN 978-0374161620 USD 27(hb))

Janet Wallach, *Desert Queen The Extraordinary Life of Gertrude Bell: Adventurer, adviser to Kings, ally of Lawrence of Arabia*, London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 2004, xxviii+419, maps, b/w plates, ISBN 0 75380 247 3, USD 35.

Reviewed by Christopher J. Davey

Some who knew her have argued that Gertrude Bell was one of the world's greatest women. She was the first woman to receive a first in Modern History at Oxford (1888), published an acclaimed translation of the Persian poetry of Hafiz (1897), became a fearless and renowned mountaineer (1902), travelled extensively in the remote regions of the Middle East becoming an authority on its society and politics, undertook archaeological recording and publication in Turkey and Iraq, took charge of the Missing and Wounded Office of the Red Cross for the first year of World War I, shared responsibility for the establishment of Iraq as an independent State after the War, and at her death was the honorary Director of Antiquities in Iraq and founder of its museum. She spoke six languages fluently, became a respected cartographer, was a Major in the British Army Intelligence and received a CBE and the Founders' medal of the Royal Geographic Society. Writing a boring biography about her would be no mean feat, which fortunately neither of these authors has achieved.

There have been at least nine biographies of Gertrude Bell. Recently Winstone's 1978 and Wallach's 1996 (as reviewed here) biographies have been revised and two more have been published, including Howell's. She had one of the world's most documented lives leaving dairies, letters, writings and thousands of photographs now in the Robinson Library of the University of Newcastle upon Tyne and displayed on the University web site. She wrote as often as three times a week to her parents and her prose is so engaging that all books are inclined to use her material directly. The Bell hand is ever present in the two books under review.

Recent events in Iraq have rekindled an interest in Bell who was instrumental in its creation eighty years ago. Familiarity with the British experience in Iraq described by Bell in her papers and letters does nothing but emphasise US credulity in their self-inflicted predicament. 'We people of the West can always conquer, but we can never hold Asia – that seems to be the legend written across the landscape' she wrote at Ashur in 1911.

Howell's book is a good read focussing on Gertrude's character and the way she saw the world. Parts are written topically rather than chronologically, relying partly on a chronology at the rear of the book and the maps of her journeys at the front to keep the reader orientated. A section on Bell's mountaineering experiences and their significance is valuable as it goes beyond the Bell letters. The first journey and highlights from the next ten years of travels are dealt with in another chapter. The chapter on her relationship with Dick Doughty-Wylie leads to a detailed description of her last desert journey to Ha'il and the tribal lands of the Rashid. The subsequent war work and the time in Iraq are largely chronological.

Howell writes a throw away line that Gertrude's parents' attitude to hereditary titles was no doubt inherited from the Pattison Quaker tradition. Gertrude's grandfather, who married Margaret Pattison, was a wealthy and famous industrialist with a university education gained in Britain, France and Germany. While his bread and butter was iron making, he pioneered the manufacture of undersea cable and aluminium. Bell family economic matters are discussed as they made Gertrude's extraordinary life possible, but Howell does not appreciate the complex religious attitudes that she inherited and which may have had more influence than even the avowed atheist Bell herself acknowledged. The respect her family had for non-Europeans and their cultures did not come from upper class English society. The strong non-conformist beliefs that were present during England's period of industrial growth and that drove much egalitarian and enquiring behaviour seems to have escaped the attention of most modern writers.

Howell leaves intriguing images. The mysterious visit to the Dardanelles' grave of Lt. Col. Dick Doughty-Wylie VC in November 1915 by a veiled woman during which time firing on both sides ceased; Howell believes it was Bell. The mystery of her death apparently by suicide at the height of a Baghdad summer; was it the prospect of poverty in retirement, loneliness as English friends left Iraq as it assumed independence, or her deteriorating health and possible lung cancer from a life of heavy smoking? Her funeral with a coffin draped with the Union Jack and the flag of Iraq, which she helped design, surrounded by British staff, the Iraqi cabinet, the whole of Baghdad and sheikhs from near and far. There is enough material here for a dozen films.

Wallach is a US journalist with a background in the Middle Eastern politics. Her book is more straightforward than Howell's and she does not convey the same intimacy with the English aristocratic female character, but there is more archaeological detail. While Howell's geography sometimes lets her down, Wallach has some doubtful descriptions. Burqa, where Bell spent Christmas Day 1913, is described as having some 'evidence of Roman occupation'; there is in fact a Roman watchtower standing to over 5 metres high. On a number of occasions bedouin are said to have served 'roasted' lamb, it was more likely

boiled. These are minor matters of detail, but they do display a limited knowledge of the Middle East.

Wallach disagrees with Bell about the Balfour Declaration; Bell thought it unworkable and artificial. If Bell returned today she would say 'I told you so' and she would scoff at Wallach's statement that Israel is the 'only democracy in the Middle East'. Bell who had a compassion for Arabs would point to the ninety-year oppression of the Palestinians, something not important to Wallach. It leaves one wondering how much Wallach actually understands Bell. Wallach's main interest is Bell's last ten years in Iraq to which she devotes over two-thirds of her book, compared to less than half by Howell.

Prior to World War I the Ottoman Empire ruled the area that became Iraq as three *vilayets*, Basra, Baghdad and Mosul thus dividing Shiites, Sunnis and Kurds. The idea of combining them into one country called Iraq seems to have been Bell's, and although the situation in 1918 was far worse than it has been recently, the British established a stable country, where Shiites, Sunnis, Kurds, Christians and Jews shared in an administration that lasted for over thirty years. The most gripping part of Wallach's book is the description of this work.

Bell lived at a time when women were thought to be intellectually inferior and non-Europeans were considered politically incompetent. Her independent means, political networks, intellectual brilliance, unquestioning family support, fearless personality and respect for the people of the Middle East, their culture and language, enabled her to break through chauvinistic bureaucracies and create a state where diplomacy had a chance over force of arms.

Neither book gives much detail, but the antiquities regime she pioneered facilitated the retention of Iraq's heritage within the country and established the Iraq Museum as one of the great museums of the world. The antiquities law she wrote for Iraq is one of the earliest. There is potentially another book here.

It was with some sadness that I put these books down. Their vividness brought to mind more recent intrepid English women and the desert places where they were encountered, but it is the loss of Bell herself, whose presence through photograph and written word is so intense, the demise of Iraq, which represented her greatest work, and the recent suffering of Iraqis who were so esteemed by Bell, that aches most. Bell's experiences do not auger well for those who now need to bring peace to Iraq. One hopes that her example described in these books will encourage others to follow her path; the world is as ever in need of more Gertrude Bells.