

# Anecdotes on Dr Movius' Paper: Champion de Crespigny and Reiss/Avigad

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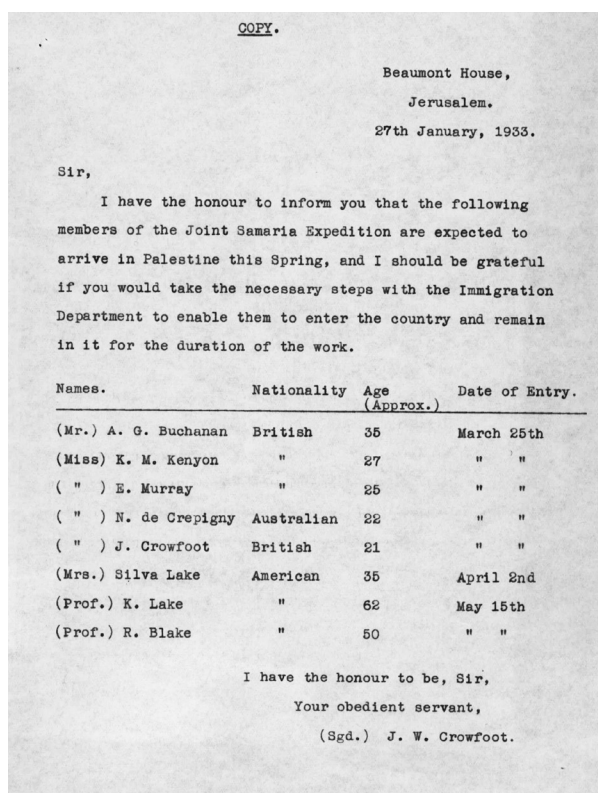
**Abstract:** This note supplements Geoffrey Movius' paper about Nancy Champion de Crespigny Movius that appeared in the previous issue of *Buried History*. Some anecdotes are presented, especially as they relate to her participation in the excavations at Samaria in 1933. It is suggested that the person tentatively identified as Eliezer Sukenik in the staff photograph is in fact Nahman Reiss, later to become Nahman Avigad. Reiss's role in the excavations at Samaria is finally commented upon.

The paper about Nancy Champion de Crespigny in the last issue of *Buried History* (Movius 2013) revealed her fascinating career in archaeology, first on her own and later working with her husband Hallam Movius on his various projects, including Abri Pataud at Les Eyzies (Dordogne).

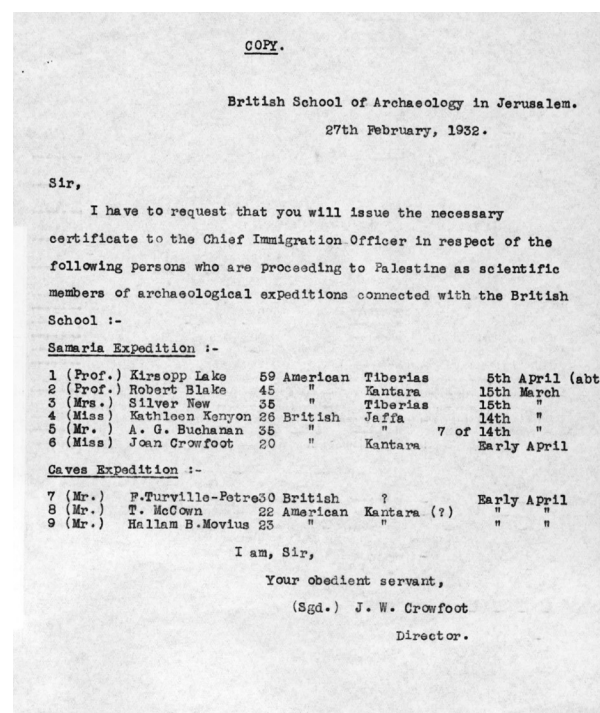
We wish to provide a few anecdotes of information regarding the Samaria expedition. First, one finds her name

(misspelled de Crespigny) on a list of the 1933 Samaria staff members in the archives of the Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA) (Figure 1). By coincidence, one finds Hallam Movius's name on a similar list from 1932, not because of his connection to Samaria but rather to his participation in Dorothy Garrod's excavations in the Mount Carmel caves (Figure 2).

Second, in her biography of Kenyon, Davis describes how Nancy Champion de Crespigny contributed to the social life of the Samaria excavation team by playing jazz records on her gramophone (2008: 59).



**Figure 1:** Letter from John Crowfoot seeking immigration permission for the 1933 Samaria team. Photo: courtesy of IAA ([http://www.iaa-archives.org.il/zoom/zoom.aspx?id=40436&folder\\_id=3368&type\\_id=5&loc\\_id=22](http://www.iaa-archives.org.il/zoom/zoom.aspx?id=40436&folder_id=3368&type_id=5&loc_id=22)).



**Figure 2:** Letter from John Crowfoot seeking immigration permission for the British School's 1932 scholars. Photo: Courtesy of IAA ([http://www.iaa-archives.org.il/zoom/zoom.aspx?folder\\_id=3367&type\\_id=5,20,6,7,8&id=40381](http://www.iaa-archives.org.il/zoom/zoom.aspx?folder_id=3367&type_id=5,20,6,7,8&id=40381))

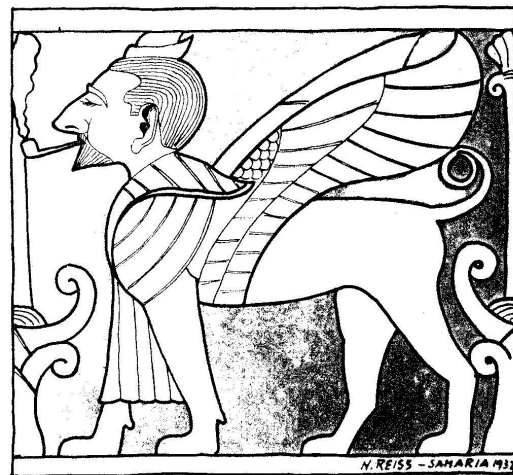
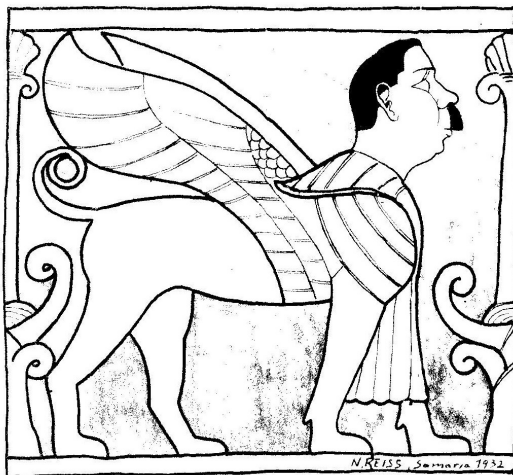


**Figure 3:** 1932 Samaria Expedition staff photograph. Back row l to r: Silvia New (later Silvia Lake), Jacob Pinkerfeld, ?, John Crowfoot, Eliezer Sukenik, Archibald Gray Buchanan, Nahman Reiss. Seated in middle: Grace (Molly) Crowfoot, ?. Front row l to r: Kathleen Kenyon, Robert Blake, Joan Crowfoot, Muriel Bentwich (?), ?, ?. Photo: courtesy Norma Franklin.

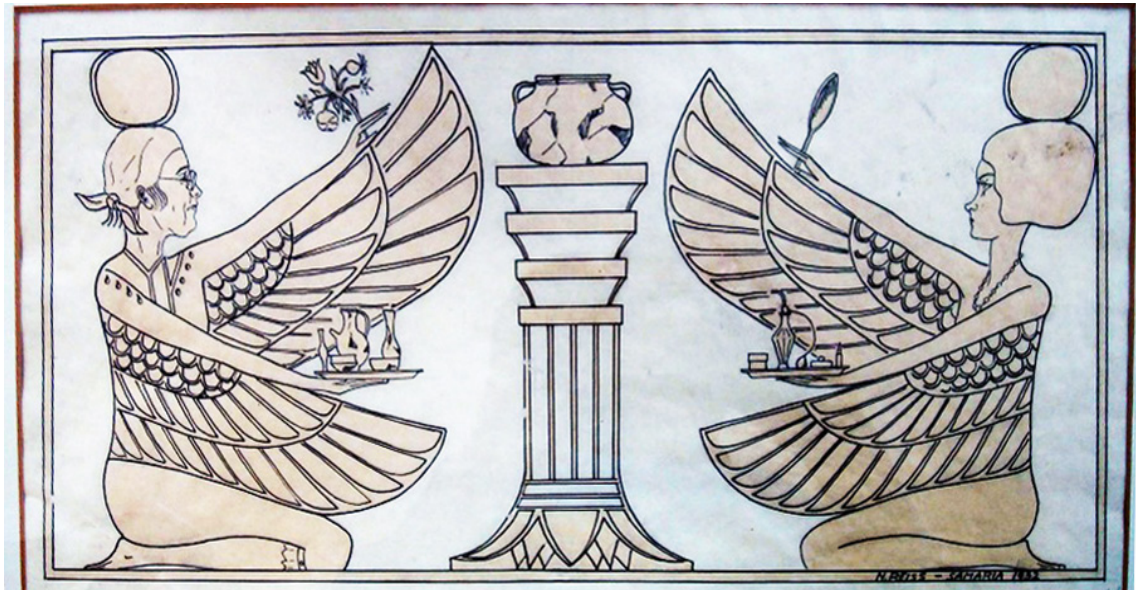
Finally, in the 1933 Samaria Expedition staff photograph (Movius 2013: fig 2), the person in the front row, far right is tentatively identified as ‘E. Sukenik’, qualified by a question mark. We believe that this person is actually Nahman Reiss, later to take the name of Nahman Avigad. The matter can be decided with reference to the 1932 Samaria team photograph (Figure 3) where the person in the back row, third from right is Eliezer Sukenik, who clearly does not appear in the 1933 photograph, but Reiss, who is standing on the far right, does appear to be the person in the front row of the 1933 team photograph. One can see an additional photograph of Reiss from slightly

later (1936) at Tel Jerishe (Geva 1982: Fig. 3, left) and, with Sukenik and other luminaries, in an undated photograph apparently taken on Mt. Scopus, Jerusalem (<http://members.bibarch.org/image.asp?PubID=BSBA&Volume=10&Issue=05&ImageID=02500&SourcePage=publication.asp&UserID=0&>). [ed: see also Figure 1 p4 above]

Reiss was born in Galicia (now Ukraine), studied architecture in Brno (Czech Republic) and later came to Palestine in 1925 or 1926. Immediately after his arrival he became the chief assistant of Eliezer Sukenik, Professor of Archaeology at Hebrew University. Reiss was responsible for many of the architectural plans and



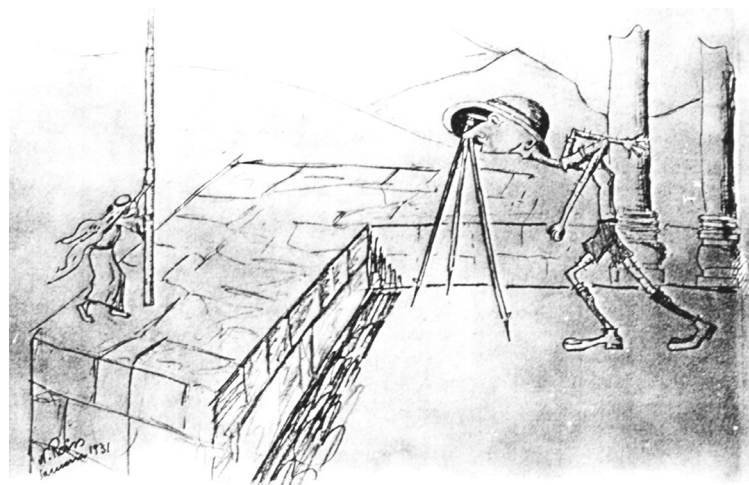
**Figure 4:** A cartoon drawn by Nahman Reiss, based on Samaria ivories, Jacob Pinkerfeld is depicted on the left and Archibald Buchanan on the right. Photo: courtesy Norma Franklin.



**Figure 5:** A cartoon drawn by Nahman Reiss, depicting Grace (Molly) and Joan Crowfoot.  
Photo: courtesy Norma Franklin.

drawings for Sukenik's excavations at this time. His first experience with Sukenik might have been the excavation of a tomb in the Greek Colony, Jerusalem, which took place in the summer of 1926; here he 'rendered assistance by taking the measurements and preparing the drawings' (Sukenik 1928: 113). In 1927, Reiss participated in Sukenik's excavation at Tel Jerishe (Geva 1982:1) and also assisted Sukenik in a survey of tombs in the Kidron Valley, Jerusalem; this included the excavation of a tomb on the Mount of Olives, published in 1928 (Sukenik 1928: 2). In 1928-1929, Reiss assisted Sukenik in his excavation of the famous Nicanor tomb in Jerusalem (Avigad 1967: 124, n. 2). In 1929, Reiss also participated in the excavation of the synagogue at Beit Alpha, where it was stated that 'Mr. N. Reiss, draughtsman of the Department of Archaeology in the Hebrew University, is responsible for most of the illustrations included in the volume, as well as for the originals of the coloured plates' (Sukenik 1932: 4; cf. also *ibid.*, p. 6).

The excavation at Samaria was a joint expedition comprised of Harvard University, the British School of Archaeology in Jerusalem, Hebrew University, the Palestine Exploration Fund, and the British Academy (Crowfoot and Crowfoot 1938: xv). While John Crowfoot's name appeared on the excavation licenses from 1931 to 1935, Sukenik's name was also included on the 1933 license. Sukenik brought his Hebrew University team with him to Samaria; this team included Reiss and Jacob Pinkerfeld. Reiss is listed amongst staff members as a draughtsman in 1931, 1932 and 1933 (Crowfoot, Kenyon and Sukenik 1942: xvi). In Volume 2 of *Samaria-Sebaste* he is credited with the drawings of the famous ivories (Crowfoot and Crowfoot 1938: xii). While the British staff may have treated Sukenik with disdain (Silberman 1996: 49-50), there is no indication that Reiss was treated in the same way. On the contrary, in addition to his duties as draughtsman at Samaria we learn that Reiss was Kenyon's tennis partner (Davis 2008: 202-203)!



**Figure 6:** A cartoon drawn by Nahman Reiss, probably depicting either Rev. Ninian Wright or Archibald Buchanan, who apparently had issues operating a dumpy level while wearing a pith helmet. Photo: courtesy Norma Franklin.

Shortly after his participation in the 1933 season at Samaria, and perhaps still in 1933, Reiss changed his name to Avigad (Avigad 1968: 52). This may have given rise to some confusion in Nancy Champion de Crespigny's mind and may explain why his name was omitted from the reverse of her photograph of the 1933 Samaria team. All of Avigad's many publications appeared after this name change.

Avigad continued to assist Sukenik until the latter's death in 1953 and it was only after this that Avigad's name started to appear on excavation licenses, such as Beth Shearim.

Avigad's contributions to the Samaria excavations are especially seen in the exquisite drawings of the ivory objects published in *Samaria-Sebaste 2* (1938). Less well-known was his artistic flair and sense of humour, both of which are evident in a collection of cartoons he created in pencil (Figures 4–6).

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