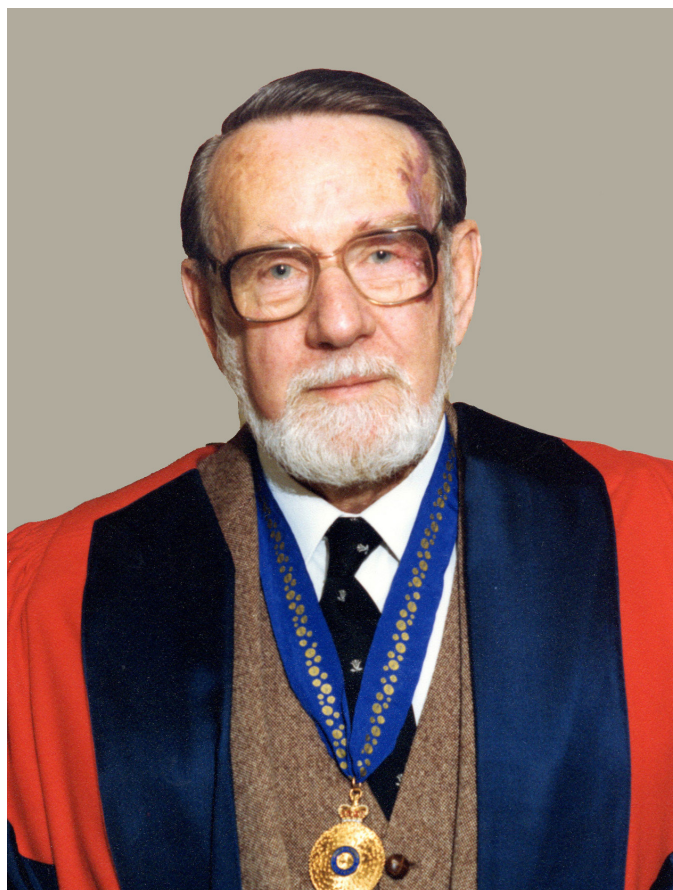


A Tribute:



John Basil Hennessy AO,

BA Sydney, DPhil Oxon, DLitt honoris causa, FSA, FAHA.

On the 27 October 2013, our father, Basil Hennessy passed away in his sleep. He was aged 88. He was a passionate and dedicated archaeologist and teacher, a modest, kind and gentle man whose life, while not always easy, was as he said himself, ‘charmed’.

Basil had written down some of his early experiences before he retired but it has only been in the last ten years that he has, albeit intermittently, put his memoirs together and it has been my sister Sarah’s and my privilege to have helped him in this task. Not being an archaeologist myself, I was worried that I may not ask the right questions to elicit information about various excavations or events. This, I soon realised, was not something to be concerned about; Basil’s recollections are the memories he wished to share.

When I was asked what his reminiscences were about, I found myself answering: ‘mainly about other people’. Having made lists from the first draft, I found that the people mentioned numbered nearly 300. Basil made friends easily, being open and honest in all his intentions, which was conveyed naturally through his demeanour. He valued friendships highly, taking people on face value and at their word. He was deeply offended if his integrity was questioned and hurt when his trust in others was found to be misplaced.

The checking of dates, places and names is necessary for biographical work, and to date I have had to make only a few minor corrections. Dad clearly had an excellent memory. Whether the ability to recall names, places and dates so readily was inherited or a product of the type of schooling in the 20s, 30s and 40s, I will never know but such a capacity must have helped him in his pursuit of understanding the often complex and elusive workings of ancient human societies.

This tribute has been compiled mainly from these biographical notes and the memories of my brother David, sister, Sarah, and myself. What appears below are some of his experiences and my impression of what some of those experiences meant to him.

Basil was born in Horsham, Victoria, on the 10 February, 1925 to Thomas and Nell (née Poultney) Hennessy. Both Tom and Nell were teachers, which no doubt fostered his love for knowledge and books; he attributed his passion for archaeology to some of the books he was given as a child. He remembered his mother with affection and as ‘one of God’s better creations’ and his father as a strong disciplinarian who also encouraged his enjoyment of sport. I think Tom was a complicated person, having disagreements with his father, John Joseph Hennessy about several matters not the least of which was the First

World War. Tom was a loyal and courageous soldier regardless of his opinions about the futility and stupidity of war and he suffered terrible wounds at the battle Mont St. Quentin in France, the legacy of which saw him die just before Basil's 10th birthday in 1935. Basil remembers that Tom, with a handful of other men, never stood when God save the King was played on any occasion, unless they were already on their feet.

Basil's father had postings to various schools in western Victoria and when he was old enough, Basil attended those schools. While I think Tom could be a tough person, he was sensitive enough to be aware of the difficulties faced by a child whose father was the headmaster and also aware of the teasing that Basil may have received about the birthmark on his forehead; it seems that Tom always assigned the head girl of each school as Basil's protector.

After Tom's death on Australia Day 1935, his mother Nell went back to work, not wishing to accept either the help or the restrictions offered by her father-in-law. At first Basil and his younger brother Loy were sent to boarding school at Villa Maria, they then went as day students to Saint Patrick's College, Ballarat. Basil seems to have enjoyed school, not finding any particular subject too onerous and especially enjoying sporting activities. At Villa Maria students were taught boxing by a priest and football and cricket by the nuns. At Saint Patrick's Basil found he had a talent for shot put, hammer throwing and football, becoming a school champion in 1940 and 1941.

With widespread family and friends throughout western Victoria (including one place called Pella) and south eastern South Australia, Basil and his brother Loy enjoyed numerous visits to their relatives' farms, especially during the school holidays after their father's death. There they could enjoy a certain amount of freedom and such adventures as could be found by children on large farms. Basil loved animals and they adored him; their presence is often included in his recollections, the photographs he took and the postcards he sent, and he was always sensitive to the less than kind treatment they often suffer. Certainly, wherever we lived, we had pets of varying descriptions and more often than not they simply found us.

After an extra year studying physics and chemistry, he left school in 1941 and applied to join the Royal Australian Navy, but at 16 he was too young and had to wait until 1942 when he turned 17. Having done the extra year at school Basil was trained as a radio and radar technician. He said he never knew why he chose the navy for his wartime service as he was constantly sea sick. I suspect that he was influenced against the army by the sight of the effects that trench warfare had inflicted on his father. The experience of visiting him in hospital as he wasted away from the after effects of mustard gas poisoning deeply shocked Basil. Being useless on board ship he requested a posting to New Guinea. After Port Moresby, he was posted to a station near Darwin in 1945/46 and was finally demobilised in January 1947. During his time in

the Navy, Basil still held onto the notion of being able to study archaeology and, whilst in New Guinea, he wrote to Vere Gordon Childe asking his advice. Childe wrote encouraging him to study first in Australia then to further his studies in England.

As soon as the opportunity presented itself Basil enrolled at the University of Sydney in 1947. In 1948 the Department of Archaeology came into being under the auspices of Dale Trendall and James Stewart and Basil became one of their first undergraduate students. I think he revelled in this time, enjoying at last an opportunity to pursue his dream and keep up his love of athletics and football. He was also appointed as a student demonstrator at the Nicholson Museum where he met Ruth Shannon, also an undergraduate student. They would later marry in March 1954.

With the encouragement of both Trendall and Stewart, Basil applied for and was granted the inaugural scholarship to the newly created British Institute of Archaeology in Ankara (BIAA), Turkey. He didn't wait for the graduation ceremony but left Australia in December 1950 to take up the scholarship. He sailed on the P&O liner *SS Orontes*, bound for Port Said (Egypt), via Colombo (Sri Lanka), Bombay (Mumbai, India) and Aden (Yemen). On board he met G.R.H. (Mick) Wright who at the time had just left a job in Fiji with the Colonial Sugar Refining Company to take up a teaching position in England. After hearing of Basil's plans he decided that archaeology was a better tack to take and he and Basil became firm life-long friends.

Basil loved Sri Lanka, was dismayed at the hardships suffered by people in India but enjoyed the short stop-over in Yemen. He managed to get to Port Said without any recurrence of the dreaded sea sickness but was bed ridden on the ship to Cyprus. This was amply made up for by the warm welcome in Nicosia by Peter Megaw, the then Director of Antiquities in Cyprus, Porphyrios Dikaos, the Curator of the Cyprus Museum and by the staff of the museum. The significance of the opportunity presented by the scholarship was not lost on Basil and he made



Figure 1: Sultan Tepe 1951: Basil's trench. Photo: courtesy the author from the archives of Basil Hennessy

good use of his time, taking every chance to visit sites and review collections. He was joined by Dale Trendall in late February 1951 and they undertook a three week tour of the Near East, through Lebanon, Palestine, Jordan and Syria ending the journey at the BIAA in Ankara, where Basil was to take up his studentship. The director, Seton Lloyd, helped Basil settle in, introducing him to such notable archaeologists as Hamid Koşay, Tahsin Özgüç, and Sedat Alp.

Again Basil made the most of the opportunities on offer, reviewing the collections at the museums at Alaça Hüyük, Boğazköy, Antioch and Adana and visiting Rodney Young's excavation at Gordion. He then joined Seton and Hydie Lloyd to excavate at Asagiyah Yarımja, near Harran. Also present were Austrian-born art historian David Storm Rice, from the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, who was excavating at the mosque at Harran, and Assyriologist Donald Wiseman from the department of Egyptian and Assyrian Antiquities at the British Museum. The site proved limited and Seton Lloyd moved the team to Sultan Tepe where Basil was given the task of opening up a step trench down the side of a large mound. He admits he felt daunted by the task, but being willing to give anything a go, especially anything in archaeology, he simply got on with the job. He was rewarded with the discovery of a library of clay cuneiform tablets, the likes of which he never managed to uncover again. It was always a special hope that he may find a similar library at his last excavation site, Pella.

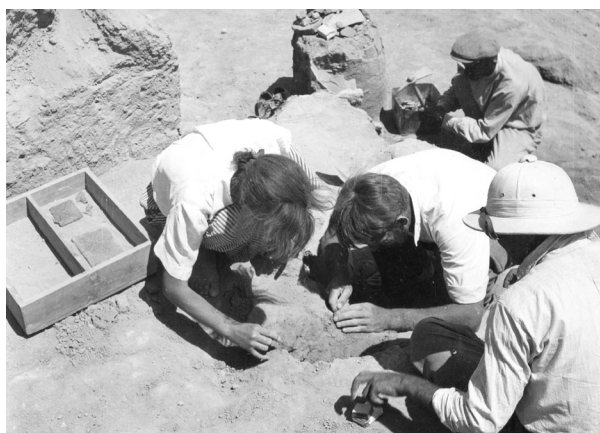


Figure 2: Sultan Tepe 1951: Hydie Lloyd assisting Basil excavate tablets. Photo: courtesy the author from the archives of Basil Hennessy

Basil returned to Cyprus firstly to work with Terence Mitford and Harry Iliffe at their excavation at Kouklia and then to join Joan du Plat Taylor and Veronica Seton-Williams' at Myrtou *Pigadhes*. Other members of the *Pigadhes* team included, John Waechter, Margaret Munn-Rankin, Linda Melton, Hector Catling, Lord William (Billy) Taylour and James Mellaart, the second recipient of the BIAA scholarship.

Here for the first time Basil directed his own excavation at the nearby cemetery site of Stephania. He was joined by his good friend Mick Wright and Tryphon Koulermos,



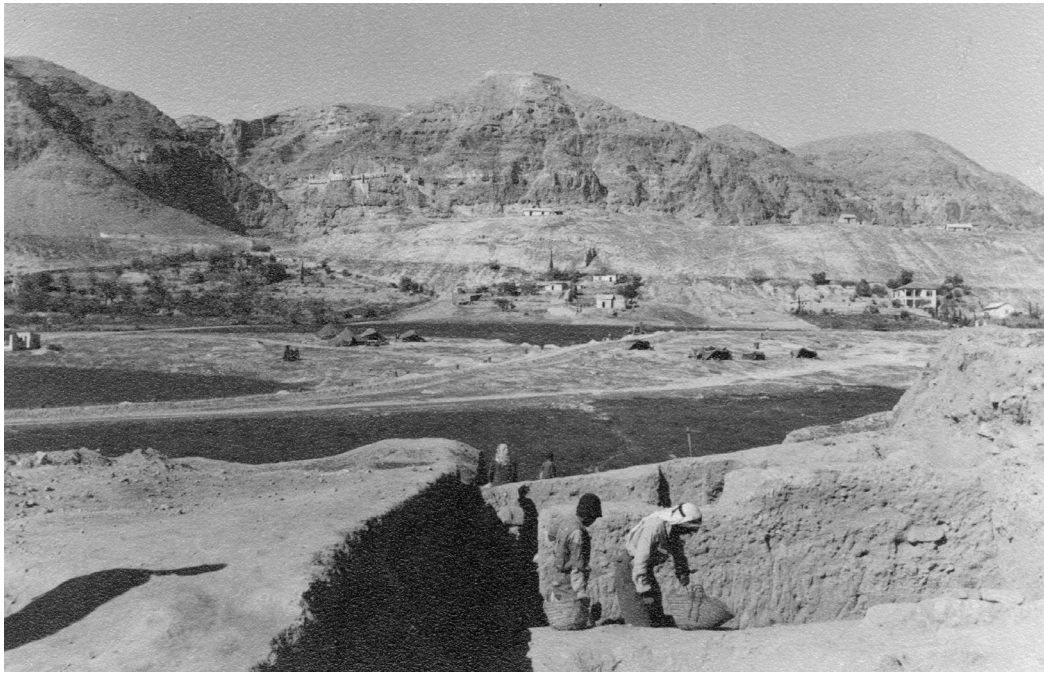
Figure 3: Stephania Tomb 10, Cyprus 1951: Basil assisted by Mick Wright, standing on the left, Lord William (Billy) Taylour and Tryphon Koulermos sitting back to the camera. Photo: courtesy the author from the archives of Basil Hennessy

who had been the foreman at Stewart's pre-War excavation at Vounous, and helped by Linda Melton when she had some time to spare. Weekends were often spent in surveys to other sites, especially with Hector Catling in an old Chrysler truck, which had a propensity for breaking down. Basil became enamoured by the landscape and the friendliness of the people of Cyprus.

In October Basil travelled back to a chilly and snowy Turkey to finish the museum surveys and returned to the BIAA in mid-November. Seton and Hydie Lloyd were due to return to England for the winter, so Basil and the senior scholar at the Institute, John Evans, found alternative accommodation until they were able to travel to Cyprus to spend Christmas with Hector and Elizabeth Catling. From there he journeyed to Jerusalem to join Kathleen Kenyon's 1952 season at Jericho.



Figure 4: Jericho January 1952: Basil with Sadik Abdullah uncovering an Early Bronze Age skeleton. Photo: courtesy the author from the archives of Basil Hennessy



*Figure 5: Jericho January 1952: Basil's trench 1A. His work in this trench established that the walls previously dated by Professor John Garstang to the Late Bronze Age were in fact from the Early Bronze Age.
Photo: courtesy the author from the archives of Basil Hennessy*

Jericho was an exciting site previously excavated by German and British teams, and was known to have Neolithic occupation levels. With Kenyon's direction, a large team and numerous trenches, it was always going to be a decisive and well controlled excavation. Basil, like most students, was in awe of Kathleen Kenyon. She was already a significant archaeologist who expected commitment and diligence from the team members but was also a great teacher, who encouraged those who met her high standards. The team included Doug Tushingham (assistant director), Diana Kirkbride, John Reid, Gus Van Beek, Peter Pedrette, Willard Hamrick, Geraldine Talbot, Mick Wright, Cecil Western, Nancy Lord, James Mel-laart, Dorothy Marshall, Father Robert North, Theodora Newbould and Neville Chittick to name a few.

Kathleen had arranged for Basil to join Max Mallowan's excavation at Nimrud after Jericho, but Jim Stewart objected to the proposal and demanded Basil return to Australia to take up a grant he had arranged. Kathleen would not have a bar of this, telling Basil he was to go to England to broaden his archaeological horizons, which he did. He was well looked after by the friends he had made on his recent travels, in particular Geraldine Talbot and her family, who lived in Chelsea with a persistent ghost, Veronica Seton-Williams who introduced him to the who's who of archaeology in England and Theodora Newbould, who taught him how to cook a proper curry. Basil also became good friends with Kathleen, fondly remembering visits to her home and the wonderful strawberries she grew which were a favourite of her father Sir Frederick Kenyon. Dad was humbled by the encouragement and support she gave him over the ensuing years. While she

was a formidable character to some, she was always kind to the Hennessy family.

I get the impression that all the excavations that Basil joined were friendly, happy affairs that encouraged scholarly discussion and a truly co-operative atmosphere. This is something I feel Basil did his best to foster on his own excavations and throughout his career, always being responsive to suggestions from colleagues and other institutions for collaborative efforts, even if he could not be directly involved.

The BIAA studentship was a very busy time and not always plain sailing with Basil running out of funds very quickly and having to take a loan from an aunt to get him through. Added to that, he came down with a persistent lung infection and he always had to be on the lookout (under constant instructions from Jim Stewart) for particular coins, books and pottery that could be purchased to enhance the collections in Sydney.

On returning to Australia Basil spent much of his time working at Jim Stewart's home, Mt Pleasant in Bathurst, where part of the house had been set up as an archaeological research centre. In 1954 he and Ruth Shannon were married at Mt Pleasant and he was also appointed to a junior lectureship in archaeology at the University of Sydney. In 1956 the funding for the position was not available, so he started a degree in law, thinking that he had no future in archaeology. However, by 1958, funds were once again available and he resumed lecturing at the University, two of his students being Kay Wright (Prag), and Robert Merrillees, who Basil felt deserved better



Figure 6: Basil in England 1962.
Photo: courtesy of David Hennessy

treatment and more respect for his scholarship than Jim Stewart was prepared to give.

During this time he had prepared the material from *Stephania* for publication and wanted to do further study, but Stewart actively discouraged both. Stewart's declining health, growing instability and increasing demands on Basil's time were making matters untenable. In 1961, Basil was offered and encouraged by colleagues to accept a place at Magdalen College, Oxford, for doctoral research under the supervision of Kathleen Kenyon. With support from Ruth it was decided that we would go to England.

I think it was a difficult decision for Dad as Jim Stewart had been a great mentor and supporter. On the one hand Stewart could be incredibly generous but with the other he could be deliberately obstructive. At the same time as he was writing letters of introduction for Basil to take overseas on his studentship travels, he was also writing letters to others, such as Veronica Seton-Williams, advising them not to have anything to do with Basil. While he secured funding for Basil's first dig at *Stephania*, he let Basil believe that some of the funds, which had actually come from the Australian Institute for Archaeology in Melbourne, were from his own pocket and that Basil was obliged to him. But it was the fact that Basil found it impossible to get his excavation results published and could not see any way to further his study in Australia that tipped the balance in favour of going to England. It was hard for Dad to accept that such a great friendship could turn so sour. We were in transit when he received the sad news that Jim Stewart had passed away.

We arrived in England in early 1962. If life had seemed a little slow over the past few years as far as his career

was concerned, then the next two years must have been like a whirlwind for Basil. Between 1962 and 1964 he managed to complete his doctorate, began publishing and undertook further archaeological exploration. The Colt Archaeological Institute published his dissertation, *The Foreign Relations of Palestine during the Early Bronze Age* (London: Quartich, 1967), as well as the Cypriot excavation report, *Stephania, A Middle and Late Bronze Age Cemetery in Cyprus* (London: Quaritch, 1964). Basil also took a trip to Cape Gelidonya, on the southern coast of Turkey, to study the pottery of the excavation conducted by George F. Bass of a Bronze Age shipwreck, resulting in a collaborative chapter with Joan du Plat Taylor in G.F. Bass *et al.*, *Cape Gelidonya: A Bronze Age Shipwreck*, (TAPA new ser., 57, Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1967). Another excursion to Jerusalem was also undertaken to drive and deliver the new Land Rover for the British School of Archaeology, accompanied by Cecil Western, a paleo-botanist who had been at Jericho and was continuing to work with Kenyon on the Jerusalem excavations. On his return, Basil was offered the post of Assistant Director at the British School of Archaeology in Jerusalem (BSAJ). He was overjoyed and accepted the position eagerly; all of us then set-off to drive across the continent in our Ford Zephyr in November 1964.

We were greeted and helped by arrangements made for us by Crystal Bennett, an experienced and respected British archaeologist who had worked with Kenyon at Jericho and Jerusalem, Peter Parr at Petra and conducted her own excavations at Umm al-Biyara. She had been appointed Secretary-Librarian to the BSAJ in 1963 and later became the director of the School in 1970.

Although I was young, my memory of the BSAJ at that time is that it was a happy and very busy place with many of the great and soon to be great scholars of Levantine archaeology passing through its doors. Kathleen Kenyon continued her work in Jerusalem, as did Peter Parr at Petra. Ian Blake's work took him to the north-western



Figure 7: Teleilat Ghassul 1967.
Photo: courtesy the author from the archives of Basil Hennessy

shores of the Dead Sea where he studied the hydrology of the Jordan Valley, Mick Wright was working at Petra and Shechem, Diana Kirkbride directed the excavations at Beidha near Petra, and Kay Wright (Prag) conducted a widespread survey of Bronze Age sites, excavated Tell Iktanu and joined Basil at his dig at the Amman Airport Temple (1966). 1965 also saw the arrival of another Australian, Anthony McNicoll, who became a close friend of ours, excavating with Kay Prag at Tell Iktanu, and with Basil at the Damascus Gate in the Old City area of Jerusalem (1964-66) and at Teleilat Ghassul (1967). The irrepressible Svend Helms (Teleilat Ghassul 1967) also arrived, charming everyone except Kenyon, who could not tolerate his high jinx and tendency to be late for everything. There was a great camaraderie and co-operation among the different schools and associations based in the Middle East, especially with the École Biblique, whose renowned scholars were to be found assisting with research and on excavations throughout Jordan, and with the families associated with the American Colony in Jerusalem. Basil also fondly remembered the dedicated staff at the School who always coped admirably with the constant influx of scholars, visitors and the various functions which were the duty of the school to host.

By 1967 instability in the region was growing, with sporadic fighting breaking out throughout the area and Jerusalem was becoming an increasingly dangerous place to be. Basil's problems were added to when the owner of the British School premises advised that a large portion of the grounds were to be sold for the building of a shopping centre. New premises for the school had to be found and another tenant was needed for the current premises. Having appraised the London-based Council for the BSAJ of the situation, Basil waited in vain for a reply. With the political situation deteriorating further, we were evacuated to Cyprus with students from the school in May, Basil staying in Jerusalem to look after the interests of BSAJ. With a lull in hostilities and on positive advice from friends in the United Nations, the Mixed Armistice Commission and the U.S. Marines and with no word from London, Basil decided to make a quick visit to London, via Cyprus to see us, to sort out the arrangements for the new premises. Within 24 hours of leaving, the Six Day War started. When Basil got to London less than 48 hours later, Sir Mortimer (Rik) Wheeler, chairman of the Council of the BSAJ roundly accused him of cowardice for leaving Jerusalem. Basil was generally a calm and gentle person but could have an explosive temper when his integrity was questioned, so a heated argument ensued. When they both calmed down, Wheeler helped Basil to immediately return to Jerusalem. The injustice of the accusation always irritated Basil but he and Wheeler later became firm friends with Wheeler showing support for Basil's endeavours in their subsequent correspondence.

Things were not easy back in Jerusalem; no shops were open and there were few supplies to be had. Two staff members, Daoud and Rabbayah, took a great risk to get some food to Basil and an American post graduate student,

Anson Rainey, came to his rescue with enough supplies to keep him going until the shops re-opened. The next few weeks were spent sorting out the mess someone had made throughout the school in the few days he had been away and trying to locate both the finds from the excavation at Teleilat Ghassul and our car, which had been stolen.

Life started to return to normal sooner than may be expected and people trickled back into Jerusalem. The first visitor to the school was Dr Richard Cleave, a naval surgeon turned professional photographer, embarking on his photographic survey of the Middle East. Cleave took over the lease on the old school for his base and helped Basil set up the new premises on Sheikh Jarrah. Colonel Murray Stanaway and Major Roy Skinner of the Mixed Armistice Commission then helped Basil get to and from Amman in his attempt to track down the Teleilat Ghassul finds; they were eventually found safely stored in Jerusalem. The car was not so fortunate.

Despite the tensions in the Middle East, the Council of the BSAJ was keen to start excavating again and nominated the site of Samaria for the next project, ignoring the international conventions against excavating in disputed territories. Basil was not happy with the directive but managed to secure approval from both Avram Biran, the director of the Department of Antiquities in Israel and from the Arab League. Putting a team together was another problem, but with help from people like the School's new secretary, Elizabeth Fane, her friend, Caroline Stevens and a student, Archie Walls, and local staff from previous excavations, a dig on the north-west slopes of the citadel at Samaria was begun in early 1968. The excavation did not last long due to the political difficulties, but long enough for some satisfactory results.

Basil's relationship with the BSAJ Council was uneasy after his argument with Wheeler and the controversy about the excavation at Samaria only compounded matters. Although the BSAJ was flourishing again, at the end of 1969 Basil and Ruth decided it was time to return to Australia. We arrived in Sydney in April/May 1970.

The Edwin Cuthbert Hall Chair in Middle Eastern Archaeology at the University of Sydney had been in abeyance since Jim Stewart's death in early 1962. The chair was reinstated in 1970 as a visiting professorship and Basil successfully applied for it. In 1972 the Edwin Cuthbert Hall Chair was made permanent and Basil was appointed to the chair in 1973, retaining the position until his retirement in 1990.

Basil was keen to set up an Australian foundation for Near Eastern Archaeology to promote research in the Near East and Cyprus and to assist Australian students to work overseas. I think that this was driven by his own experience of the scholarship he had received in the 1950s, which was invaluable to his endeavours. His initial appointment was not permanent so it was difficult to find a base for such a structure in Sydney, however, the University of New England in Armidale offered a home

for the fledgling foundation. It was eventually moved to Sydney University for practical purposes but Basil has always appreciated the support of the University of New England and maintained a connection there, being honoured by the establishment of a visiting lectureship in his name. There was also hope for an Australian School of Archaeology overseas. Eve Stewart (Jim Stewart's widow) suggested that if sufficient funds could be found to support such a school then she would donate her house in northern Cyprus as the school's premises. Unfortunately the invasion of Cyprus by Turkey terminated that particular avenue and instead efforts were concentrated on consolidating the Near Eastern Archaeological Foundation (NEAF) at Sydney University, a legacy well maintained by a dedicated core of experienced people.

Instability in the region delayed a return to Jordan for excavation until 1975. The final excavation seasons at Teleilat Ghassul took place from 1975 to 1977, with the two seasons in 1977, seeing the discovery and reclamation of a wonderful Chalcolithic wall painting, which is now in the Amman Archaeological Museum. Basil said that from the start Teleilat Ghassul was never an easy site, with a complicated geological/hydrological history, difficult weather conditions and finally its very own mine field.

In 1976 Anthony McNicoll took up a lectureship in Near Eastern Archaeology at the University of Sydney, beginning one of the happiest collaborative periods in Basil's career. He and Tony were great friends and they had always worked well together, at Teleilat Ghassul and then at the new site of Tabaqat Fahl (Pella), situated in the foothills of the north Jordan Valley.

The first season at Pella in 1979 was a joint Sydney University and Wooster College, Ohio, expedition. Pella was a dream, come true for Basil. I remember an occasion at the university when Basil and Tony were enthusiastically discussing the site after their initial survey; there were photographs of what was to me a surprisingly green valley with some interesting looking mounds. To the trained eyes of Basil and Tony however, there lay an impressive and important ancient Decapolis whose layers and areas of occupation could be anticipated as if they had x-ray vision, their understanding of archaeological landscapes was formidable, honed by experience and their knowledge of the sciences encompassed by archaeology. Tragically Tony died in December 1985, Basil losing a very close friend and valued colleague.

Pella is a rich and important site with a long occupation from the Lower Palaeolithic providing the perfect training ground for students covering all periods in Jordan. The good will of the Jordanian Department of Antiquities, and the great friendship and good will of His Royal Highness Prince El Hassan Bin Talal and the Royal Family, have helped to put the University of Sydney's excavations in Jordan on a very special plane.



Figure 8: Kathleen Kenyon and Basil outside the BSAJ Sheikh Jarrah with the school Land Rover late 1960s.

Photo: courtesy of David Hennessy

Basil was at his happiest when he was on a dig, whether it was one of his own or when he had the privilege of being a guest at someone else's site. He paid little heed to the often primitive conditions that need to be endured by archaeologists, enjoying the freedom from the formality and pressures of everyday life. He once equated his feelings for digging to those of opening Christmas presents. It was exciting, you never knew what was there until you opened it up and the result was always rewarding. He was often away on his birthday as the digging season was usually January through February, but he has fond memories of the teams he was with always making a special effort for his birthday, with hand-made birthday cards large enough for everyone to sign and the birthday cakes a highlight. Dad had a sweet tooth.

For Basil, the most important aspect of being a University professor was his students. There was, to him, no point in holding such a position if your main aim was other than passing on your knowledge and helping your students further their interests, an attitude influenced perhaps by his own early experience of the generous help freely given by eminent scholars at the time. There were however many other responsibilities that went with such a position: there was fund-raising for projects, administrative duties, organising and directing excavations, research, publishing, advancing the department's relationship with other institutions, developing resources as well as finding the time for all the enquires from individuals and community groups interested in archaeology. To help with all of this, Basil was fortunate to have a secretary whose talent for organisation was second to none, Mrs Patricia Smith. She kept a tight rein on the department and Basil was always grateful for Pat's dedication. There were also the truly passionate students who were eager to help with research and publications. Basil said he was blessed to have such wonderful students: the Department of Archaeology at the University of Sydney having fostered the talents of scholars including: Ina Kehrberg-Ostrasz, Stephen Bourke,



Figure 9: Pella Team 1990. Back row, L to R: Jessica Panday, Kate da Costa, Stephen Bourke, Kevin Reilly, Margaret O’Hea, Kathryn King, Craig Barker, Stephanie Licciardo (behind), Peter Magee, Abu Issa, 2nd row: Roz Sharpe, Mohammad Aziz, Ian Edwards, Amanda Parrish, Paul Donnelly, Fiona Richards, Caroline Saunders, Alan Walmsley, 3rd row: Justine Channing, Margaret Wheeler, Erin Crumlin, Wendy Reade, Rachael Sparks, Noël Siver, Front row: Basil, Ben Churcher, Jodie Benton, Abu Sami. Photo: courtesy Rachael Sparks.

Phillip Edwards, John Tidmarsh, Maree Browne, Lisa Giddy, Kathryn Eriksson, Peta Seaton, Timothy Potts, Alan Walmsley, Jaimie Lovell, Pamela Watson, Kate da Costa, Karen Hendrix and Rachael Sparks to name just a few who have gone on to develop careers in archaeology and related fields both in Australia and overseas and some who have, much to Basil’s relief and gratitude, have been able to take over the work at Pella and the publication of the results from Teleilat Ghassul.

Although Basil’s main passion was archaeology, he had many other interests. He liked making things, though much of this talent was restricted to building (and mending) fences and stables for his daughters’ horses and household renovations. He enjoyed collecting stamps and ceramics, watching the AFL on television and puzzling over the latest developments in physics. He was widely read, though I don’t remember him reading much, if any, fiction, except to us when we were young. He had a wonderful and silly sense of humour largely influenced by *The Goons* (Harry Secombe, Spike Milligan and Peter Sellers). Most of the stories he told focused on the humorous side of life. He was always affected deeply by sad tales and while occasionally he would tell you of some of his less than pleasant experiences, it troubled him to remember the details.

Basil loved travelling, which may of course seem obvious, but our brother David remembers that when he was with Dad, at the British School in Jerusalem, in 1969, they were listening to the broadcast about the moon landing, Basil remarking, as he was gazing up at the Moon, ‘we

have come here all the way from Australia, and I thought that was far enough, now it looks like we will have to go a little bit further’. Archaeology on the Moon was not out of the question.

The greatest difficulty for Dad was the loss of his eyesight. With it came the loss of the ability to continue any field work or research, or to even follow the research of others and keep up with developments in archaeology except for when friends and colleagues kept him in the loop with visits, phone calls and by sending articles which could be read to him. These efforts he appreciated greatly and it went some way to easing some of the frustration of not being able to continue actively in archaeological pursuits.

Basil achieved a great many successes during his lifetime, none of which he deliberately set out to achieve. His passion for his career as an archaeologist, his attention to detail and his sense of what was right and important made him successful. He treated everyone with equal respect regardless of their social standing, gender, age or background. He has been remembered as ‘a gentleman’, ‘a wonderful teacher’, ‘someone who listened to me’, as having a ‘great intellect’, being ‘modest’ and a ‘wonderful friend’. These reflections by his former students and friends would have been to Basil the greatest accolade he could receive. Basil was a great scholar, a good man and a wonderful father.

Linda Hennessy
January 2014

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