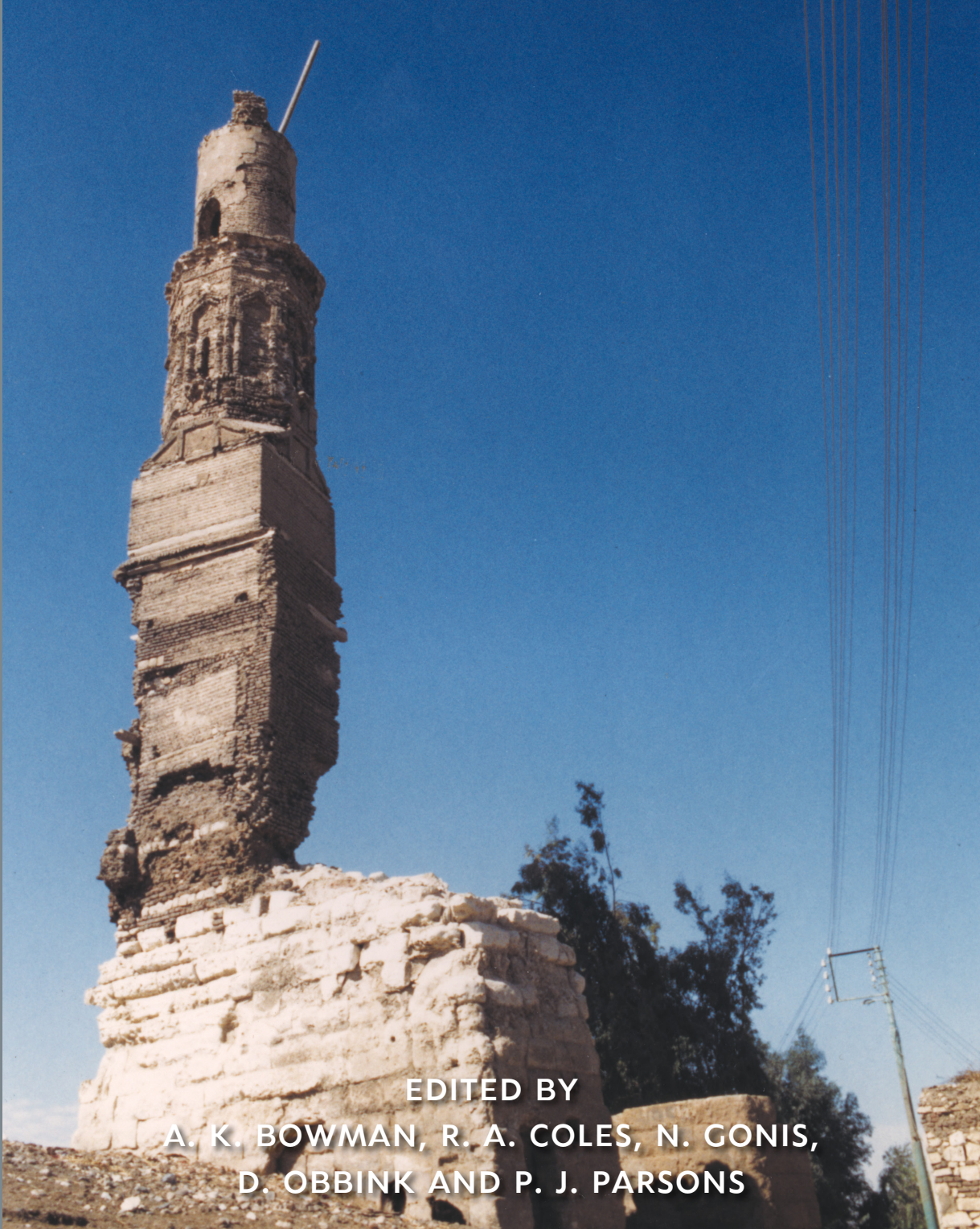




# **OXYRHYNCHUS**

## **A City and its Texts**



EDITED BY  
A. K. BOWMAN, R. A. COLES, N. GONIS,  
D. OBBINK AND P. J. PARSONS

# OXYRHYNCHUS

A CITY AND ITS TEXTS



Dedication of cast bronze Oxyrhynchus fish with worshipper.

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A. K. BOWMAN   R.A. COLES   N. GONIS   D. OBBINK   P. J. PARSONS

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## Preface



THIS volume focuses on the site of Oxyrhynchus (modern Bahnasa) in Middle Egypt: its buildings, art, monuments, and the ancient manuscripts ('papyri', ancient paper) recovered through excavations of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Beginning with a symposium in 1998 on behalf of the British Academy to mark the centenary of the Oxyrhynchus papyri, and charting a decade of continuing work on the site and steady publication of the finds, the chapters below mark the state of the art of research on their topics in the first decade of the twenty-first century. Taken together, they give a general account of the site and its material culture: art, architecture, and papyri. A century earlier, in the year 1898, a newcomer appeared on the papyrological and archaeological scene, then in its infancy: the first volume of *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, which inaugurated the publication of Grenfell and Hunt's remarkable finds at Bahnasa in Egypt. Occupied by the Graeco-Roman settler class from the Ptolemies to the Arab conquest, Oxyrhynchus yields the largest amount of written documentation produced for any ancient city, together with a substantial quantity of archaeological finds. The painstaking presentation of this material, in keeping with the exacting standards set by Grenfell and Hunt, continues to occupy the Oxyrhynchus Papyri Project at Oxford (a Major Project of the British Academy, currently funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council) for publication in the first instance by the Egypt Exploration Society. Other finds, from monumental blocks to tiny, postage-stamp-sized pieces of papyrus manuscripts from Oxyrhynchus reside scattered throughout Egyptian, European, and American museums and institutions in an

archaeological diaspora that can only be called remarkable for any single ancient city. Reuniting the pieces seems a Herculean task. From the history and results of Grenfell and Hunt's seasons at the turn of the century through Petrie's excavations in the 1920's to the ongoing publication and analysis of the papyrus texts, the chapters below canvass the ongoing efforts to make whole sense again of the city itself, the excavations and the different, mutually illuminating types of material culture, texts, and subjects of study represented in the papyrus collection - in short, most major aspects of the site and the finds.

Grenfell and Hunt's original published reports to the Society have been included, edited by Nikolaos Gonis, along with a catalogue of objects from Oxyrhynchus in two London museums. Petrie's own excavation report on the site appears as Chapter 5, while reports of two recent, ongoing excavations are given in Chapters 9 and 10. Several contributions by the late Eric Turner on the Roman context and scribal background of the papyrus texts, originally published elsewhere, have been reprinted by permission of their publishers as Chapters 2, 11, 12, and 20. Certain chapters correct and revise others, while still others provide a fresh perspective or re-evaluation of a century of previous work on the site: Donald Bailey's Chapter 6 on the Great Theatre carefully revises and fills out details originally documented in Flinders Petrie's rough-and-ready excavation report (Chapter 5). Chapters 21-7, on the Literature, Art, and Science of Oxyrhynchus, all take as their starting point Eric Turner's analysis of scribal culture at Oxyrhynchus (reprinted as Chapter 20). Dominic Montserrat's Chapter 3 critiques the involvement of Grenfell and Hunt

with the Egypt Exploration Society (described by Turner in the reprinted Chapter 2) by taking their portrayal in the popular press as its vantage point.

A comprehensive synthesis of all aspects of the site and its importance has yet to be undertaken. The contributions below utilize the published finds, together with archival material, some of it unpublished and not regularly consulted, to effect a retrospective view of past results and a prospective glimpse of things yet to come from the City of the Sharp-Nosed Fish. The papers on the city, its architecture, sculpture, and drawing have been made visible with images created by the Imaging Papyri project at Oxford from its digital repository on Oxyrhynchus, which helps document the current state of work on the city and publish its finds, including a publicly accessible databank of images of all papyri published

in The Oxyrhynchus Papyri series (see <http://www.papyrology.ox.ac.uk/POxy>) and the accompanying online exhibition, 'Oxyrhynchus: A City and its Texts' (originally held in the Ashmolean Museum: see [http://www.papyrology.ox.ac.uk/POxy/VExhibition/exhib\\_welcome.html](http://www.papyrology.ox.ac.uk/POxy/VExhibition/exhib_welcome.html)), which provides more extensive illustration of the site, people, and topics discussed in the chapters below. In addition, the editors owe an even greater than usual debt of thanks to the Egypt Exploration Society, and in particular to the members of its Graeco-Roman Branch, as well as to Dr Jeffrey Dean for his superior typographical composition, and to Amin Benaissa, Holger Essler, and Pelaghia Strataki for indexing and proof-reading. In assembling the material the authors and editors have patiently endeavoured to make Oxyrhynchus more accessible to the interested public, archaeologists, and historians alike.

A. K. BOWMAN  
R. A. COLES  
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# CITY AND EXCAVATION





∴ I ∴

## Oxyrhynchus: A City and its Texts

Revel A. Coles



**O**XYRHYNCHUS in Egypt, the ‘city of the sharp-nosed fish’ (see the frontispiece). Today called Bahnasa, it lies about 200 kilometres south of modern Cairo (Fig. 1.1), on a branch of the Nile called the Bahr Yussuf, ‘Joseph’s Canal’. Its earlier history is more obscure, but by the time of Augustus it was an important municipal centre, the ‘metropolis’ or capital of its district, the Oxyrhynchite nome.

When, however, one of the first recorded visitors to the site since classical times, Baron Vivant Denon, went there in 1798, he found little more than a vast area of mounds of rubbish, like a bleak industrial wasteland, spreading out around a run-down village with dilapidated mosques (Fig. 1.2). He could see just one classical relic to sketch (Fig. 1.3), and today even that has gone.

Nevertheless, a century later those rubbish mounds attracted the attention of two young Oxford scholars, Bernard Grenfell and Arthur Hunt (Fig. 1.4). The pair had already spent a season in the Fayūm, southwest of Cairo, for the Egypt Exploration Fund (now Society) and had acquired a taste for rubbish dumps. They had developed an understanding of rubbish-dump soil quality and had learned by experience what they might expect to find there. Papyri were what they were looking for: original rolls, documents, and books, preserved by the dry climate and special soil conditions, written on a form of paper made from the papyrus reed, which in those days grew read-

ily in the Delta marshes. Now it scarcely grows wild north of the Sudan, and in Egypt it is mainly found only where it is cultivated by private enterprise. In antiquity, by contrast, the manufacture of papyrus paper may have been a state monopoly. The process in essence involved cutting the pith of the reed into long thin strips which were laid parallel, and then another similar layer was laid on top at right angles, and the whole lot was put in a press.<sup>1</sup>

From Roman Egypt, the papyri that have survived for us are not those that the ancients tried to keep, but those they threw away - on rubbish dumps, or left in abandoned houses, or indeed buried in tombs. The fragile papyri have had to compete for survival with wind-blown sand, hungry beetles, and decaying organic matter, and they are seldom in mint condition. Nevertheless, a remarkable haul awaited the determined excavator.

Grenfell and Hunt were both members of The Queen’s College in Oxford. Their first excavation season at Oxyrhynchus/Bahnasa took place during the winter of 1896/7, and the century intervening since Denon’s visit had not improved Oxyrhynchus (Fig. 1.5). Despite their understanding of the possibilities of rubbish mounds, Grenfell and Hunt hoped for Ptolemaic literary finds from

<sup>1</sup> H. Ragab, *Le Papyrus* (Cairo 1980); C. Basile, A. Di Natale, *Atti del II Convegno Nazionale di Egittologia e Papirologia, Siracusa 1995* (Siracuse 1996) 85–135.

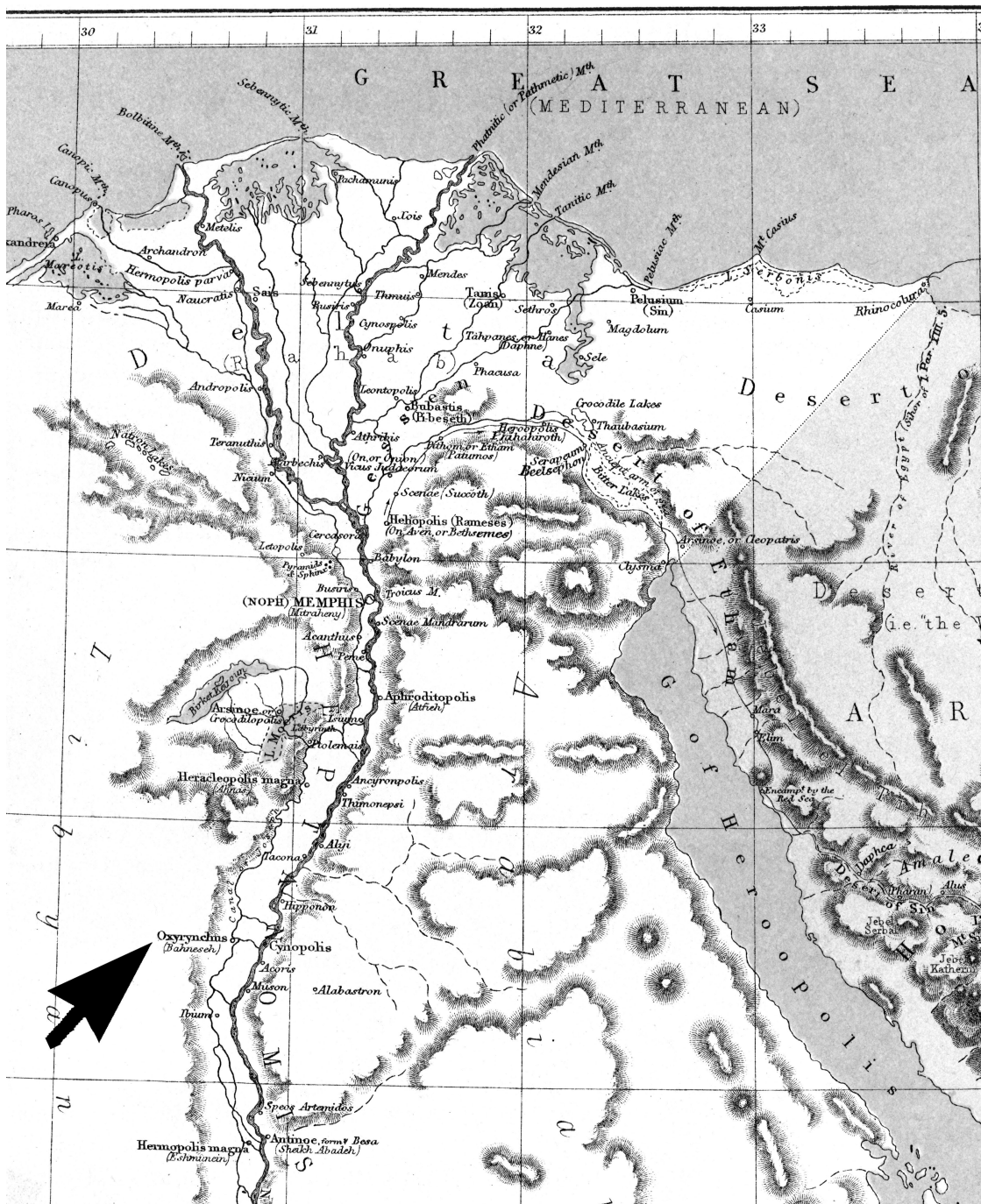


Figure 1.1. Detail of map of Egypt from Grenfell and Hunt's papers.  
Papyrology Rooms, Sackler Library, Oxford.

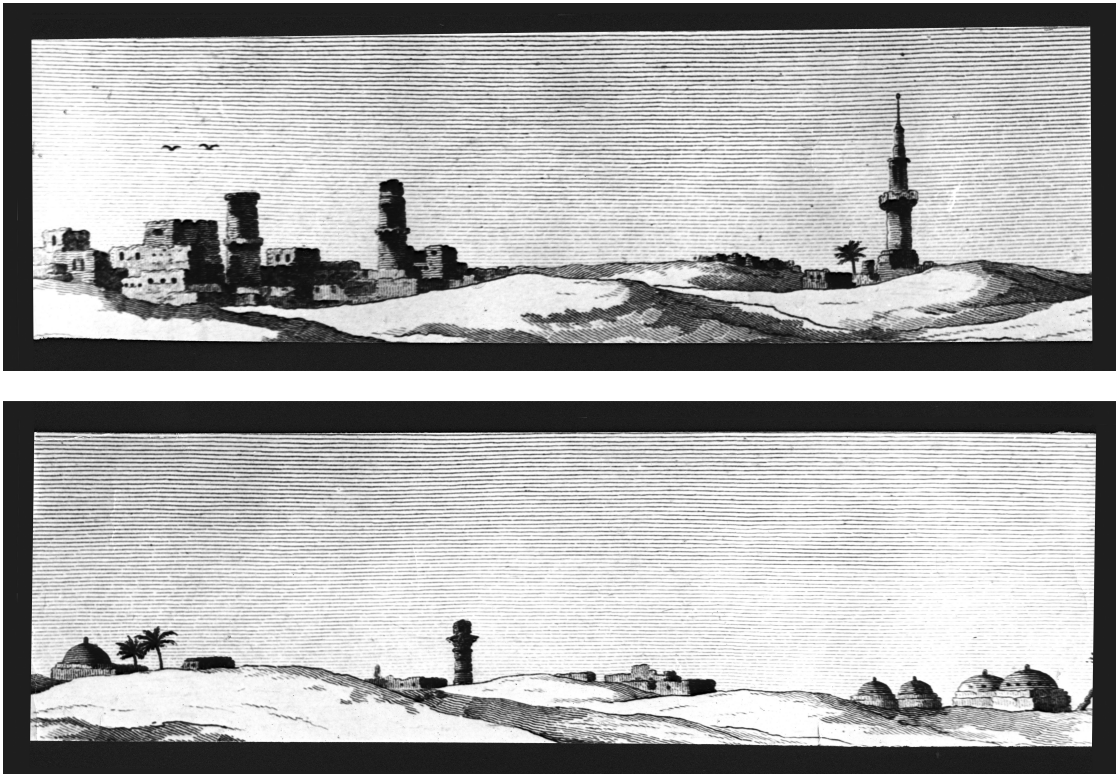


Figure 1.2. Oxyrhynchus seen from the west in 1798, from a drawing by Vivant Denon.



Figure 1.3. Top of honorific column (now vanished) at Oxyrhynchus in 1798, drawn by Vivant Denon.



Figure 1.4. Bernard Grenfell (R) and Arthur Hunt, probably in the Fayum.



Figure 1.5. Oxyrhynchus seen from the west, probably in 1903.  
Photo from glass negative in the Papyrology Rooms, Sackler Library, Oxford.

the town's cemeteries, and for three weeks they persisted in hopeful but hopeless poking around there. Then they - or rather their native diggers - stuck their spades in a rubbish mound, and they opened a papyrological floodgate.

On the second day they found the papyrus they called the *Logia* papyrus, or the 'Sayings of Jesus', now known to be from the apocryphal Gospel of Thomas. A find like this was like the fulfilment of a late Victorian dream, and they published this piece in a separate little booklet that same year (1897). The *Logia* papyrus was just one item, however, in a torrent of discarded documents and literary manuscripts that in one day might fill more than thirty baskets. They could and did find almost anything that might have landed up in an ancient waste-paper basket: known literature, lost literature, government documents, legal documents, private correspondence. Much of it, alas, in a damaged state - it *was* after all rubbish - though every now and then they discovered rolls still rolled up. The bulk of all this was in Greek, which had become the administrative language of Egypt since the time of Alexander the Great and would remain the language of local administration (and culture) for several hundred years, despite Egypt's position as a Roman province after the death of Cleopatra; thus Latin too is a rare find in this country town. The superseded Egyptian demotic was also relatively rare at this site, the deeper earlier levels having been destroyed by damp. Various other languages are represented from time to time, notably Coptic. And then of course there is Arabic; nothing earlier than the ninth century, but in quantity from mediaeval times, on paper rather than papyrus.

Grenfell and Hunt worked with 100–200 local diggers and excavated to depths of as much as ten metres (Fig. 1.6), till the damp base level was reached. It is clear that they only in effect 'turned the mounds over': that most of the soil they looked through is no longer there is due to later quarrying - the ancient detritus or *sebak* is prized as a fertilizer - and this has cleared great areas down to the damp level. Hunt was the photographer, and sorted and packed the finds while Grenfell supervised the workmen. Plate 1 shows a typical box of papyri much as they were

found, prior to conservation and cataloguing. At the end of each season, big wooden crates were prepared, to contain the metal boxes (made on site) in which the papyri had been packed, which were then first transported by camel (Fig. 1.7), then by ship from Alexandria to England.

After a brief interval, Grenfell and Hunt returned five times to Oxyrhynchus, and overall they brought back - with full government agreement, possible in those days - hundreds of boxes of papyri, to constitute what is the largest collection in the world. They published their first volume of finds from the site just over a century ago, in 1898, a year after their first dig there.

Grenfell died in 1926, Hunt in 1934, with the tally of volumes by then standing at seventeen. Since Hunt's death, dedicated successors have kept up the good work. Edgar Lobel, also in The Queen's College, first took over the care of the collection, storing the hundred choicest boxes in his far-from-fireproof college room over the war years, and adding to them twenty even choicer boxes that he retrieved from Hunt's private house in north Oxford. Edgar was the giant of the literary papyri of Oxyrhynchus, whose association with the collection spanned a period of nearly seventy years.<sup>1</sup>

Following Edgar Lobel, the Oxyrhynchite roll-call includes Colin Roberts, Secretary of the Delegates of the Clarendon Press for much of his life, and John Barns, who became Professor of Egyptology in Oxford. And above all Sir Eric Turner, Professor of Papyrology in University College, London, who masterminded work on the collection through a difficult postwar period, and who was senior editor of *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri* series for nearly thirty years. It was his vision and negotiation that led in 1966 to the establishment of the work on the collection as a major research project of the British Academy. Since then, the papyri that Edgar Lobel used to keep in his college room have been rehoused in purpose-built premises, first in the Ashmolean Museum and now in the Sackler Library in Oxford, and publication of the

<sup>1</sup> See E. G. Turner's obituary of Lobel, *Gnomon* 55 (1983) 275–80.



Figure 1.6. Deep-level excavation, probably in 1903.  
Photo from glass negative in the Papyrology Rooms, Sackler Library, Oxford.

volumes of the Oxyrhynchus series has reached Volume LXX. In more recent years the project has received financial support from the Arts and Humanities Research Council.

Grenfell and Hunt's discoveries, combined with later archaeological investigation, allow us to build up a picture of the town and its inhabit-

ants. The population may have exceeded 30,000, with a cultured landowning elite who read classical Greek literature and filled the posts in local and even central government. Their pride in their classical heritage is well evidenced by the riches of the Oxyrhynchus papyri. Documents vastly outnumber literary texts; nevertheless the liter-



Figure 1.7. The papyri are prepared for the first leg of their long journey from the site back to Oxford.  
Photo from glass negative in the Papyrology Rooms, Sackler Library, Oxford.

ary quantity is huge, and two-thirds of the literature that found its way into the town's rubbish is from works unknown today, by unknown writers. In broad statistical terms, the inhabitants of this relatively remote place might have had access to three times the quantity of classical Greek literature to be found on the shelves of the university libraries of today.

Principal among later archaeological investigators at the site was the great Flinders Petrie. After some papyrus-hunting visits by the Italians be-

tween 1910 and 1913 (they returned after the war between 1927 and 1934),<sup>1</sup> which frequently turned up extra bits belonging to papyri that Grenfell and Hunt had found, Petrie visited the site in 1922. From Oxyrhynchus he wrote an atmospheric letter to Hunt:

Behnesa, Beni Mazar. 11 March 1922. My dear Hunt: We have been here three weeks, after clearing some hundreds of first dynasty tombs

<sup>1</sup> See Rosario Pintaudi's contribution below in this volume, Chap. 8, pp. 104–8.

at Abydos. We are in the old palm grove, immensely changed by a railway running across the Bahr Yusuf, and a *sebakh* line going round the back of the town, with shrieking trains going out in the dark before dawn.

These trains were taking out up to 150 tons of *sebakh* a day, Petrie went on.

Petrie's main objective was to discover what remained of buildings. He partially cleared the second-century-AD theatre, 400 feet in diameter and once upon a time towering 100 feet above the ground at the back of the auditorium, with an estimated seating capacity of 12,500.<sup>1</sup> It was the third largest theatre in the Roman world and had a most unusual feature, mediaeval-type spiral staircases at the rear corners of the stage. The stone has mostly been robbed, and today nothing is visible above the sand (Plate 11).

Petrie also published a photograph (Fig. 5.1, no. 2) of a so-called 'statue base', which is now even more visible after clearance of detritus from around it (Plate 11), and the most dramatic ancient feature to survive in Bahnasa. It now stands some 7 metres high, and up the top are a couple of later rough inscriptions, one relating to the late-Byzantine emperor Phocas, and in support of the Blues circus faction. Grenfell and Hunt never mention this pillar; it must have been totally buried in their time, with a surface level nearly 10 metres above where it is today. Nor did Grenfell and Hunt see the pillar that Denon sketched in 1798 (Fig. 1.3). Theirs was a transitional period, when the one had gone and the other was not yet visible. They belong together, these pillars; that is, the top (Denon), now lost, stood on top of the base (Phocas), now exposed. The two together made up an honorific column, once around 15 metres high not including the probably imperial statue that would have stood on top. This unity was Donald Bailey's proposal,<sup>2</sup> and I think it may be asserted more strongly, given recognition of background details in Denon's 1798 view (Fig. 1.3)

in a colour photograph of 1981 (Plate 1v), with a slight allowance for the different angle. I refer to the ruined mosque of Zain al-'Abidin, of the late Mamluk period - middle to late fifteenth century - on the left, and the landmark pale yellow dome of the *qubba* or shrine of Abu Samra on the right, which dates from the 18th century. This honorific column is the sole survivor of four, a *tetrastylon*, so standing at the crossing of two of the town's major streets. This was a guess, but has now been probably confirmed by a recent magnetometer survey.<sup>3</sup>

Petrie also uncovered extensive remains of a double colonnade (Fig. 5.1, no. 1). The columns, single pieces of limestone, are nearly a metre in diameter and stood 6 metres tall; each complete column would have weighed nearly thirteen tons. They are set 2½ metres apart, and Petrie says the colonnade was 28 columns long, roughly 85 metres. I have wondered whether this colonnade might represent the town's Northern Stoa, with the attached half-column at the western end (see Fig. 5.5) being the take-off point for a similar row of columns from the Western Stoa. The resulting complex might resemble a reduced version of the agora-plus-stoa layout at Magnesia on the Maeander.<sup>4</sup> That design shows how a warren of small shops and workshops might be an integral part of a stoa.

The stoas of Oxyrhynchus have been variously attested. If Petrie's colonnade can really be the Northern Stoa, it is documented in a papyrus published in 1997, no. 4441 in Volume LXIV of *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri*. This is the continuation of a text Grenfell and Hunt published in their very first volume in 1898, so no. 4441 had the merit of linking Grenfell and Hunt's first volume with that volume's centenary. The relevant text in Volume 1 is no. 53, now in the British Library, with a detached column now in Trinity College, Dublin.<sup>5</sup> The new text supplies line-ends for the

<sup>1</sup> For a fuller account of this theatre, see the reprint of Petrie's work, Chap. 5 below, pp. 50–69, and Donald Bailey's Chap. 6, pp. 70–90.

<sup>2</sup> See volume IV of his *Excavations at El-Ashmunein* (ancient Hermopolis, south of Oxyrhynchus) p. 30.

<sup>3</sup> See Josep Padró's Chap. 10 below in this volume, pp. 129–38.

<sup>4</sup> See J. J. Coulton, *The Architectural Development of the Greek Stoa* (Oxford 1976) 254 fig. 81.

<sup>5</sup> While the originals of papyri published in more recent volumes remain in the ownership of the Egypt

Dublin piece and continues (not without gaps admittedly) for thirteen further columns.

The date is the early fourth century AD, the contents a miscellany of reports to the senior municipal official in Oxyrhynchus. Towards the end we have a column number, 115, and we may calculate that this roll would have been at least 25 metres long when complete. Members of the guilds of various building trades have been instructed to go round the whole town and inspect all the public buildings and adjacent private properties, and report on needed repair works. The buildings are listed under the headings Northern Stoa, Western Stoa, Eastern Stoa, and Southern Stoa. Whether this location by stoa simply serves as a compass pointer, or whether the buildings listed actually form part of the stoa complex as in the Magnesia layout, remains unclear.

Most of the topographical data relates to the areas of the Western and Eastern Stoa. In the area of the Western Stoa, we find the surgery of Dioscorus. Then there is a stable; somewhere the town had the equivalent of a state-run motel, with space for up to ninety official travellers and their horses and baggage animals (LX 4087–8), but we can only guess whether this might be it. Then there is the school of Dionysius, who had to pay the cost of the school's repairs; and Thaesis' vegetable shop, which Thaesis had to pay to have fixed up. Grander buildings in this zone are the Temple of Fortune, not attested before, and a Temple of Achilles; the 'record-office of the Western Stoa', another novelty, and a market.

The Eastern Stoa area seems to be home to a whole lot of tradesmen's shops - a fruiterer, a pastry-cook, a condiment-seller, a vetch-seller, a beer-seller, and a butcher. Among these nevertheless are Temples of Demeter, Dionysus, and the emperor Hadrian. There is also a street called 'the street of the warm baths of the public bath'.

Later parts of the text mention an Imperial Palace - we had not known that the town had one - and extensive repair works to a public bath,

Exploration Society but are housed within the Sackler Library in Oxford, where they may be seen on application, the originals of most of the texts in the first 16 volumes were presented to various libraries and other institutions worldwide.

not necessarily the same as the one in the Eastern Stoa area. These bath repairs involve lead-workers, glass-workers, a locksmith, and plasterers, and the quantities of building materials are listed - 34 tons of one item, throwing intriguing light on ancient plaster technology.

All this happened in AD 315 and 316. Ten years later, there would be a momentous event for the history of Oxyrhynchus. But first let us think for a moment about the layout of the city.

Grenfell and Hunt had left us a couple of rough pencilled site plans (Fig. 1.8, Plate v), together with a more formal version (Fig. 1.9), which we eventually published in Volume 1 of *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri* in 1983. The numbers that cover the formal plan (and the larger of the drafts, Plate v) bear no relation to our complex inherited system of inventory numbers for the papyri, but are the excavators' attempt to define a somewhat shapeless jumble of dunes. Petrie too had made a site plan (Fig. 5.5), not instantly locatable in terms of the Grenfell and Hunt plans. See also Fig. 10.8 below, and the modern plan by the Catalan-Egyptian mission, Fig. 10.1.

On the right is the modern village of Bahnasa, clustered close up along the bank of the Bahr Yussuf. The rubbish mounds that yielded Oxyrhynchus's Greek papyri are scattered out well to the west, and especially in a zone to the north-west. Close to the modern village the excavators found only Arabic papyri and paper. There are lots of tombs and cemeteries, ancient, mediaeval, and modern. The ancient ones are mostly well out on the fringes, the mediaeval ones in the 'middle ground' and often perched on top of Grenfell and Hunt's rubbish mounds.

Surprisingly, the archaeological evidence suggests that the theatre, shown as 'Temple' on Fig. 1.9, may have been isolated somewhat from the town; the proof is the way in which it was more or less surrounded by rubbish mounds, including that known as Kôm Gamman, number 20, which yielded so many literary texts and years later did the same for the Italian excavators, so creating the numerous links between British and Italian collections. Nevertheless, documentary evidence refers to houses in the 'quarter of the Theatre

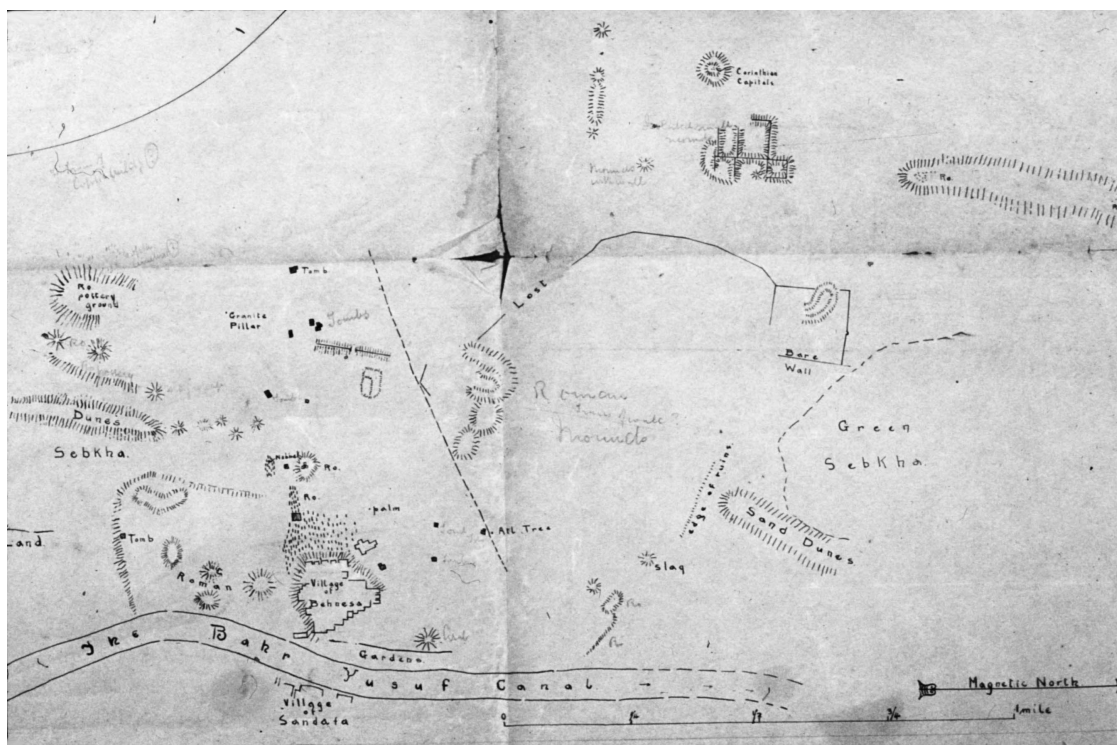


Figure 1.8. Grenfell and Hunt's first draft plan of Oxyrhynchus (cf. Plate v).  
Papyrology Rooms, Sackler Library, Oxford.

Square', so that the archaeological evidence may not give the full picture.

With the theatre site located, we can now use Figs. 5.5 and 10.8 to place Petrie's colonnade in context, with above to the right the four pillars of the *tetrastylon*.<sup>1</sup>

The site may thus be divided broadly into three concentric zones: (1) the modern village nestled up against the Bahr Yusuf; (2) the ancient town around it, largely deep in sand overlaid with a layer of Arabic rubbish; and (3) the deep papyrus-rich building-free rubbish mounds beyond.

We move on a decade to another long text, this time of AD 325, published in Volume LIV of *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri* in 1987. This is no. 3759, a long report of legal proceedings held before another senior municipal official. I will pass over the legal

contents, saying only that this and other papyri in the same volume attest a new prefect of Egypt (the provincial governor), and in so doing help to clarify how imperial dynastic upheavals were reflected in provincial administration. Throughout the preceding decade there had not been a prefect of Egypt, a state of affairs that ended in September 324 when Egypt came under control of the emperor Constantine. We may suppose that Magnus, the new man, was Constantine's appointee, and that his appointment as prefect reflects the shake-up in Egypt's administration that followed the change in imperial management.

This establishment of Constantine as the ultimate authority in Egypt had a more far-reaching consequence for Oxyrhynchus, which is evidenced for the first time by no. 3759. Towards its end the presiding official refers to the hour of *vespera* having passed, *vespera* being a technical term to denote the hour before sunset. He then says that

<sup>1</sup> See these features (not to scale) in Fig. 10.8.

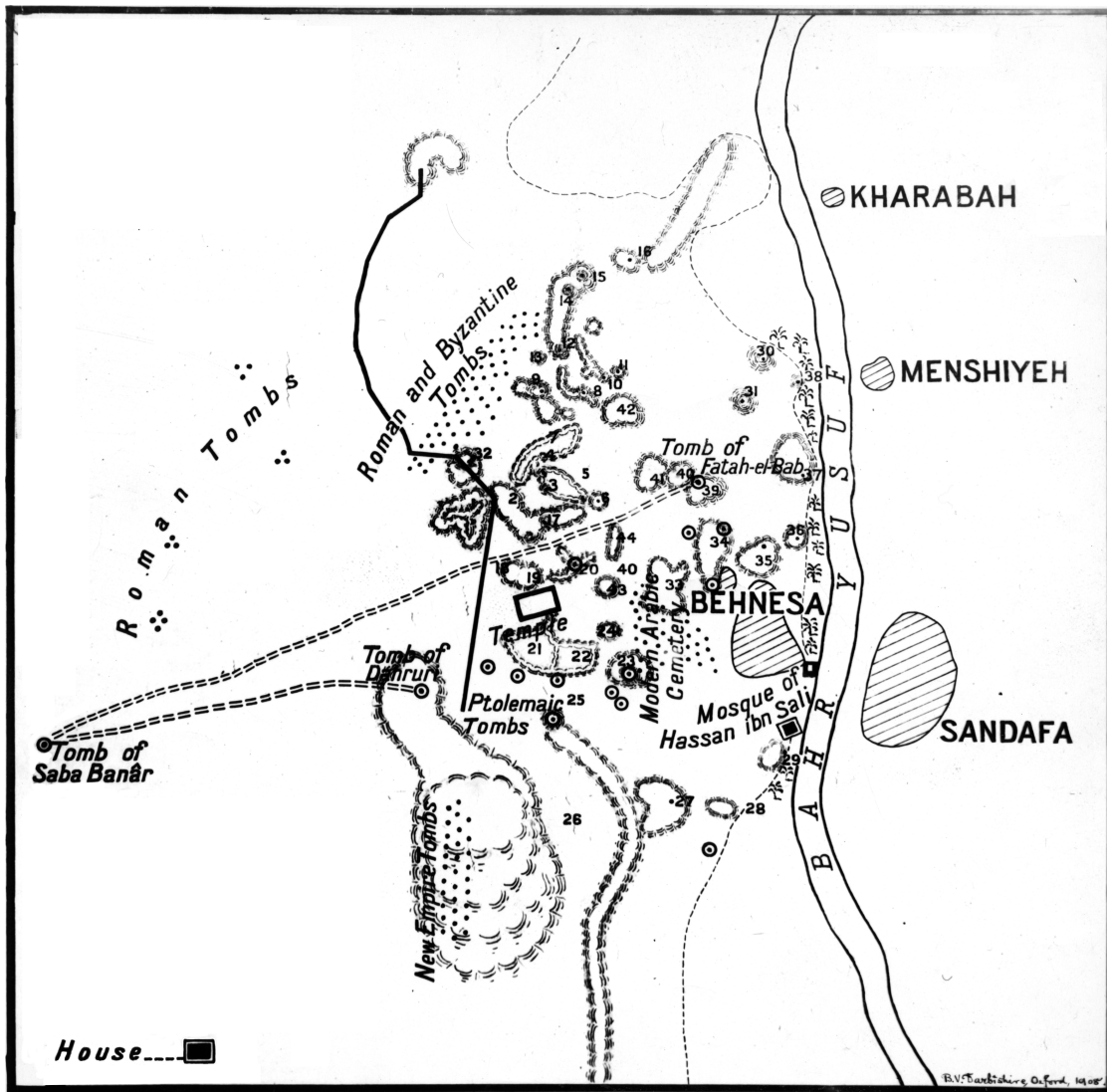


Figure 1.9. Revised plan of Oxyrhynchus, published in Vol. I of *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri*.  
Papyrology Rooms, Sackler Library, Oxford.

since part of the sacred Lord's Day has passed, the hearing is to be postponed till after the Lord's Day. First, the named days of the week were far more a part of daily life than we might have supposed from papyri previously published. Second, we had the date of these proceedings at the top, converting to the 2nd of October AD 325, and we can calculate that the 3rd of October was indeed a Sunday; and the 24-hour day of the week was

reckoned here as beginning not at midnight but at sunset with 'the first hour of the night'. So in this papyrus we know not only the date and the day of the week, we know the time of day, which was shortly after 5.40 pm.

A few years earlier, we learn from another Oxyrhynchus papyrus in the same volume (3741 of AD 313), court officials took Thursdays off, Jupiter's Day. 3759 is simultaneously the earliest papyrus

to name the Lord's Day and the earliest documentary evidence for Sunday observance. That goes back to an edict of Constantine dated AD 321, but that edict would not have been effective in Egypt until after September 324, when the country came under Constantine's control. Just a year later, text no. 3759 shows us the edict working.

We can hardly think that these early fourth-century officials observing Sunday were committed Christians. For them, following the government *diktats* was simply political expediency. Nevertheless, the lifting of the repression of Christians, delayed though its application was in Egypt, was the signal for a religious 'explosion' that saw Oxyrhynchus develop into a major centre of Christian cult. Early in the fifth century Rufinus went there, and he tells us that there were twelve churches in the city. He also says that the local bishop told him that there were 10,000 monks and 20,000 nuns there! That, I suspect, we should read with a degree of disbelief, but the figure of twelve churches would agree well with forty churches documented for the city in the following century, in AD 535/6.<sup>1</sup>

A century after that, Oxyrhynchus was to face another major event that would be even more dramatic in its effects on the town than had been the explosion of Christianity. Let us once more consider the site plan. To Grenfell and Hunt, there would have been no distinction between the outer zones; a monotonous dirty grey moon-scape of mounds of *sebakh* would have seemed to stretch from the houses almost to the horizon. Since Petrie's work there, we know that this would be a false impression. The mounds far out were simply rubbish mounds, without buildings (except for the occasional tomb) and once packed with papyri and other refuse from two thousand years of occupation half a mile away. But in the middle zone, deep down there are still remains of grand Roman-period buildings, buried in sand with little contemporary rubbish and no signs of later occupation of the site until they are overlaid several metres above with a stratum of Arabic-

period rubbish. 'Two thousand years of occupation', I said, but the archaeological evidence points to a hiatus in this occupation.

This suggestion finds documentary support. Other sites have yielded written records that smoothly bridge the change to Islamic rule in the mid seventh century, with Greek documents from the eighth century, and indeed bilingual documents, Greek plus Arabic. Not so at Oxyrhynchus: the last dated Greek document to mention the city dates from AD 644/5,<sup>2</sup> while an examination of Arabic pieces in the Oxyrhynchus collection indicates dates from the end of the ninth century up to the fourteenth or fifteenth century. From the later seventh century, from all of the eighth century, and from most of the ninth century, nothing. In any language.

It might be guessed that Oxyrhynchus had been destroyed. This is what is alleged in a mediaeval Arabic epic, *The Conquest of Bahnsa*.<sup>3</sup> If we allow that there may be some truth in this, we may ask when and why the attack happened. Since Oxyrhynchus was still a flourishing city in AD 644/5, the destruction cannot have taken place at the outset of the Arab invasion in 641. Perhaps Oxyrhynchus was involved in a subsequent revolt, as Alexandria was in 645/6. Such a date might do very well for Oxyrhynchus, at least until we find further documentation. Why then did Oxyrhynchus revolt? We have seen that the city had developed into an important Christian centre; a clue as to why it became such, were one needed, may come from an unexpected source. St Matthew's Gospel tells us that Mary and Joseph fled from Judaea to Egypt with the baby Jesus to escape Herod's persecution. Where in Egypt did they go? Different traditions lay claim to several places in Egypt as being where they stayed, including Hermopolis not far to the south, a town whose churches included a fifth-century basilica 150 feet long. Oxyrhynchus too is claimed as a place where

<sup>1</sup> See *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri* x1 p. 26, with yet more churches in LXVII 4617–23.

<sup>2</sup> H. Zilliacus, *Eranos* 38 (1940) 85 ff., republished as SB VI 8987. N. Gonis has very recently found in the collection a handful of documents that post-date the Islamic conquest.

<sup>3</sup> See E. Galtier, *Foutouh` al Bahnsa* (Mémoires publiées par les membres de L'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale du Caire 22: Cairo 1909).

the Holy Family stayed; the claim is to be found in writing precisely in *The Conquest of Bahnasa*. The tradition still lingers locally; a little north of the present village there still flourishes the most enormous olive tree (Plate vi) known as the Tree of Jesus. A planned tree-ring dating of this tree twenty years or so ago had to be abandoned, but its roots are right down at the Roman-period ground level, as the fallen column and column-base indicate.

When the Arabs reoccupied the site in the later ninth century, they would have found an area roughly a mile long by half a mile wide of tumbled ruins filled with wind-blown sand. They concentrated their redevelopment on a relatively small area along the bank of the Bahr Yussuf, and they dumped their rubbish on the nearest open ground, feeling little inclination to carry it 500 or 1000 metres so as to dump it on top of the ancient city's rubbish mounds. For information about Islamic Oxyrhynchus (Bahnasa we should call it from now on), see Géza Fehérvári's account, Chap. 9 below, pp. 109–28, of the excavations supported by Dar al-Athar al-Islamiyya, the Kuwait National Museum, between 1985 and 1987. Among the team's objectives was conservation work on the fifteenth-century mosque of Zain al-'Abidin, the very one in the Denon view of 1798 (Fig. 1.3) and in Plate iv. Further important investigation of the substructure of this mosque was carried out by the Catalan team that has worked at Oxyrhynchus since 1992, as reported by Josep Padró, Chap. 10 below, pp. 129–38.

One of the first things the Arabic inhabitants did was to build the mosque known as that of Hassan ibn-Salih, close to the Bahr Yussuf on the site of what had apparently been the city's principal Christian church, probably in the last decades of the ninth century. Pillars of the Christian church still stand inside, it is not clear whether *in situ* or reused. Development did not sprawl but was kept in a tight area, so that excavation by the Kuwaiti team revealed layer upon layer of rebuilding, including a well-preserved street of perhaps the tenth century (Plate vii). The town soon gained renown as a centre for textile production. A particular hope was that it could be proved

that Bahnasa was the source of a special kind of lustre-painted pottery, a hope that was to remain unfulfilled, although the Kuwaiti team did locate nearly forty kilns (Fig. 9.27 below) to the north of the town, in an area Grenfell and Hunt's pencilled map (Fig. 1.8) labels as 'slag', kilns that did serve for pottery production but only for standard earthenware.

An assistant on the Kuwaiti team, Derek Kennet, took some splendid aerial photographs by sending his camera aloft attached to a kite on 200 metres of line. A thousand and more years of building on top of the ruins of their predecessors has brought the town to the state revealed by Plate viii. The ruined mosque of Zain al-'Abidin is at the top left; that of Hassan ibn-Salih, the first mosque built, is at the upper right, with the Bahr Yussuf just beyond. The well-preserved street (Plate vii) and the nearby yellow domed *qubba* of Abu Samra are located just out of the top left of this view. In a house adjacent, the Kuwaiti team found a pot containing a leather bag holding a hoard of 200 gold dinars (Plate ix), dating to the reign of the Fatimid caliph al-Hakim, AD 996–1021.

The Catalan team has explored in particular the necropolis area to the north-west of the modern village, which proved to have been used for burials from the fifth century BC through to the seventh century AD. The early tombs were particularly fine, consisting of linked stone-built vaulted chambers. Short reports appeared in *Nilus* and in the June 1993 issue of *Revista de arqueologia*. Fuller details and bibliography are given below by Josep Padró, pp. 129–30.

Having created mounds of their own rubbish over the sand-filled Roman ruins, the inhabitants have entered a new phase by burying their dead on the tops of these mounds, precluding further excavation. The occasional trench yields plentiful Arabic documents, mainly on paper, but - as expected - no pre-Arabic written material.

Preparation of the volumes of the Oxyrhynchus series is now entrusted to a team of General Editors and Advisory Editors. Each volume usually contains around fifty texts, and most recent volumes have each been the work of a dozen or

more different editors, both graduate students and international visiting scholars. In 1997 a ten-day Summer School was held as an introduction to the subject, with over thirty participants. In the summer of 1998 a conference was held in Oxford and London to celebrate a hundred years of Oxyrhynchus publication, with over a hundred international participants. A concurrent exhibition of papyri and site photographs was held in the the Ashmolean Museum's Eastern Art Department,

and images of this and other things may be seen on the Oxyrhynchus website, [www.papyrology.ox.ac.uk/POxy](http://www.papyrology.ox.ac.uk/POxy).

The most recently published volume of *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri* is volume LXX, which appeared in 2006 and takes the individual item publication numbers to 4802. The collection is rich enough that perhaps sometime in this twenty-first century the volumes will reach one hundred and beyond, and the items published approach 10,000.

## The Graeco-Roman Branch of the Egypt Exploration Society

E. G. Turner



GREEKS found their way to all parts of the ancient world, including Egypt. Under the later Pharaohs they figured as mercenaries, travellers, merchants and settlers; with Alexander the Great in 332 BC they entered Egypt as 'liberating' conquerors. They formed the ruling class under the Ptolemaic kings, provided middle-level administrative talent for the Romans and Byzantines until the time of Mahomet: a millennium, more or less. Literate men and women, proud of their artistic heritage and the resources of their language, like their forefathers they read and copied their literature on papyrus manuscripts; they had already adopted it for their private and administrative papers. They continued to use it in Egypt, and the papyrus codex (a manuscript in book, not roll, form) was in all likelihood the invention of the early Greek Christians of Egypt. Greek papyri written in the ancient world are preserved principally in Egypt, where it does not rain very much. They are an archaeological deposit of the written word.

It was in the 1880s that scholars first awoke to their importance, their abundance and the profligacy with which they were being destroyed.

Reprinted from *Excavating in Egypt: The Egypt Exploration Society, 1882–1982*, ed. T. G. H. James (London 1983) 161–78. The pagination of the original publication is indicated by small figures in parentheses; note that some page numbers are missing, as these pages contained plates not reproduced here. All notes are editorial except for nn. 1–2 in the table at the end.

*Cognoscenti* of an earlier date had prided themselves on the possession of an occasional papyrus roll or book. But in the 1880s such were generally little valued. Egyptians, becoming aware of the potential of their agriculture and eager to improve it, treated ancient town sites as a source of ready-made fertiliser. Of Europeans, Austrian scholars were the first to undertake papyrus salvage (mainly by organised collection) at Kiman Faris, the ancient Crocodilopolis. In 1888 Flinders Petrie (at a time when he was at loggerheads with the Egypt Exploration Fund) uncovered a beautifully written roll of Homer at Hawara. In 1889 he discovered the un plundered Ptolemaic cemetery at Gurob and, to his great surprise, found that the mummy cases of its burials were built up of written papyrus, treated as waste in antiquity. In 1888 and 1889 Wallis Budge tracked down Greek literary rolls found at Meir, and brought them to the British Museum. They included the lost monologues of Herodas, the *Constitution of Athens* by Aristotle, the choral poetry of Bacchylides; of these F. G. Kenyon was to give the first edition (of the Aristotle in January 1891).

Petrie's Homeric roll of 1888 (together with a lock of its owner's hair, for she was a literary lady) was presented by Petrie's backer, Jesse Haworth, a Manchester manufacturer, to the Bodleian Library. It is not fanciful to suppose that two young Oxford men, Bernard Pyne Grenfell

and Arthur Surridge Hunt, would have seen it there. Both were undergraduates at The Queen's College, to which the former went up in 1888, the latter in 1889. They were friends (they walked together in Tyrol in summer 1889). Both had distinguished records as students of Greek; after taking (162) Greats, both were appointed to the Craven Fellowship. Grenfell set himself to study economics, but A. C. Clark diverted him to Greek papyri. In the winter of 1893 he worked in Egypt under Petrie at Coptos, and began to purchase papyri on his own account. Petrie himself in the spring of 1894 bought the first roll of what was published under the title *The Revenue Laws of Ptolemy Philadelphus*, and Grenfell was entrusted with the edition. He sent the manuscript to the printer in summer 1895. This speed he achieved in spite of working for another season at Coptos, discovering a second roll of the *Revenue Laws*, finding additional mummies at Gurob, and preparing a separate volume of purchased papyri for press. This miscellaneous volume of seventy texts, *An Alexandrian Erotic Fragment and other Papyri chiefly Ptolemaic* (P. Grenf. I to scholars) was published in spring 1896 at almost the same moment as *The Revenue Laws*. A second volume of miscellaneous texts (P. Grenf. II) appeared in spring 1897, containing 146 items.

These 220-odd papyri (one of first-rate interest) acquired by desultory purchase during two winters were, no doubt, typical of the collection an individual traveller might form at this date. Grenfell used them as tangible proof of the need for a more positive approach. The great advances in knowledge of Pharaonic Egypt were clear to all; Greek and Roman settlements, so Grenfell argued, should equally be investigated before they disappeared. In the summer of 1895 the Committee of the Egypt Exploration Fund was persuaded to give financial backing to an exploratory tour of the sites in the Faiyum. So in the winter of 1895 Grenfell and D. G. Hogarth made a trial excavation at Kon Aushim and Umm el-Atl (or Kom el-Asl), ancient Karanis and Bacchias. In December the results were sufficiently promising for Grenfell to telegraph A. S. Hunt to join him. Hunt had chosen the palaeography of the Latin manuscripts of Spain as his field of study. He

responded almost instantly, and in January 1896 began a partnership more lasting and at least as productive as that of Gilbert and Sullivan.

The Committee of the Egypt Exploration Fund agreed to continue its financial support, but the locale of the next winter's exploration was changed to Bahnasa, Oxyrhynchus. The Committee's decision was endorsed at the Fund's Annual General Meeting on 13 November 1896, of which the minutes record: 'Mr. Hogarth pressed upon the Society the necessity for consistently devoting some fixed share of their energies and income to the recovery of classical papyri and the prosecution of Greek archaeology in Egypt . . . Professor Petrie described the destruction of history continually going on in Egypt and urged that every effort should be made by extended scientific excavation to rescue what still remained. He cordially agreed with Mr. Hogarth's proposal and pointed out that the work of the English-speaking races for Egyptology in Egypt could no longer be reported in a single annual volume, but that at least four separate branches with separate subscription lists and separate publications were imperatively needed.'

The excavation begun shortly afterwards at Bahnasa by Grenfell and Hunt did not disappoint expectations. After an initial uncertainty (the excavators were looking for cemeteries and could not believe that the object of their search was to be found in the ancient rubbish mounds), Greek papyri were harvested by the basketful. One of the earliest finds was a leaf of a papyrus book containing hitherto unknown *Logia Iesu*: (163) The Sayings of Our Lord. In the 1950s it was shown that they were a part of the uncanonical *Gospel of Thomas*. At the end of the season Grenfell and Hunt estimated their finds at 300 literary items, 3,000 Greek documents, together with a sprinkling of Latin, Coptic and Arabic texts. 'After handing over to the Egyptian Government 150 of the most complete rolls (the publication of which is reserved to the Fund) the explorers brought to England upwards of 280 boxes of papyri' (Prospectus, autumn 1897).

The excavation had been run on a shoe-string budget. 'Mr. Grenfell received in all the sum of £50 towards his personal expenses, during an ab-

sence from this country of more than five months; Mr. Hunt received nothing whatever' (Honorary Treasurer's report to the Annual General Meeting of the Fund, November 1897). Tribute must be paid now, as it was then, to the generosity as well as farsightedness of the Egypt Exploration Fund in supporting work which was only marginal to its main aims. However, it was realised in 1897 that it was unfair to expect the indefinite continuation of such support. Besides, printing costs had to be faced. The *Logia* were published as a separate pamphlet within six weeks of the arrival of the papyrus in England at the beginning of June 1897. More than 30,000 copies were sold (price two shillings with collotype plates, sixpence in a cheap edition with reproduction from blocks). Less sensational texts could not expect to find the ready sale of the *Logia*. *Revenue Laws*, P. Grenfell I and II had been published at the charges of the Clarendon Press. A University Press, generous to scholarship as it was, was not unreasonable in being reluctant to guarantee the costs of what might prove a series of volumes somewhat limited in market appeal. The solution was found in the adoption in part of Petrie's suggestion of the previous autumn.

The minute of a Special Meeting of the Committee of the fund on Thursday, 1 July 1897 records:

Sir E. Maunde Thompson in the chair, Mr. Cotton Hon. Sec., Mr. H. A. Grueber Hon. Treas., Professor Sayce, Mr. Crum, Mr. Farmer Hall and Mrs. Tirard:

The Publication Sub-Committee submitted a report on the measures they had taken for the publication of the *Logia*.

The publication Sub-Committee also submitted a draft prospectus, inviting subscriptions for a new department of the Fund, to be called the Graeco-Roman Research Account, for the discovery and publication of the remains of classical antiquity and early Christianity in Egypt. The draft prospectus was approved.

1 July 1897 was the birthday of what is now known as Graeco-Roman Branch of the Egypt Exploration Society. It was the first association in the world formed with the specific object of excavating for papyri and publishing them.

No doubt the special meeting was needed quickly so that the prospectus could be printed at once on the back cover of the *Logia*. It was, and on 13 July Petrie wrote to Cotton pointing out that the title 'Graeco-Roman Research Account' was already in use for a fund in favour of students at University College London. By October the new name 'Graeco-Roman Branch' was appearing on a separately issued prospectus. A guinea a year entitled the subscriber to a volume of the new Graeco-Roman memoirs as well as the Archaeological Report of the Egypt Exploration Fund, and (165) subscriptions came in satisfactorily. At the Fund's Annual General Meeting on 10 November 1897 it was announced that subscribers included the Prime Minister, the Lord Chancellor, the Speaker of the House of Commons, seven bishops, three deans, seventy members of the ancient universities (including twelve college libraries), Trinity College, Dublin, and the four Scottish universities.

The winter of 1897/8 was the only one between 1893 and 1908 that Grenfell did not pass in Egypt. He and Hunt spent it in the preparation of the first Graeco-Roman memoir, *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, Part I. Its preface is dated April 1898, eleven months after the first papyri reached Oxford. It is of 284 pages, has eight superb collotype plates, and 158 texts published in full (six 'theological', twenty-three of Greek literature new and old, three Latin). Forty-nine additional documents were described briefly. The selection was made to illustrate the range in both subject and time of the finds; and the transcriptions are careful and thoughtful. The increase of knowledge has faulted them occasionally: it is instructive to note how often it is the editors themselves who later corrected their own readings.

In lay-out *P. Oxy. I* was at once recognised as setting a pattern for the publication of papyri, which has now been almost universally adopted as model. A concise introduction summarises the content and interest of the text transcribed; the transcription (in the documents articulated into words, given accents and punctuation) retains the spelling of the scribe, faulty orthography or syntax being mended in a succinct critical apparatus. 'I have not thought it worth while to disfigure

the pages by the constant insertion of *sic*, wrote Grenfell in *Revenue Laws*, p. vi. There follows a translation, and a brief commentary on the content, 'evading no difficulty but free from superfluity', as H. I. Bell wrote (*Dictionary of National Biography*, 1922–30, s.v. Grenfell, p. 362).

The progress of excavation and publication over the next ten years is most easily comprehended in the tabulation, shown on pp. 24–5, which has the additional advantage of freeing my narrative from the need constantly to catalogue and calendar, and allowing me space to give a short account of excavation practice and methods. Since in *Greek Papyri* I have given long extracts from reports on the first thrilling season at Bahnasa, I shall not repeat them here, but quote from accounts of the work of later seasons at that site. I have taken the liberty of quoting at some length passages from an unpublished lecture by Grenfell.<sup>1</sup>

Activity on the site seems to have gone on until sunset – a long day of work began at first light. Normally there were only Grenfell and Hunt to take charge. Both would have exchanged shifts, but Grenfell writes as though he directed operations out of doors on the dig, and Hunt took responsibility for registering finds in the expedition house, undertook preliminary cleaning and relaxing of the crumpled papyri, and supervised the packing. Under an experienced nucleus of thirty foremen, up to an additional 150–80 men and boys could work in the trenches. When finds were coming in steadily but not in a rush, 100 men would be employed and the wages bill ran to £30 a week. Grenfell's letters speak highly of the skill of his foremen, and of the honesty and quickness to learn of the men from Bahnasa. By contrast those at El-Hiba were idle and careless. Grenfell believed that on the whole he lost very little. Of course, some texts would have been held back or cut for private gain. Those of us (166) who edit the papyri long after the discovery and identify a piece in another collection as part of one of ours can be sure of theft only if there is a knife-

cut edge between joining pieces. Supervision of 200 men was difficult. On 17 January 1906 Grenfell wrote to H. A. Grueber, Honorary Treasurer of the Fund, at a time when large extra numbers had been taken on: 'Most of the men are by this time equally expert and untrustworthy and ceaseless vigilance is necessary. Various dealers have been hanging about recently, and last Sunday we decoyed and arrested 3, confiscating the anticas upon them, which were not from this site. It is fairly clear that the leakage has not been serious at any rate.'

It has already been remarked that the finds made at Bahnasa were obtained, not from Graeco-Roman cemeteries or from buildings, but from ancient rubbish mounds. Let Grenfell tell the story in his own words:

The papyri which one finds in the mounds have all been thrown away as rubbish. In this respect Oxyrhynchus offers a marked contrast to the town sites in the Fayum, like Dimeh, from which so many Greek papyri have come. There owing to the contraction of the margin of cultivation in the fourth century many towns were abandoned by their inhabitants, and in the ruins of the houses one may find on the floor numerous papyri, often tied together in bundles, just as they were when the houses were deserted. But at Oxyrhynchus there are hardly any remains of buildings; the bricks and still more the stones have been carried away to be used as building material for succeeding generations. Of the massive Ptolemaic temple dedicated to Isis, Sarapis and Osiris, which once rivalled in splendour the shrines of Dendera and Edfou, the walls can only be discerned by the lines of limestone chips where the stone-masons have removed the blocks.

This passage is repeated in full to counter the calumny (which I have heard uttered in 1980 by Egyptologists who should know better) that Grenfell and Hunt destroyed the sites at which they worked in their mad scramble to win papyri for their collections. True, they published few or no site plans: it was a question of priorities in the use of scarce time. Grenfell's statement about Bahnasa is corroborated by Flinders Petrie, who spent two months there in spring 1922, and found a railway laid down to the mounds: 'Every day

<sup>1</sup> This lecture is kept with Grenfell and Hunt's papers in the Papyrology Rooms, Sackler Library, Oxford. A version of it was delivered in Berlin on 6 August 1908.

a train of 100 or 150 tons of earth leaves this area.' Petrie found only one inscription (of Byzantine date); Grenfell records none. Yet Graeco-Roman Oxyrhynchus must have been filled with inscriptions. They, like the walls on which they were placed, have been robbed for stone, and the marble will have found its way to the lime kiln.

Grenfell continues:

The method of digging a mound on a large scale is extremely simple. The workmen are divided into groups of 4 or 6, half men, half boys, and in the beginning are arranged in a line along the bottom of one side of a mound, each group having a space two metres broad and about 3 metres long assigned to it. At Oxyrhynchus the level at which damp has destroyed all papyrus is the flat ground within a few inches of the surface, and in a mound this damp level tends to rise somewhat, though of course not nearly so quickly as the mound rises itself. When one trench has been dug down to the damp level, one proceeds to excavate another (168) immediately above it, and throw the earth into the trench which has been finished, and so on right through the mound until one reaches the crest, when one begins again from the other side. The particular mixture of earth mixed with straw and bits of wood in which papyrus is found, and which is to the papyrus digger what quartz is to the gold-seeker, sometimes runs in clearly marked strata between other layers of cinders, bricks or all kinds of debris containing no papyrus, but in many of the mounds at Oxyrhynchus papyri are found continuously down to a depth of five or even eight metres. As a rule the well preserved documents are discovered within 3 metres of the surface; in the lower strata the papyri tend to be more fragmentary, though our trenches in a few mounds have reached 9 metres at the highest parts before coming to the damp level . . .

Most of the larger pieces are found by the men working in the trench, who of course have to use their hands entirely, not the hoes, when it is a question of extricating so delicate a material; but it is inevitable that small pieces should be sometimes passed over by the man who is actually digging, and each basketful has to be examined carefully when it is emptied.

The clouds of dust and sand, which are quite inevitable when one is digging in very loose dry soil on the edge of the desert, give you an idea of

the difficulties under which the excavator for papyri has to work. It is really marvellous how the men manage to keep their eyes open through it all. The brick building on the top of the mound [Grenfell comments on a lantern slide] is a much venerated shekh's tomb. The large mediaeval and modern Necropolis of Behnesa extends over part of the ancient mounds, and in this mound in particular the presence of the tombs on the summit presented considerable obstacles to our work, which however we were, fortunately for science, able to overcome. On completing our excavations in it, we restored and repainted the shekh's tomb, and this circumstance coupled with the fact that on one very windy day I was obliged owing to the dust to tie a handkerchief over one eye, has given rise to a curious legend. They will tell you if you go to Behnesa, how when we were digging that mound the spirit of the shekh appeared to me in a dream, after vainly trying to persuade me to desist from our excavations threatened me with blindness, which duly fell upon me (there the handkerchief comes in). Afterwards however the shekh reflected that the poor people of the village had been earning very high wages by the work (one gives a bakhshish for each papyrus found in addition to the daily wage, and the luckier workmen were receiving what were for them considerable sums), and that after all we had no intention of disturbing his own tomb; so he repented and appeared again to me and consented to restore my sight on condition that I repainted his tomb and made it the finest of all the shekh's tombs in the cemetery, as indeed it now unquestionably is.

The winter of 1905 provided some sensational finds, and I quote from Grenfell's letters and reports:

[On 28 December 1905] we moved to a group of mounds, in which the papyri ranged from the 1st to the 5th century. This has been extremely rich not only in documents but also in literary fragments, principally of the 2nd and 3rd centuries. The climax in point of quantity was reached on Jan. 10, when we found more papyri than we have ever done, except on two days in 1897 and one day in 1900; while on Jan. 13 and 14 we were fortunate enough to make incomparably the (169) largest and most important find of classical pieces that we have ever made (letter to Grueber).

Some picturesque details are added in the reports in *The Times* for 14 May 1906 (where the date of this find is confused with a later one and wrongly given as 28 January), and the Egypt Exploration Fund *Archaeological Report* for 1905/6, p. 8 f.:

. . . shortly before sunset [on 13 January] we reached, at about 6 feet from the surface, a place where in the third century A.D. a basketful of broken literary papyrus rolls had been thrown away. In the fading light it was impossible to extricate the whole find that evening; but a strong guard was posted on the spot during the night, and the remainder was safely removed in the following forenoon. Before being condemned to the rubbish heap, the papyri had as usual been torn up.

Four of these rolls were published in 1908 in *Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, v; by 1919 and the appearance of *Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, XIII, the whole find had been edited. It comprised a number of lost works: an extensive MS of Pindar, Paeans, another containing a history of the fourth century BC whose author we now call 'The Oxyrhynchus Historian', Euripides, *Hypsipyle*, Antiphon, *On Truth*, Aeschines Socraticus, some speeches of Lysias and of Hypereides, a commentary on Thucydides, a treatise on literature, and an oration on the cult of Caesar. Of known works there was an extensive MS of Plato's *Symposium* and two of his *Phaedrus*, one each of Thucydides and Isocrates.

The letter previously quoted notes: 'We are employing 210 men and boys, a number which represents the absolute limit, since Hunt cannot deal with more than 30 different lots of papyri a day.' Shortly afterwards Grenfell wrote again: 'On Jan. 16 work on a new mound was begun. It proves to be not only extraordinarily rich but very deep, and since many of the best papyri are in the very lowest levels, the progress of our trenches through it is extremely slow' (letter to Grueber, 25 January 1906). Then on 27–9 January a third find was made: 'Though it cannot be compared in importance to its predecessors, it was quite exceptionally good. It consists of a very large quantity of documents (chiefly 2nd–3rd cent.) interspersed with numerous literary fragments . . . The

papyri were found at the bottom of the deepest part of the trench, over 25 feet down . . . From the upper levels we have continued to find nearly every day as I anticipated scattered pieces belonging to the second large literary find, occasionally in handfuls.'

The idea that excavation could be finished in 1906 had to be abandoned. More 'scattered pieces belonging to the second large literary find' were recovered in the winter of 1906/7, and Grenfell and Hunt did not even then finish the digging of this mound.

From time to time in his letters Grenfell refers to financial anxieties. Will the money hold out? In spring 1906, with finds abundant and money short, the excavators offered to forego their expenses. An intensive lecture campaign was planned for the following autumn to finance a campaign in the next season (no doubt it is from the text of that lecture that extracts have already been given). It may be suspected that the (171) reason why in 1900/1 the Egypt Exploration Fund was not a backer of the dig at Tebtunis was because the kitty was empty. Mrs Phoebe Hearst and the University of California put up the money and paid for the publication. The texts from the mummified crocodiles went to Berkeley, where they are now in the Rare Book Room. *The Tebtunis Papyri*, I (1902), was a joint publication of the Fund and the University of California, *The Tebtunis Papyri*, II (1907), originally a publication of California only; it has now been reclaimed for the Graeco-Roman publications series of the Society's Graeco-Roman Branch.

The need to economise led Grenfell and Hunt to undertake personally all the ancillary tasks which would nowadays be performed by a technical staff. They themselves relaxed their finds and dismantled the mummy cases. The papyri were not mounted between glass but kept between sheets of the *Oxford University Gazette*. No photographs were made until wanted for publication, no cleaning or 'conservation' undertaken. As late as 1928 Hunt wrote that 'a comprehensive view of the material has not yet been obtainable. The editors have been obliged . . . to content themselves with a periodical opening of a few boxes' (letter to the *Daily Telegraph*, 13 October 1928).

The work was done cheerfully. Whether excavating, travelling or editing, Grenfell and Hunt remained firm friends. Their partnership constituted a 'single creative personality, *eine schöpferische Einheit*', in the phrase of Ulrich Wilcken. Such harmonious collaboration is rare among front-ranking scholars. Together they published far more in quantity and with a higher degree of accuracy and acumen than either of them could have achieved alone. Hunt has recorded the value of constant discussion and of two pairs of eyes for the solution of difficulties. 'In the winter at our Egyptian camp we seldom saw another European; in the summer months our editorial work was mostly done in the same room. Problems which arose in the field, difficulties of decipherment and interpretation were ventilated and discussed. Copies of papyri were exchanged for the purpose of collation, and whatever one wrote was revised by the other' (*Proceedings of the British Academy* 12 (1926), p. 362).

They were incomparable decipherers; and both had the power of grasping the bearing on old problems of new evidence and of penetrating quickly to the heart of a difficulty even in an unfamiliar field. 'Dynamic' is the favourite adjective used by his friends to describe Grenfell. When action was under discussion, his instinct was to find reasons for doing something, Hunt's reasons for not doing it. Grenfell was the faster worker. Analysis once completed, Grenfell would settle down to write and then move on to something else. Hunt was more cautious, steadier, readier to take a second look. In contrast to Grenfell's epistolary torrent, Hunt's letters are laconic, fussy about detail, almost prim. Grenfell especially enjoyed history, chronological complexities, economics, topography, textual criticism. Hunt understood the precisions of the law and the relevance of documents. It is likely that he was the more sensitive to literature of the pair;<sup>1</sup> certainly his was the palaeographical brain. Mind and eye co-operated in

palaeographical judgements that stand up amazingly to new discoveries. 'You had to get up early in the morning', E. Lobel once remarked to me, 'to catch Hunt out on a palaeographical question.' The level of Hunt's scholarship can be judged from the three volumes of *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, VII–IX, and two volumes (172) of *Rylands Papyri* on which his name only without his colleague's stands on the title-page. No failure of imagination or accuracy is to be observed in them.

The partnership was in fact interrupted in 1908, when Grenfell had a serious breakdown in health. An outside observer might reasonably infer that it was caused by over-exertion. Hunt denies the inference, and states that Grenfell had an inherited tendency to nervous depression. Illness had first struck him in Egypt in December 1906. During his absence from the dig for nearly two months Hunt had to manage alone at Bahnasa. He was helped by the young A. M. Blackman (on his first season of field-work). On leaving Egypt in March 1907 Grenfell and Hunt left their camping gear behind. A return was envisaged in spite of the financial stringency and the prospect of infinite editorial work. In fact, neither man participated again in an excavation. A friendly Antiquities Service kept the concession at Bahnasa open for them. In 1908 a dig was planned,<sup>2</sup> but abandoned on 15 October 1908 because of Grenfell's illness.

In July 1909 a new season of excavation was at the planning stage. In the event Hunt did not go, but put the expedition in the hands of J. de M. Johnson, later to be Oxford University's Printer. Sites were examined at Atfih and elsewhere, with no great success. In another season in 1913/14 Johnson made useful investigations at Antinoë, and brought back fragments of beautifully illustrated books, a welcome MS of Theocritus and the teaching material of a shorthand school. An exhibition of the finds was held at the Society of Antiquaries, Burlington House, on 13–28 July 1914. In the next week the First World War broke out and an era closed. John Johnson became Assistant

<sup>1</sup> 'It is likely' is an understatement; according to Hunt, 'B. P. Grenfell 1869–1926', *PBA* 12 (1926) 363, '[Grenfell's] bent was historical rather than literary'; and in Grenfell's own words, quoted from the unpublished lecture, 'when it is a question of soaring into the higher regions of poesy, it is generally Mr. Hunt who

mounts Pegasus. My muse is more pedestrian, and prefers to remain on solid earth.'

<sup>2</sup> But not at Oxyrhynchus; see p. 37 below.

Secretary to the Delegates of the Oxford University Press, and was lost to papyrological studies. The specified items of published papyri were sent back to Cairo, and the other published texts were distributed as gifts to libraries and institutions throughout the world.

Since 1914 the Graeco-Roman Branch has sponsored no excavation specifically to search for papyri. At its twenty-fifth anniversary exhibition organised in the British Museum in 1922 publication, not excavation, was declared to be its aim, and this has remained true. Of course, Greek and Roman papyri have come to the Egypt Exploration Society since that date and been published by its Graeco-Roman editors, but the Society's regular Egyptological expeditions have uncovered them. The Sacred Animal Necropolis at Saqqara has provided some texts, notably the oldest dateable papyrus documents in Greek, discovered by Dr Geoffrey Martin in 1972. Qasr Ibrim has supplied an unlooked-for wealth: in 1976 a letter of the king of the Blemmyes, in 1978 part of a roll containing verses of Cornelius Gallus. Both were published with a speed that would have earned the approval of Grenfell.

The editor who is confronted with a complete papyrus is a lucky man. The literary rolls torn up in antiquity which formed the bulk of the big literary finds of 1906 set a special problem. The fragments must be put together again. Grenfell and especially Hunt tackled the task courageously. Their editions of *Hypsipyle*, of Sophocles' *Searching Satyrs*, the *Iambi* of Callimachus ('the most difficult papyrus that I have yet had to deal with', as Hunt wrote to Grueber, 17 July 1909). Sappho and Alcaeus (*Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, x, 1231-4) yielded moving poetry as well as literary history. In 1914 acknowledgement is first made in print to Edgar Lobel (*Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, x, p. 45). Over the next sixty years his skill and scholarship were to reconstitute (174) substantial portions of this lost literature. On Hunt's death in 1934 the Society entrusted the care of the collection to him. Between 1941 and 1972 his is the only name to appear as editor of nine volumes of the *Oxyrhynchus* series, to six others his is the major contribution. During these years his austere volumes were purchased by libraries throughout the world, and

their sale maintained the Society's publication fund in the black.

The principles of this kind of work are worth a short characterisation. The first step is to assemble scraps which are judged to be in the same handwriting, then, if possible, to separate them into their original rolls and identify the authors involved. One and the same scribe frequently copied more than one MS (one, for instance, is known to have copied at least Bacchylides, Erinna, Herodotus and Aeschines): it is likely therefore that there will be some near misses in the process. Identification by content (recognition of a topic or a known fragment, metre, dialect) is only one of the rules worked out for each example. One set of rules derives from the physical properties of papyri and the ancient mode of manufacturing a roll, a second set is furnished by what can be inferred about a scribe's habits and his methods of laying out his book. Normally the writing will be in columns, to reconstruct which it will be necessary to discover the number of lines in each and the number of letters per line. Titles, margins, line-ends or beginnings are aids to the establishment of a physical framework. The papyrologist is therefore not only a good reader of difficult hand-writing but a mender, comparable to the pot mender on an archaeological site. He must know a lot of Greek as well as have a good eye and quick mind - and, of course, perseverance. Working by such methods Mr Lobel has recreated for the modern world considerable portions of lost poetry - Hesiod, Callimachus, Aeschylus, Sappho, Alcaeus, Anacreon, Alcman, Stesichorus, Simonides, Pindar among others.

I hope Mr Lobel will forgive me for writing these words which record his enormous contribution to modern Greek scholarship. He has always shunned publicity and acknowledgement: in scholarly achievement and temperament he resembles his own much-loved Callimachus. And he enjoys a reputation for pungency of comment on others, if not of polemic against them, reminiscent of the author of the famous preface to the *Aitia*. The remarks his colleagues treasure are barbed hyperbole, but they have a sting justified by knowledge: 'Euripides, like Wilamowitz, knew no Greek.' I must personally admit to trepidation

on my first visit to him because of his reputation for severity. Severe he is. But his wit, courtesy and wide range of interest make a visit to him an occasion of intense pleasure.<sup>1</sup>

Mr Lobel has set a standard for papyrologists: they are expected to be impeccable, infallible and omniscient. As a member of the post-Lobel generation I recognise an ideal and a handicap. Exacting original work cannot be done in a hurry, nor can the preparation for publication of other people's labours. If work is to be speeded up, scholars must turn themselves into papyrologists. There is no short cut: a 'provisional transcription', often thoughtlessly demanded, is in effect an edition. The Oxyrhynchus team has resolved to adhere to the tradition that texts must be published before they are made generally available, on the ground that faulty transcriptions do harm that cannot be undone. *Nescit vox missa reverti*.

(176) 'The Oxyrhynchus Team': a committee has in effect replaced one man. There was a major effort of reorganisation in the 1960s, tried out with pilot grants from the Gulbenkian Foundation and the British Academy. Since 1966 the British Academy has shared the responsibility with the Egypt Exploration Society. The preface to Part xxxiii of the *Oxyrhynchus Papyri* sets out the details:

In 1966 the British Academy accepted as one of its major research projects the task of cataloguing and preparing for publication the unedited Greek and Latin papyri in the Oxyrhynchus collection. Its generous support, and the prospect of continuation of that support over a period of years, has made it possible to set additional technicians and staff to work on the physical preparation of the material, on the compilation of an inventory of the damped-out papyri, and the formation of a corpus of photographs of them. This work is being done under the supervision of a committee of the British Academy, which has made it its business to combine effectively the resources of the Academy and the very considerable technical help and facilities offered in

London by University College and in Oxford by the Ashmolean Museum (through the Grenfell and Hunt library) and the Faculty Board of Literae Humaniores. The Egypt Exploration Society will continue to bear the cost of and take scholarly responsibility for publication. Its general editors hope to be able to recruit additional scholars for the exacting task of editing papyri, a burden which Mr. Lobel has borne too long alone.

There is reason to be pleased with what has been accomplished since this arrangement was made. Fifteen volumes of the *Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, one of the *Tebtunis Papyri* and a location list have been printed.<sup>2</sup> The resources of photography have been utilised, indeed, developed, and conservation techniques pioneered. New methods of dismounting mummy cases are being tested: in the first trials at University College London the scientific methods have proved spectacularly successful, even if the Greek contents have so far appeared humdrum. In publication special attention has been paid to non-literary papyri, since Mr Lobel confined himself to literature. Part xl contained a closely knit archive on the public corn ration at Oxyrhynchus in the third century of our era: its implications for the social and economic history of the Roman Empire are still being worked out. Documents are being marshalled by type and archives are being isolated. And there will still be a good harvest of Greek literature: work on some five or six collections of torn-up lyric poetry is making progress, as is the preparation of texts of prose authors. At present Part xlviii of the *Oxyrhynchus Papyri* has appeared, and the general editors have more than enough material in hand in typescript to reach Part l. The Oxyrhynchus Committee is in good heart, confident that the illumination of Graeco-Roman antiquity will continue through the efforts of the Graeco-Roman Branch of the Egypt Exploration Society.

<sup>1</sup> See Turner's *Nachruf* on Lobel in *Gnomon* 55 (1983) 275–80.

<sup>2</sup> As of 1983; more of course have appeared since then.

*Grenfell and Hunt's first ten years*

|      | Excavation <sup>a</sup> or Travelling                         | Publication<br>(for E.E.F.) |                                     | Volume<br>to sub-<br>scribers        | Editorial work; and other publications<br>of Grenfell and Hunt <sup>2</sup> |
|------|---------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1895 | Grenfell with Petrie;<br>Gurob                                | <i>Revenue Laws</i>         | a. Oct. '95 <sup>1</sup><br>b. 1896 |                                      |                                                                             |
| 1896 | Grenfell, Hogarth, Hunt<br>in Faiyum<br>(E.E.F. Season 1)     | <i>P. Grenf.</i> I          | a. Dec. '95<br>b. 1896              |                                      |                                                                             |
| 1897 | Bahnasa 1<br>(E.E.F. Season 2)                                | <i>P. Grenf.</i> II         | a. Oct. '96<br>b. 1897              |                                      |                                                                             |
|      | Graeco-Roman Branch founded                                   | <i>Logia Iesu</i>           | b. July '97                         |                                      |                                                                             |
| 1898 | (Not in Egypt)                                                | <i>P. Oxy.</i> I            | a. April 27<br>b. 1898              | ✓                                    | Revised text of Menander, <i>Georgos</i>                                    |
| 1899 | Faiyum<br>(G.-R. Branch Season 1)                             | <i>P. Oxy.</i> II           | a. Sept. '99<br>b. 1899             | ✓                                    |                                                                             |
| 1900 | (Tebtunis: Univ. of<br>California)                            | <i>Fayum Towns</i>          | a. n.d.<br>b. 1900                  | ✓                                    | <i>P. Amherst</i> I                                                         |
| 1901 | Faiyum<br>(G.-R. Branch Season 2)<br>(cartonnage unpublished) |                             |                                     | ✓<br>See 1902                        | <i>P. Amherst</i> II                                                        |
| 1902 | El-Hiba (Faiyum) 1<br>(G.-R. Branch Season 3)                 | <i>P. Teb.</i> I            | a. May '02<br>b. 1902               | ✓<br>Double<br>vol. 1901<br>and 1902 |                                                                             |
| 1903 | El-Hiba 2<br>Bahnasa 2<br>(G.-R. Branch Season 4)             | <i>P. Oxy.</i> III          | a. June '03<br>b. 1903              | ✓                                    | <i>P. Cairo</i> (Cat. gén. . . . Musée du Caire,<br>Nos. 10001–10869)       |
| 1904 | Bahnasa 3<br>(G.-R. Branch Season 5)                          | <i>P. Oxy.</i> IV           | a. April '04<br>b. 1904             | ✓                                    |                                                                             |
| 1905 | Bahnasa 4<br>(G.-R. Branch Season 6)                          |                             |                                     | ✓<br>See 1906                        |                                                                             |
| 1906 | Bahnasa 5<br>(G.-R. Branch Season 7)                          |                             | a. May '06<br>b. 1906               | ✓<br>Double<br>vol. 1905<br>and 1906 |                                                                             |

| Excavation <sup>a</sup> or Travelling                                    | Publication<br>(for E.E.F.)           | Volume<br>to sub-<br>scribers                     | Editorial work; and other publications<br>of Grenfell and Hunt <sup>2</sup> |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1907 Bahnasa 6<br>(G.-R. Branch Season 8)<br>(Grenfell ill)              |                                       | ✓<br>(late)                                       | <i>P. Teb.</i> II<br>a. June '07<br>b. 1907                                 |
| 1908 No excavation<br>(Excavation planned but<br>abandoned) <sup>b</sup> | <i>P. Oxy.</i> v<br><i>P. Oxy.</i> VI | a. Oct. '07<br>b. 1908<br>a. Sept. '08<br>b. 1908 |                                                                             |

<sup>1</sup> a . . date of Preface  
b . . date of imprint

<sup>2</sup> A selection

<sup>a</sup> Except for the excavation of 1903, all other excavations started in December of the previous year; thus for '1895' read '1894/5', for '1896' read '1895/6', etc. See also Chap. 28 below.

<sup>b</sup> No excavation was planned for the winter of 1907/8; the excavation 'planned but abandoned' was for the winter of 1908/9.

## News Reports: The Excavations and their Journalistic Coverage

Dominic Montserrat



THE first Egyptological event to create a media circus is often said to be the discovery of Tutankhamun's tomb in 1922. In fact, one might make out a good case for the Egypt Exploration Fund's digs at Oxyrhynchus occupying a comparable place in the less well-developed media of the decade between 1897 and 1907. The journalistic ball started rolling with the sensational finds of an important early Christian papyrus, the *Logia Iesou* or 'Sayings of Jesus', in the first season, and thereafter general interest in the excavations never flagged. Bernard Grenfell, Arthur Hunt, and others associated with the Oxyrhynchus digs wrote lively accounts of their discoveries for the popular illustrated press, scholarly articles for more sober periodicals such as *The Times* and *Athenaeum*, catalogues of public exhibitions of the small finds, and lectures, illustrated with magic-lantern slides, that gave not only tantalizing glimpses of the literary riches yielded by the rubbish mounds of the city but also a feel of the romance of digging in Egypt. As the first volumes of texts from the excavations began to appear, they received long, anecdotal reviews in an amazingly disparate range of daily newspapers, magazines, and non-specialist journals. The general tenor of these is *plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose*, concentrating on the human immediacy of the non-literary papyri. One review is tellingly entitled *Old World Home Life*; another calls the dig 'an event which has joined the hands of then and

now'.<sup>1</sup> All this stimulated further interest in Oxyrhynchus and its texts among a wide reading public. A sure sign of the media impact is that Oxyrhynchus and papyrus-hunting began to filter down into popular culture, including novels and popular songs.<sup>2</sup> Just as with Tutankhamun, there

<sup>1</sup> Reviews in *The Christian World* (July 1898) and *The Periodical* (Sept. 1897). A note in *The Globe* (11 Nov. 1898) suggests that the Oxyrhynchus papyri were considered even more topical: 'According to the Egypt Exploration Society [*sic*] some portions of the "Iliad" have been discovered "written on the back of an important document relating to the rights of married women, and also a list of the winners in the Olympian horse races." The Married Women's Property Act and the "All the Winners Speshul" of our modern metropolis are, then, not so new as some of us have perhaps imagined. But which was the "important" document, the "Iliad", the Women's Act, or the race report?'

<sup>2</sup> Grenfell's often-repeated anecdote about the crocodile mummies at Tebtunis (for media references, see L. Deuel, *Testaments of Time* (London 1966) 151) may have influenced a popular song from Owen Hall's musical comedy *A Greek Slave* (lyrics by Harry Greenbank and Adrian Ross, music by Sidney Jones), which ran at Daly's Theatre for 349 performances from 8 June 1898 to 2 June 1899. This has a character called Heliodorus the wizard, who tells how he learned to become 'the mightiest magician of the age' in Egypt, and the Chorus replies: 'So now he is a marvel of a mage, | Through reading the papyrus of a page | From the gummy little tummy of a rummy sort of mummy | He's the mightiest magician of the age.'

is even a journalistically embroidered myth about supernatural retribution upon the excavators.<sup>1</sup>

All this may not come as a surprise. The reading public in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century were more aware of the classical world; also, papyri related to the development of Christianity would have an obvious appeal to a late-Victorian Christian milieu. One might also speculate that the appearance of papyri as props in widely exhibited and reproduced historical paintings of the 1870s and 1880s accustomed people to seeing them and prepared the way for interest in discoveries of the real thing.<sup>2</sup> But in this paper I shall argue that a high media profile for the dig at Oxyrhynchus was a necessity, and that column inches and digging went hand in hand. From the inception of the Egypt Exploration Fund (henceforth the EEF) in 1882, its founder Amelia Edwards had made great efforts to publicize its activities, partly because of her own career background in popular journalism.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, between 1897 and 1907 the EEF was often in a precarious financial state, and its Graeco-Roman Branch (which organized and paid for the digs at Oxyrhynchus), was on an uncertain footing. Publicity meant more interest: more interest meant more subscriptions and donations. Therefore, because the seasons of excavation and their reportage fed off each other, it is important to consider both in tandem.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This is the story that Grenfell was struck blind by the Sheikh whose tomb was disturbed during the excavations, but healed when he realized the benefits of the dig for the people of Behnesa: see E. G. Turner, 'The Graeco-Roman Branch', in T. G. H. James (ed.), *Excavating in Egypt* (London 1983) 168 (= Chap. 2 above, p. 21). Grenfell was evidently fond of repeating variants of the legend himself: see *The Western Daily Press* [Bristol] (3 March 1908) and *The Times* (30 Jan. 1908).

<sup>2</sup> See works such as Edwin Long's *Christ or Diana* (1881), where a large and accurately-painted Greek papyrus symbolizes Christian faith, and many paintings by Laurence Alma-Tadema, such as *A Reading from Homer* (1885), where the rhapsode reads from the Bankes Homer, *A Favourite Poet* (1888), and *Prose* (1879), all illustrated in E. Prettejohn (ed.), *Sir Laurence Alma-Tadema* (Amsterdam 1997).

<sup>3</sup> See Joan Rees, *Amelia Edwards: Traveller, Novelist & Egyptologist* (London 1998) 54–5.

<sup>4</sup> The standard accounts of the dig at Oxyrhynchus

#### DIGGING AT OXYRHYNCHUS, 1896–1907

Grenfell and Hunt had had their first experience of digging for papyrus with David Hogarth at Bacchias and Karanis in the winter of 1895–6.<sup>5</sup> Significantly, this excavation also provided the prototype for publicizing discoveries. Hogarth immediately produced an emotive account of the dig for *The Times* of 7 April 1896, and two thinly fictionalized versions in short stories for major literary magazines: 'On the Fringe of the Desert' (*Cornhill Magazine* 74 (Sept. 1896) 347–53) and 'Cycling in the Desert' (*National Review* 27 (1896) 701–9) – the latter mostly about a new type of patent bicycle. At all events, the appetite of the reading public had been whetted. The great success of this season stimulated the search for a suitable site elsewhere, but the question of where to excavate for papyrus was difficult. At its meeting on 6 October 1896, the Committee of the EEF heard a letter from Grenfell, offering his own money for a dig to expedite matters, 'for fear the site might in the meantime be excavated by another'. At this point, he was still hoping to negotiate with the Antiquities Service for a Fayum site. But only a month later, at the Committee meeting of Tuesday 10 November 1896, Grenfell had made the decision to dig at Behnesa, the site of the ancient Oxyrhynchus. The minutes record, 'Mr Grenfell, finding that Oxyrhynchus was included in Prof. Petrie's concession, decided to go there instead of asking for a fresh site in the Fayum.' Petrie had obtained permission to dig anywhere in an eighty-mile strip of the desert fringe of the western Nile valley from immediately south of the neck of the Fayum to Minya, with Behnesa lying at the extreme south of the concession. An anecdote (based on a passage of

are both by E. G. Turner: in *Greek Papyri: An Introduction* (Oxford 1980<sup>2</sup>) 27–33, and 'The Graeco-Roman Branch' 162–72 (= Chap. 2 above, pp. 18–24). A rather livelier and more anecdotal account, in part based on coverage in the American press, is given by L. Deuel, *Testaments of Time* (London 1966) 132–64.

<sup>5</sup> See my '“No Papyrus and No Portraits”: Grenfell, Hogarth and the First Season in the Fayyum, 1895–6', *BASP* 33 (1996) 133–75.

the *Historia monachorum in Aegypto*) repeated in several newspaper accounts of the first season gives a clue to why the unpromising hamlet of Behnesa was chosen in the first place. Behnesa is

hardly to be distinguished from the encroachments of the Lybian [*sic*] Desert; there are no traces of ruined temples or even churches, and yet this barren spot was once 'so full of convents that monkish chants were heard in every corner.' In the fifth century the diocese of Oxyrhynchus is said to have contained 10,000 monks and 12,000 nuns, and the town itself twelve churches. A study of early Christian literature convinced Mr. Grenfell that this spot, so near to the papyrus-bearing Fayoum, must yield some relics of early Egyptian Christian literature. (*The Daily Chronicle* (12 July 1898))

Petrie sailed out with Grenfell and Hunt and set up camp with them at Behnesa, but a few trial digs proved unpromising, and Petrie soon left them to excavate the Old Kingdom site at Deshasheh, about forty miles to the north. Grenfell and Hunt concentrated efforts on the Behnesa tombs, but after three weeks of largely unprofitable digging they turned their attention to the mounds of the ruined town site. Work here began on 11 January 1897.

The first season, which ended in April, proved the most productive in terms of quantities of papyri (see Table 3.1). The discovery of the papyrus with the Sayings of Jesus (the *Logia Iesou*, identified in the 1950s as coming from the uncanonical *Gospel of Thomas*), happened on the second day of digging the town site. (Oddly enough, less than a year before, Hogarth had predicted its discovery in his article in *The Times*.) In spite of other remarkable texts coming to light, such as a lost poem of Sappho, the *Logia* dominated both scholarly and popular interest in Oxyrhynchus for some time. Even before Grenfell and Hunt had returned to England and caught their breath, news of the sensational *Logia* find was leaked to the press, and numerous accounts began to appear in the papers from March onwards.<sup>1</sup> In line

with the 'New Journalism' of the 1890s, with its emphasis on visuals and human interest, these accounts stress the personalities involved. So *The Daily Graphic* for 21 July 1897 has a short account of the finding of the papyrus but is dominated by studio photographs of Grenfell and Hunt, views of Behnesa, and a drawing entitled 'Sabr' Said, the boy who found the logia'. Several other accounts compared discoveries at Oxyrhynchus with another hot news item, the Klondike gold rush, in which the exciting narrative of quest and discovery is almost as important as the religious significance of the papyri. The normally staid *Review of Reviews* gives an idea of their tenor:

It is a curious coincidence, not without significance, that last month should have been made memorable by the announcement of two notable discoveries. The topics which absorbed the public attention were the discovery of gold in the desolate wilds of Northern America, and the recovery of a heap of papyri from one of the ruined cities of Egypt. These two events have each impressed the public imagination in its own way, but the attraction to the common man is, in both cases, much the same. It is the possibility of the discovery of the unexpected, the chance that something out of the ordinary might happen. Although we are not likely to witness a rush to Egypt such as has taken place at Klondyke, there is no doubt that the probability of finding forgotten papyri will give a stimulus to Egyptian exploration. Egypt has always been a land of mystery, and has a strange attraction for men of all time. Its fascination is not likely to be diminished by the discovery of a fragment of the 'Sayings of our Lord' by Mr Grenfell and Mr Hunt . . . the possibility of recovering forgotten sayings of Christ strikes the imagination of even the man in the street. (*Review of Reviews* 19 (Dec. 1897) 202)

Egypt, hidden mystery, Christianity, gold: a po-

*Logia of Papias*. For an overview of the reactions of different kinds of newspaper, see reviews in *The Lancet* (17 July 1897); *The Graphic* (17 July 1897); *The Sun* (20 July 1897), and ensuing correspondence; *The Daily Chronicle* (13/29 July 1897); *The Queen* (20 July 1897); *The Churchman* (18 Dec. 1897); *The Enquirer* (30 July 1898); *Church Bells* (11 Nov. 1898); *Chester World* (17 Nov. 1898).

<sup>1</sup> See e.g. *The Expository Times* (April 1897): 'A telegram has been received at the British Museum, saying that Prof. Petrie, or someone else, has found the