

Arthur Evans

Sir Arthur Evans	
	
Born	8 July 1851 Nash Mills, Hertfordshire
Died	11 July 1941 (aged 90) Youlbury, Oxfordshire
Nationality	United Kingdom
Fields	Archaeology, museum management, journalism, statesmanship, philanthropy
Institutions	Ashmolean Museum
Alma mater	University of Oxford
Known for	Excavations at Knossos; developing the concept of Minoan civilization
Influences	John Evans Heinrich Schliemann Edward Augustus Freeman William Gladstone
Influenced	V. Gordon Childe; all archaeologists and historians of the ancient Aegean region
Notable awards	Fellow of the Royal Society, ^[1] knighted 1911

Sir Arthur John Evans FRS^[1] (8 July 1851 – 11 July 1941) was a British archaeologist most famous for unearthing the palace of Knossos on the Greek island of Crete and for developing the concept of Minoan civilization from the structures and artifacts found there and elsewhere throughout the eastern Mediterranean. Evans was the first to define Cretan scripts Linear A and Linear B, as well as an earlier pictographic writing.

Along with Heinrich Schliemann, Evans was a pioneer in the study of Aegean civilization in the Bronze Age. The two men knew of each other. Evans visited Schliemann's sites. Schliemann had planned to excavate at Knossos, but died before fulfilling that dream. Evans bought the site and stepped in to take charge of the project, which was then still in its infancy. He continued Schliemann's concept of Mycenaean civilization but soon found that he needed to distinguish another civilization, the Minoan.^[1]

In addition to his archaeological contributions, Evans fulfilled a role in the British Empire for which there is no proper word in formal English. Although he was not a professional statesman or soldier, and was probably never a

paid agent of the government, he nevertheless negotiated or played a role in negotiating unofficially with foreign powers in the Middle East. The Ottoman Empire, and subsequently the Turkish Republic, recognized this role, according to him informally the status of an ambassador. He was, on request of the revolutionary organizations of the peoples of the Balkans, a significant player in the formation of the nation of Yugoslavia. That nation sent representatives to his funeral in 1941. This role was one outcome of the informal network of associations created by the 19th century British educational system, of which Evans was, so to speak, a charter member.

Biographical background

Family

Arthur Evans was born in Nash Mills, England, the first child of John Evans and Harriet Ann Dickinson, the daughter of John's employer, inventor and founder of Messrs John Dickinson, a paper mill. John Evans came from a family of men who were both educated and intellectually active; they were nevertheless undistinguished by either wealth or aristocratic connection. John's father, Arthur's grandfather, had been headmaster of Market Bosworth Grammar School. John knew Latin and could quote the classical authors.

In 1840, instead of going to college, John started work in the mill owned by his maternal uncle, John Dickinson. He married his cousin, Harriet, in 1850, which entitled him, in 1851, to a junior partnership in the family business.^[2] Profits from the mill would eventually help fund Arthur's excavations, restorations at Knossos, and resulting publications. For the time being they were an unpretentious and affectionate family. They moved into a brick row house built for the purpose near the mill, which came to be called the "red house" because it lacked the sooty patina of the other houses.^[3] Harriet called her husband "Jack." Grandmother Evans called Arthur "darling Trot," asserting in a note that, compared to his father, he was "a bit of a dunce."^[4] In 1856, with Harriet's declining health and Jack's growing reputation and prosperity, they moved into Harriet's childhood home, a mansion with a garden, where the children ran free.

John maintained his status as an officer in the company, which eventually became John Dickinson Stationery, but also became distinguished for his pursuits in numismatics, geology and archaeology. His interest in geology came from an assignment by the company to study the diminishing water resources in the area with a view toward protecting the company from lawsuits. The mill consumed large amounts of water, which was also needed for the canals. He became an expert and a legal consultant.^[5] However, collecting was endemic to the family; his father and grandfather both had done it. He was more interested in the stone-age artifacts he was discovering while mapping stream beds. As Arthur grew older, he was allowed to assist John in looking for artifacts and later classifying the collection.

Ultimately John became a distinguished antiquary, publishing numerous books and articles. In 1859 he conducted a geological survey of the Somme Valley with Joseph Prestwich. He was a member and officer of many learned societies, including being a Fellow of the Royal Society.^[1] He won the Lyell Medal. In 1892 was knighted by Queen Victoria. His connections and invaluable advice were indispensable to Arthur's career throughout the remainder of his long life.



The Nash paper mill

Arthur's mother, Harriet, died in 1858 when Arthur was seven. He had two brothers, Philip Norman (1854) and Lewis (1853), and two sisters, Alice (1858) and Harriet (1857). He would remain on excellent terms with all of them all of his life. He was raised by a stepmother, Fanny (Frances), née Phelps, with whom he also got along very well. She had no children of her own and also predeceased her husband. John's third wife was a classical scholar, Maria Millington Lathbury. When he was 70 they had a daughter, Joan, who would become an art historian.^[6] John died in 1908 at 85, when Arthur was 57. His close support and assistance had been indispensable in excavating and conceptualizing Minoan civilization.

Education

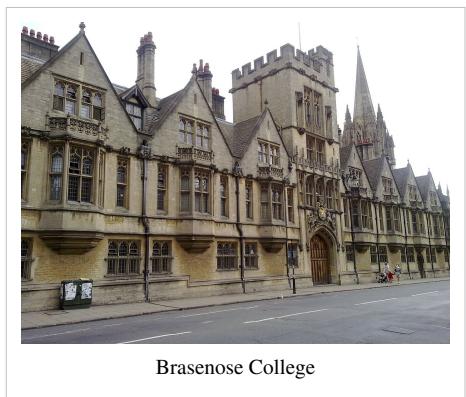
Old Harrovian

Arthur was given every advantage of education. After a childhood stay at Callipers Preparatory School (no longer extant) he entered Harrow School in 1865 at age 14, at which he did well. He was co-editor of *The Harrovian* in his final year, 1869/70.^[7] At Harrow he was friends especially with Francis Maitland Balfour.^[8] Both boys had similar interests. They competed for the Natural History Prize. The outcome was a draw. They were both highly athletic, riding, swimming and mountain-climbing, at which Balfour was killed later in life. Arthur was blue-eyed. He suffered from near-sightedness, but he refused to wear glasses. His close-up vision was better than normal, enabling him to see detail missed by others. Farther away his field of vision was blurry. He compensated by carrying a cane used to explore the environment, which he called Prodg. His wit was very sharp, too sharp for the administration, which stopped a periodical he had started, *The Pen-Viper*, after the first issue.^[9] Because of his vision, Arthur was not interested in team sports. After graduation, Evans became part of and relied on the Old Harrovian network of acquaintances. Minchin characterized him as "a philologer and wit" as well as an expert on "the eastern question", i.e. diplomatic and political problems posed by the decay of the Ottoman Empire. Arthur also continued his father's habit of quoting the appropriate Latin author from memory.



Harrow

Oxford man



Brasenose College

Between 1870 and 1874 Arthur matriculated at Brasenose College, Oxford. His housemaster at Harrow, F. Rendall, had eased the way to his acceptance with the recommendation that he was "a boy of powerful original mind." At Brasenose he chose to read modern history, a new curriculum, which was nearly a disaster, as his main interests were in archaeology and classical studies.

His summertime activities with his brothers and friends were perhaps more definitive to his subsequent career. Having been given an ample allowance by his father, he went looking for adventure on the continent, deliberately seeking out circumstances that might be

considered dangerous by some. In June, 1871, he and Lewis visited Hallstatt, where his father had excavated in 1866, adding some of the artifacts to his collection. Arthur had made himself familiar with these.

Subsequently they went on to Paris and then to Amiens. The Franco-Prussian War had just concluded the month before. Arthur had been told at the French border to remove the dark cape he was wearing so that he would not be shot for a spy.^[10] Amiens was occupied by the Prussian army. Arthur found them prosaic and preoccupied with souvenir-hunting. He and Lewis hunted for stone-age artifacts in the gravel quarries, Arthur remarking that he was

glad the Prussians were not interested in flint artifacts.^[11]

In 1872 he and Norman adventured into Ottoman territory in the Carpathians, already in a state of political tension. They crossed borders illegally at high altitudes, "revolvers at the ready." This was Arthur's first encounter with Turkish people and customs. He bought a complete set of clothes of a wealthy Turkish male, complete with red fez, baggy trousers and embroidered, short-sleeved tunic. His detailed, enthusiastic account was published in *Fraser's Magazine* for May, 1873.

In 1873 he and Balfour tramped over Lapland, Finland, and Sweden. Everywhere he went he took copious anthropological notes and made numerous drawings of the people, places and artifacts.^[12] During the Christmas holidays of 1873, Evans cataloged a coin collection being bequeathed to Harrow by John Gardner Wilkinson, the father of British Egyptology, who was too ill to work on it himself. The headmaster had suggested "my old pupil, Arthur John Evans – a remarkably able young man."^[13]

Little Evans, son of John Evans the Great

Arthur graduated from Oxford at the age of 24 in 1874, but his career had come near to foundering during the final examinations on a special topic, modern history. Despite his extensive knowledge of ancient history, classics, archaeology and what would be termed today cultural anthropology, he apparently had not even read enough in his nominal major to pass the required examination. He could answer no questions on topics later than the 12th century.^[14]

Fortunately he had convinced one of his examiners, Edward Augustus Freeman, of his talent. They were both published authors, they were both Gladstone liberals, and they were both interested in and on the side of Bosnian and Herzegovinan insurrection. Moreover, Freeman was raising four attractive and talented daughters. Freeman convinced Evans' tutors, George Kitchen and John Richard Green, and they convinced the Regius professor, William Stubbs, that, in view of his special other knowledge and interests, and his father's "high standing in learned society," Evans should not only be passed, but receive a first. It was the topic of much jesting. Green wrote to Freeman on 11 November 1875:

"I am very sorry to have missed you, dear Freeman ... Little Evans — son of John Evans the great — has just come back from the Herzegovina which he reached by way of Lapland, having started from the Schools in excitement at the 'first' I wrung for him out of the obdurate Stubbs ..."

A double entendre on Evans' height seems possible, as his five feet, two inches did not strike his observers as tall.^[15] Whether Horowitz' characterization as "insignificant in stature," which is typical of many of his more critical biographers, is to be indulged is another matter. Evans later roughed it in the mountains of Bosnia and Herzegovina for months at a time, and in late middle age hiked over the mountains of Crete, neither of which achievements imply an insignificant constitution.

Fiasco at Göttingen

Green has his events slightly confused, as Lapland was not in Arthur's itinerary for that year. In the spring of 1875 he applied for the Archaeological Travelling Studentship offered by Oxford, but, as he says in a letter to Freeman later in life,^[16] he was turned down thanks to the efforts of Benjamin Jowett and Charles Thomas Newton, two Oxford dons having a low opinion of his work there. He was bitterly disappointed. In April–July of that year he attended a summer term at the University of Göttingen at the suggestion of Henry Montagu Butler, then headmaster at Harrow. Arthur was to study with Reinhold Pauli, who had spent some years in Britain, and was a friend of Green. The study would be preparatory to doing research in modern history at Göttingen. The arrangement may have been meant as a remedial plan. On the way to Göttingen, Arthur was sidetracked, unpropitiously for the modern history plan, by some illegal excavations at Trier. He had noticed that the tombs were being plundered surreptitiously. For the sake of preserving some artifacts, he hired a crew, performed such hasty excavations as he could, crated the material and sent it home to John.^[17]

Göttingen was not to Arthur's liking. His quarters were stuffy, and the topics were of little interest to him, as he had already demonstrated. His letters speak mainly of the discrepancy between the poor peasants of the countryside and the institution of the wealthy in the town. His thinking was of a revolutionary bent. Deciding not to stay, he left there abruptly to meet Lewis for another trip to the Balkans. That decision marked the end of his formal education. Bosnia and Herzegovina were then in a full-blown state of insurrection. The Ottomans were using Bashi-bazouks to try to quell it. Despite subsequent events, there is no evidence that the young Arthur might have had ulterior motives at this time, despite the fact that Butler had helped to educate half the government of the United Kingdom. He was simply an adventurous young man bored with poring through books in a career into which he had been pushed against his real interests. The real adventure, in his mind, was the revolution in the Balkans.

Career

Agent in the Balkans

Private adventurer



After resolving to leave Göttingen, Arthur and Lewis planned an adventure in Bosnia and Herzegovina starting immediately in August 1875. They knew that the region, a part of the Ottoman Empire, was under martial law, and that the Christians (mainly the Serbs) were in a state of insurrection against the Bosnian Muslim beys placed over them. Some Ottoman troops were in the country in support of the beys, but mainly the beys were using mercenaries, the Bashi-bazouks, private armies recruited from anywhere, loosely attached to the Ottoman military. Large numbers could be assembled on short notice. Their notorious cruelty, which they practised against the natives, helped to turn the British Empire under Gladstone against the Ottoman Empire, as well as to attract Russian intervention at Serbian request, the very sequence of events that, when the region was under the

Austro-Hungarian Empire, would result in world-wide conflagration. At the time of Arthur's and Lewis's initial adventure, the Ottomans were still trying to lessen the threat of intervention by placating their neighbors. Arthur sought and obtained permission to travel in Bosnia, even though at war, from its Turkish military governor.

The two brothers experienced little difficulty with either the Serbs or the Ottomans but they did provoke the neighboring Austro-Hungarian Empire, and spent the night in "a wretched cell." After deciding to lodge in a good hotel in Slavonski Brod on the border, having judged it safer than Bosanski Brod across the Sava River, they were observed by an officer who saw their sketches and concluded they might be Russian spies. Politely invited by two other officers to join the police chief and produce passports, Arthur replied, "Tell him that we are Englishmen and are not accustomed to being treated in this way." The officers insisted and, interrupting the chief at dinner, Arthur suggested he should have come to the hotel in person to request the passports. The chief, in a somewhat less than civil manner, won the argument about whether he had the right to check the passports of Englishmen by inviting them to spend the night in a cell.^[18]

On the way to the holding cell the two young men were followed by a large crowd, whom Arthur lost no opportunity to harangue, even though they understood only German. He threatened the authorities in the name of the British fleet, which, he asserted, would sail up the Save. He demanded the mayor, offered the jailer a bribe for food and water, but went into the cell unfed and without water. Meanwhile the incident came to attention of Dr. Makanetz, leader of the National Party of the Croatian Assembly, who happened to be in Brod. The next day he complained to the mayor. Arthur and his brother were released with profuse apologies forthwith.^[19]

They crossed the Save into Bosnia, which Arthur found so different that he regarded the Save as the border between Europe and Asia. After a number of interviews with Turkish officials, who attempted to dissuade them from travel on foot, the passport from the pasha prevailed. They were given an escort – one man, enough to establish authority – as far as Dervent. From there they traveled directly south to Sarajevo and from there to Dubrovnik (Ragusa) on the coast, actually in Croatia. In Sarajevo they learned that the region through which they had just passed was now "plunged in civil war."^[20] They were escorted to the British consulate. The consul was away at Mostar, but the young men were greeted by a familiar figure, Edward Augustus Freeman, Chargé d'Affaires, and "his amiable daughters." Edward was assisting his good friend, the Prime Minister, to keep an eye on the situation. They relaxed in "the quiet of an English garden."

The English Protestants of Sarajevo, some of whom had come in a missionary capacity, were packing to leave the country, as were other "resident Europeans." Shortly the revolt reached lower Bosnia. Turkish garrisons were massacred, in response to which the irregular Turkish troops began to massacre. The Christian population streamed across the Save into Austria. The pasha of Sarajevo, however, was determined to keep the peace. The young men spent their last day there shopping quietly. Then they headed south to Ragusa, where Arthur later was to spend so many happily married years in his own villa on the sea.

Reporter for the Manchester Guardian

Home again, Arthur wrote of his experiences, working from his extensive notes and drawings, publishing *Through Bosnia and Herzegovina*, which was so popular it came out in two editions, 1876 and 1877. He became overnight an expert in Balkan affairs. The Manchester Guardian hired him as a correspondent, sending him back to the Balkans in 1877. He reported on the suppression of the Christian insurrectionists by the armed forces of the Ottoman Empire, and yet was treated by that empire as though he were an ambassador, despite his anti-Turkish sentiments. His older interests in antiquities continued. He collected portable artifacts, especially sealstones, at every opportunity, between sending back article after article to the Guardian. He also visited the Freemans in Sarajevo whenever he could. A relationship with one of the winsome daughters, Margaret, had begun to blossom. In 1878 the Russians compelled a settlement of the conflict on appeal by the Serbs. The Ottomans ceded Bosnia and Herzegovina to the Austro-Hungarian Empire as a protectorate.

In 1878 Arthur proposed to Margaret, Freeman's oldest daughter, three years his senior, an educated and literate woman, and until now secretary for her father. The offer was accepted, to everyone's great satisfaction. Freeman spoke affectionately of his future son-in-law. The couple were married near the Freeman home in Wookey, at the Parish Church. After a celebration they took up residence in a Venetian villa Arthur had purchased in Ragusa, Casa San Lazzaro, on the bluffs overlooking the Adriatic. One of their first tasks was to create a garden there. They lived happily, Arthur pursuing his journalistic career, until 1882. They were hoping to conceive, but the longed-for event never happened, even though Margaret returned to England for 6 months for an operation. They were bitterly disappointed. Ultimately Arthur's continued stance in favor of native government led to a condition of unacceptability to the local regime within the Austro-Hungarian Empire. He did not see the Austro-Hungarian regime as an improvement over the Ottoman. He wrote: "The people are treated not as a liberated but as a conquered and inferior race...."^[21] The Evans' sentiments were followed by acts of personal charity: they took in an orphan, invited a blind woman to dinner every night. Finally Arthur wrote some public letters in favor of an insurrection.

Arthur was arrested in 1882, to be put on trial as a British agent provocateur stirring up further insurrection. His journalistic sources were not acceptable friendships to the authorities. He spent six weeks in prison awaiting trial, but at the trial nothing definitive could be proved. His wife was interrogated. She found most offensive the reading of her love letters before her eyes by a hostile police agent. Arthur was expelled from the country. Gladstone had been apprised of the situation immediately, but, as far as the public knew, did nothing. The government in Vienna similarly disavowed any knowledge of or connection to the actions of the local authorities. Whatever deal may have been struck remains unknown, at least to the public. The Evans' returned home to rent a house in Oxford, abandoning their villa, which was turned into a hotel.^[22] However, Arthur's reputation among the Slavs assumed unassailable

proportions. He was invited later to play a role in the formation of the pre-Yugoslav state. In 1941 the government of Yugoslavia sent representatives to his funeral.^[23]

Keeper of the Ashmolean Museum



The Ashmolean Museum

Arthur and Margaret moved back to Oxford, renting a house there in January, 1883. This period of unemployment was the only one of his life; however, he employed himself as best he could, including recovering from his Balkan experiences and finishing up his Balkan studies. He completed his articles on Roman roads and cities there. It was suggested that he apply to a new Professorship of Classical Archaeology at Oxford. As soon as he found out that Jowett and Newton were among the electors, he decided not to apply. He wrote to Freeman to the effect that to confine archaeology to classics was an absurdity.^[16] Instead he and Margaret travelled to Greece, seeking out Heinrich Schliemann at Athens. Margaret and Sophia had a long and enjoyable visit for several hours, during which Arthur examined the Mycenaean antiquities at hand with Heinrich.^[24]

Meanwhile unknown to him events were taking a turn at Oxford that would give him a new career. The Ashmolean Museum, an adjunct of Oxford University, was in a chaotic state of transition. It had been a natural history museum, but a decision had been made that it was not to be so any longer,

and the collections had been transferred to other museums. The lower floor housed some art and archaeology, but the upper floor was being used for university functions. John Henry Parker, appointed the first keeper in 1870, inherited the disagreeable task of trying to manage through the dismantling. His efforts to negotiate with the noted and self-educated wealthy art collector, Charles Drury Edward (CDE) Fortnum, for the privilege of housing the latter's extensive art collection, were being undercut by the university administrators and were about to fail. In January, 1874, Parker died. The museum was in the hands of its assistant keepers, one of whom, Edward Evans (no relation), in addition to doing the day-to-day work in maintaining the collections, was to be Arthur's executive during Arthur's extended absences.

The best strategy for the museum now, which was manifest to everyone concerned, was to convert it to an art and archaeology museum, expanding the collections that were left. In November, 1883, Fortnam [check spelling] wrote to Arthur asking for his assistance in locating some letters in the Bodleian Library that would help to validate a noted ring in his collection, about which he had written. He did so following the advice of his old friend and fellow member of the Society of Antiquities, John Evans. Arthur was unable to find the letters. He suggested Fortnum visit Oxford, as he (Arthur) was trying to form a new group to promote archaeological interests there. Unknown to Arthur, Fortnum was already deeply interested in archaeology at Oxford. He was becoming dissatisfied with the rivals for his collection, the South Kensington Museum, because of their "lack of a properly informed and competent [sic?] person as keeper," which was the same reason he had been dissatisfied with the Ashmolean. In his language, his precious infants needed a proper mother to care for them. Suddenly Arthur appeared at the right moment with the right qualifications. Offered the position of keeper at Ashmolean, he took it with a tremendous burst of enthusiasm and energy.^[25]

In 1884, Evans at the age of 34, was appointed Keeper of the Ashmolean Museum. He held a grand inauguration at which he outlined his planned changes, publishing it as *The Ashmolean as a Home of Archaeology in Oxford*.^[26] Already the great frontage building had been erected. Evans took it firmly in the direction of being an archaeology museum. He insisted the artifacts be transferred back to the museum, negotiated for and succeeded in acquiring Fortnum's collections, later gave his father's collections to the museum, and finally, bequeathed his own Minoan collections, not without the intended effect. Today it has the finest Minoan assemblages outside Crete. He also

persuaded Fortnum to donate £10,000 to build the extensive rooms behind the impressive façade, buildings which have only recently been demolished to make way for the new Ashmolean Museum.

Archaeologist par excellence

Excavations at Aylesford

He undertook his first major excavation in England at Aylesford in Kent in 1887 when he excavated an Iron Age cemetery which later became the type site of the Aylesford Swarling culture which included the first wheel-made pottery in Britain, often connected with the 'Belgae'.^[27]

The end and the beginning

In 1893, Arthur's way of life as a married, middling archaeologist, putting around the Ashmolean, and travelling extensively and perpetually on holiday with his beloved Margaret, came to an abrupt end, leaving emotional desolation in its wake and changing the course of his life. Freeman died in March 1892. Always of precarious health, he had heard that Spain had a salubrious climate. Traveling there to test the hypothesis and perhaps improve his physical condition, he contracted smallpox and was gone in a few days. His oldest daughter did not survive him long. Always of precarious health herself – she is said to have had tuberculosis – she was too weak to prepare her father's papers for publication, so she delegated the task to a family friend, Reverend William Stephens.

In October of that year Arthur took her to visit Boar's Hill, near Oxford, in legend so named because a scholar attacked by a boar there choked it to death by stuffing a copy of Aristotle in its mouth. The view was famous, the air clear. He wanted to buy 60 acres to build a home for Margaret on the hill. She approved the location, so he convinced his father to put up the money. Then he had the tops of the pines cut, eight feet from the ground, on which he had built a platform and a log cabin to serve as a temporary quarters while the mansion was being built. His intent was to keep her from the cold, damp ground.^[28] Apparently she never lived there. They were away again for the winter, Margaret to winter with her sister in Bordighera, Arthur to Sicily to complete the last volume of the history he and Freeman had begun together.

In February he met John Myres, a student at the British School, in Athens. The two shopped the flea markets looking for antiquities. Arthur purchased some seal stones inscribed with a mysterious writing, said to have come from Crete. Then he met Margaret in Bordighera. The two started back to Athens, but en route, in Alassio, Italy she was overtaken by a severe attack. On 11 March 1893, after experiencing painful spasms for two hours,^[1] she died with Arthur holding her hand, of an unknown disease, perhaps tuberculosis, although the symptoms fit a heart attack also. He was 42; she, 45. He would outlive her by another lifetime according to his age then.

Margaret rests in the English cemetery at Alassio, where her grave marker may be seen to this day. Her epitaph says,^[29] in part, "Her bright, energetic spirit, undaunted by suffering to the last, and ever working for the welfare of those around her, made a short life long." Arthur placed on the grave a wreath he wove himself of margarite and wild broom, expressive of their innermost feelings, commemorating the event with a private poem, *To Margaret my beloved wife*, not published until after his death decades later:

"Of Margarites and mountain heath
And scented broom so white –
Such as herself she plucked, – a wreath
I wreath for her tonight.
...
For she was open as the air
Pure as the blue of heaven

And truer love – or pearl so rare
To man was never given."

To his father, who had a more practical view, having had motherless children to care for, he wrote:^[30] "I do not think anyone can ever know what Margaret has been to me." He never married again. For the rest of his life he wrote on black-bordered stationery.^[30] He went ahead with the mansion on Boar's Hill, against the advice of his father, who regarded it as wasteful and useless. He called it Youlbury, after the name of the locality.

Waiting for the future

After Margaret's death Arthur wandered aimlessly around Liguria ostensibly looking at Terramare Culture sites and for Neolithic remains in Ligurian caves. Then he revisited the locations of his youthful explorations in Zagreb. Finally he returned to live a hermit-like existence in the cabin he had built for her. The Ashmolean no longer interested him. He complained petulently to Fortnam in a late, childish display of sibling rivalry, that his father had had another child, his half-sister Joan.^[31] After a year of grief the mounting tension in Crete began to attract his interest. Knossos was now known to be a major site, thanks to Arthur's old friend and fellow journalist in Bosnia, William James Stillman. Another old friend, Federico Halbherr, the Italian archaeologist and future excavator of Phaistos, was keeping him posted on developments at Knossos by mail.

Archaeologists from the United States, Britain, France, Germany and Italy were in attendance at the site watching the progress, so to speak, of "the sick man of Europe," a metaphor of the dying Ottoman Empire. The various pashas, eager not to offend the native Cretan parliament, were encouraging foreigners to apply for a firman to excavate, and then not granting any. The Cretans were afraid of the Ottomans' removing any artifacts to Istanbul. The Ottoman method of stalling was to require any would-be excavators to buy the site from its native owners first. The owners in turn were coached to charge so much money that none would think it worthwhile to apply in such uncertain circumstances. Even the wealthy Schliemann had given up on the price in 1890 and had gone home to die in that year.^[32]

In 1894, Arthur, always an active man, intrigued by the idea that the script engraved on the stones he had purchased before Margaret's death might be Cretan, his grief abated, steamed off to Heraklion to join the circle of watchers. During his year of tending to the details of Youlbury, administering the Ashmolean, and writing some minor papers, he had also discovered the script on some other jewelry that came to the museum from Myres in Crete. He announced that he had concluded to a Mycenaean hieroglyphic script of about 60 characters. Shortly he wrote to his friend and patron at the Ashmolean, Charles Fortnum, that he was "very restless" and must go to Crete.^[33]

Arriving in Heraklion he did not connect with his friends immediately, but took the opportunity to examine the excavations at Knossos. Seeing the sign of the double axe almost immediately he knew that he was at the home of the script. If he did not formulate the intent to excavate at that moment it must have been shortly after, when his friends gave him the tour. He turned some original thinking on the problem of succeeding in acquiring the site when all others had failed. His solution was the Cretan Exploration Fund, devised on the model of the Palestine Exploration Fund. The owners would not sell to individuals, who could not afford it, but they would sell to a fund. Apparently Arthur did not bother to explain that he was the only contributor. He bought 1/4 of the site with first option to buy the rest later. The firman was still in deficit. Politics in Crete were taking a violent turn however.



A portion of Arthur Evans' reconstruction of the Minoan palace at Knossos. This is Bastion A at the North Entrance, noted for the Bull Fresco above it.

Anything might happen. Arthur returned to London to wind up his affairs there and make sure the Ashmolean had suitable direction in the event of his further absence.

The pen-viper uncaged

In September, 1898, the last of the Turkish troops withdrew from Crete. The war was over, but not the fighting, as the Christians took reprisals on the Moslems, and the Moslems sought to defend themselves. The British Army forbade travel for any reason. Checkpoints went up everywhere. Arthur, Myres and Hogarth returned to Crete together, Arthur this time as correspondent for the Manchester Guardian, a role in which he revelled. His sharp tongue had not mellowed over the years. He was once again the Pen-viper, but this time there was no administration to cage him. He criticised the Ottoman Empire for its corruption, as usual. Then he criticised the British Empire for its collaboration with the Ottoman. Many officials of that empire had been Greek. Now they were working with the British trying to build a credible Cretan government. For them Arthur invented a new and eloquent term, "the Turco-British regime". He criticised the Moslems for attacking the Christians, and the Christians for attacking the Moslems. He collided with the British military, complaining vociferously to the British higher authorities.

Arthur went everywhere, investigating everything recklessly. The British public must be kept informed. He always made moral judgements, taking the side of the underdog, no matter who it was. He saw that the Moslem population was now on the decline, some being massacred, and some abandoning the island. After the massacre at the village of Eteà, he came down mainly on the Moslem side. The villagers had been attacked by Christians in the night. They sought refuge in a mosque. The next day they were promised clemency if they would disarm themselves. Handing over their weapons, they were lined up to be marched elsewhere, they were told. Instead, they were shot, the only survivor being a small girl who had a cape thrown over her to conceal her.

It is impossible now to determine what effect Arthur might have had on the authorities. Prince George was completely conciliatory, assisting in any way that he could to halt the bloodshed and establish a new Constitution. In 1899 a government of both Christians and Moslems was elected under it. Crete was a republic, although a protected one. Arthur's political work was done.

Discovery of Minoan civilization

Now that the restriction of the Ottoman firman was removed, there was a great rush on the part of all the other archaeologists to obtain first permission to dig from the new Cretan government. They soon found that Arthur had a monopoly. Using the Cretan Exploration Fund, now being swollen by contributions from others, he paid off the debt for the land. Then he ordered stores from Britain. He hired two foremen, and they hired 32 diggers. He went joyfully to work on the flower-covered hill in March, 1900.

Assisted by Dr. Duncan Mackenzie, who had already distinguished himself by his excavations on the island of Melos, and Mr. Fyfe, an architect from the British School at Athens, Evans employed a large staff of local labourers as excavators, and began work in 1900. Within a few months they had uncovered a substantial portion of what he called the Palace of Minos. The term "palace" may be misleading; Knossos was an intricate collection of over 1000 interlocking rooms, some of which served as artisans' workrooms and food processing centres (e.g. wine presses). It served as a central storage point, and a religious and administrative center.

On the basis of the ceramic evidence and stratigraphy, Evans concluded that there was another civilization on Crete that had existed before those brought to light by the adventurer-archaeologist Heinrich Schliemann at Mycenae and Tiryns. The small ruin of Knossos spanned 5 acres (20,000 m²) and the palace had a maze-like quality that reminded Evans of the labyrinth described in Greek mythology. In the myth, the labyrinth had been built by King Minos to hide the Minotaur, a half-man half-bull creature that was the offspring of Minos' wife, Pasiphae, and a bull. Evans dubbed the civilization once inhabiting this great palace the Minoan civilization.

By 1903, most of the palace was excavated, bringing to light an advanced city containing artwork and many examples of writing. Painted on the walls of the palace were numerous scenes depicting bulls, leading Evans to

conclude that the Minoans did indeed worship the bull. In 1905 he finished excavations. He then proceeded to have the room called the throne room (due to the throne-like stone chair fixed in the room) repainted by a father-and-son team of Swiss artists, the Émile Gilliérons Junior and Senior. While Evans based the recreations on archaeological evidence, some of the best-known frescoes from the throne room were almost complete inventions of the Gilliérons, according to his critics.^[34]

Senior trustee

All the excavations at Knossos were done on leave of absence from the museum. "While the Keeper's salary was not generous, the conditions of residence were very liberal ... the keeper could and should travel to secure new acquisitions".^[35] But in 1908 at the age of 57 he resigned his position to concentrate on writing up his Minoan work. In 1912 he refused the opportunity to become President of the Society of Antiquaries, a position which his father had already held. But in 1914 at the age of 63, when he was too old to take part in the War, he took on the Presidency of the Antiquaries which carried with it an ex officio appointment as a Trustee of the British Museum and he spent the War successfully fighting the War Office who wanted to commandeer the museum for the Air Board. He thus played a major role in the history of the British Museum as well as in the history of the Ashmolean Museum.

Major creative works

Scripta Minoa

Evans found 3,000 clay tablets during excavations, which he transcribed and organized, publishing them in *Scripta Minoa*. As some of them are now missing, the transcriptions are the only source of those. He perceived that the scripts were two different and mutually exclusive writing systems, which he termed Linear A and Linear B. The A script appeared to have preceded the B. Evans dated the Linear B Chariot Tablets, so called from their depictions of chariots, at Knossos to immediately prior to the catastrophic Minoan civilization collapse of the 15th century BC.^[36]

One of Evans' theses in the 1901 *Scripta Minoa*, is that^[37] most of the symbols for the Phoenician alphabet (abjad) are almost identical to the many centuries older, 19th century BC, Cretan hieroglyphs.

The basic part of the discussion about Phoenician alphabet in *Scripta Minoa, Vol. I* takes place in the section *Cretan Philistines and the Phoenician Alphabet*.^[38] Modern scholars now see it as a continuation of the Proto-Canaanite alphabet from ca. 1400 BC, adapted to writing a Canaanite (Northwest Semitic) language. The Phoenician alphabet seamlessly continues the Proto-Canaanite alphabet, by convention called Phoenician from the mid-11th century, where it is first attested on inscribed bronze arrowheads.^[39]

Evans had no better luck with Linear B, which turned out to be Greek. Despite decades of theories, Linear A has not been convincingly deciphered, nor even the language group identified. His classifications and careful transcriptions have been of great value to Mycenaean scholars.

Other legacies

Evans was knighted in 1911 for his services to archaeology and is commemorated both at Knossos and at the Ashmolean Museum, which holds the largest collection of Minoan artifacts outside of Greece. He received an honorary doctorate (D.Litt.) from the University of Dublin in June 1901.^[40]

In 1913 he paid £100 to double the amount paid with the studentship in memory of Augustus Wollaston Franks, established jointly by the University of London and the Society of Antiquaries, which was won that year by Mortimer Wheeler.

From 1894 until his death Evans lived on Boars Hill, Berkshire (now Oxfordshire), near Oxford. His house, Youlbury, has since been demolished. He had Jarn Mound and its surrounding wild garden built during the Great Depression to make work for local out-of-work labourers. Evans left part of his estate to the Boy Scouts and

Youlbury Camp is still available for their use.

Notes

- [1] .
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- [14] .
- [16] .
- [17] .
- [18] .
- [19] .
- [20] .
- [21] .
- [22] The villa sits on a bluff at the base of a ring of hills. Adjoining it a modern hotel towers over the scene.
- [23] .
- [24] .
- [25] The details of the complicated and extensive negotiations for the Fortnum collection, at which Arthur excelled, may be found in
- [26] .
- [27] *Archaeologia* 52, 1891
- [29] .
- [30] .
- [31] .
- [32] .
- [33] .
- [34] Gere, Cathy *Knossos and the Prophets of Modernism* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2009), 111.
- [35] Macgillivray Minotaur - Sir Arthur Evans and the Archaeology of the Minoan Myth.
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- [38] Pages 77–94.
- [39] Markoe (2000), p. 111.

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