# MARSA MATRUH I

## The Excavation



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Oric Bates

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## The Excavation

**The University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology's Excavations on Bates's Island, Marsa Matruh, Egypt 1985–1989**

**Donald White**

with contributions by

Rita Gardner and Linda Hulin

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*IN MEMORY OF*

LIDIANO BACCHIELI, CLAUDIO FRIGERO, AND JOHN LLOYD

*AND*

*IN RESPECTFUL HOMAGE TO*

ORIC BATES

Time, like an ever-rolling stream,
Bears all its sons away.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES IN THE TEXT . . . . . ix

LIST OF PLANS . . . . . xi

LIST OF PLATES . . . . . xiii

PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS . . . . . xvii

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL ABBREVIATIONS . . . . . xxi

MINOR ABBREVIATIONS . . . . . xxv

CHAPTER 1. The Setting,
*Donald White* . . . . . 1

CHAPTER 2. Introduction to the Island's Excavations,
*Donald White* . . . . . 15

CHAPTER 3. Environmental Morphology and History of the Island and Adjacent Lagoon Area,
*Donald White and Rita Gardner* . . . . . 23

CHAPTER 4. The Island's Late Bronze Age Occupation,
*Donald White* . . . . . 35

CHAPTER 5. Area VI: The Great Ridge, Bates's Libyan Cemetery,
*Donald White and Linda Hulin* . . . . . 85

CHAPTER 6. The Island's Historical Period Occupation,
*Donald White* . . . . . 105

INDEX . . . . . 121

PLANS . . . . . 127

PLATES . . . . . 133

# LIST OF FIGURES IN THE TEXT


Figure 1:1. Map of the principal ancient coastal sites between Alexandria and the Libyan Plateau. . . . . .xxvi

Figure 1:2. Plan of Marsa Matruh West. . . . . .2

Figure 1:3. Fourtau's 1904 sketch plan of Marsa Matruh. . . . . .4

Figure 1:4. Fourtau's sketch plan of Villa with Internal Colonnade along the south shore of Matruh's West Lagoon . . . . . .4

Figure 1:5. Gruoc's 1820 plan and elevations of Gasr el-Fok, south of Râs el-Hikma. . . . . .6

Figure 1:6. Detail of Barth's route map along the Marmarican Coast. . . . . .8

Figure 1:7. Bates's map of Marsa Matruh and its surrounding. . . . . .9

Figure 4:1. Plan of the island's Northern and Southern Clusters of Late Bronze Age walls and collapsed rubble. . . . . .38

Figure 4:2. Plan of the Sponge-Divers House (S101). . . . . .39

Figure 4:3. Plan of G5-IV/SW Test. . . . . .40

Figure 4:4. Cross-section of the south end of G5-IV/SW Test. . . . . .41

Figure 4:5. Plan of the H4-III test trench. . . . . .43

Figure 4:6. East-west section of fill across the north end of H4-III. . . . . .43

Figure 4:7. Plan of the Southern Cluster's and Northern Cluster's trenches and walled remains. . . . . .44–45

Figure 4:8. Plan of H5-I/H5-II and H5-III. . . . . .47

Figure 4:9. East-west section, H5-I/H5-II, North Balk. . . . . .48

Figure 4:10. North-south section, H5-III, West Balk. . . . . .52

Figure 4:11. East-west section, H5-III, H5-III/SW, South Balk. . . . . .53

Figure 4:12. East-west section, H5-III/W, South Balk. . . . . .54

Figure 4:13. Plan of I6-I/II at the 2.1–2.5 level. . . . . .55

Figure 4:14. Plan of I6-I/II at the 3.1–6.1 level. . . . . .56

Figure 4:15. East-west cross-section of the northeast corner of I6-I/II. . . . . .56

Figure 4:16. Plan of the Southern Cluster. . . . . .58

Figure 4:17. Plan of F4-III, S107. . . . . .60
Figure 4:18. North-south section, F4-III, East Balk. . . . . .61
Figure 4:19. East-west section, F4-III, North Balk. . . . . .62
Figure 4:20. North-south section, E4-II/E, West Balk. . . . . .65
Figure 4:21. Plan of E4-III and Room S102. . . . . .67
Figure 4:22. North-south section, E4-III, West Balk. . . . . .68
Figure 4:23. East-west section, E4-III, South Balk. . . . . .69
Figure 4:24. North-south section of D4-I, West Balk. . . . . .71
Figure 5:1. Bates's sketch plans and sections and contents of his tombs A.1 and A.2. . . . . .90
Figure 5:2. Late Bronze Age stone and terracotta artifacts from Bates's Area VI Libyan Cemetery. . . . . .91
Figure 5:3. Plan of Area VIB, Bedouin (?) pits or hearths. . . . . .95
Figure 5.4. Examples of Fabrics A and B. . . . . .98
Figure 5:5. Examples of Fabrics A, B, and C. . . . . .99
Figure 5:6. Examples of Fabrics A, B, and C, and a modern jar. . . . . .101
Figure 6:1. Plan of I8-III/S. . . . . .109
Figure 6:2. North-south section, I8-III/S, East Balk. . . . . .110
Figure 6:3. North-south section, I8-III/S, West Balk. . . . . .111
Figure 6:4. Plan of G6-I. . . . . .113
Figure 6:5. East-west section, G6-I, South Balk. . . . . .114
Figure 6:6. Plan of J8-I/II. . . . . .116
Figure 6:7. East-west section, J8-I/II, North Balk. . . . . .116
Figure 6:8. Bates's sketch plans of the island and its S101 Sponge-Divers House. . . . . .119
Figure 6:9. Bates's plan and cross-section of the S101 Sponge-Divers House. . . . . .120

# LIST OF PLANS

Plan 1. Topographic plan of Bates's Island showing location of excavated walls and structures.

Plan 2. Plan of Bates's Island showing location of excavated trenches.

Plan 3. Map of the eastern end of the East Lagoon showing relationship of Bates's Island (Area I) to adjacent shores features (Areas II, III, and V).

Plan 4. Redrawing, with additions, of 1938/1941 1:25,000 scale plan (Dept. of Surveys and Mines, Sheet no. 2) of Matruh harbor and lagoons east to Râs Alam el-Rûm, locating Areas I-IX. Area IV, Umm el-Rakham area, and the ridge south of Umm el-Rakham and west of Wadi el-Samad all lie west of the mapped area.

# LIST OF PLATES


Plate 1 A. Town of Matruh in 1913.
B. Bedouins at Matruh.

Plate 2 A. Vintage houses from old Matruh on the eastern side of town.
B.World War II German seaplane, which crashed on Matruh's quay.

Plate 3 A. Satellite photo of the salt pans on the eastern end of the Eastern Lagoon system.
B. Roman site on Coastal Ridge west of Matruh's harbor.

Plate 4 A. Group of surface sherds, including Cypriot White Slip II.
B. Cratered interior of the Sponge-Divers House (S101) before excavation.

Plate 5 A. Detail of the interior of the Sponge-Divers House.
B. Sample ordnance and shrapnel.

Plate 6 A. Reconnaissance satellite photo of the coast from Marsa Matruh to Râs Alam el-Rûm.
B. Reconnaissance satellite photo of the First Eastern Lagoon.

Plate 7 A. Distant view of the partially flooded *sahel* from Area V.
B. Closer view of the lagoon.

Plate 8 A. Oblique aerial photograph of the island.
B. Sherds lying on the submerged surface of the island's sandbar.

Plate 9 A. Submerged line of blocks (S111).
B. Area IX pumice layer.

Plate 10 A. Detail of pumice in front of the Area IX.
B. Râs Alam el-Rûm. 11A.

Plate 11 A. H5-1 surface scatter of pumice.
B. Râs Alam el-Rûm with marshy plain separating sea and barrier beach from easternmost lagoon.

Plate 12 A. Coastal ridge running east from the west end of the First Eastern Lagoon.
B. Deposit of wind-blown sand exposed by a bulldozer cut into the south face of the eastern coastal ridge opposite Bates's Island.

Plate 13 A. Coastal ridge west of the main harbor.
B. Bates's Island.

Plate 14 A. Bates's Island (Area V).
B. View of Bates's Island.
C. Bates's Island.

Plate 15 A. General view of the Cyrenaican oasis village of Al-Giarabub.
B. Layers of aeolianite on the west face of Bates's Island.

Plate 16 A. Northern end of the island before excavation.
B. Island's sloping low ground across its sheltered eastern side.

Plate 17 South end of G5-IV/SW Test.

Plate 18 The Sponge-Divers House (S101) with cleared surface.

Plate 19 The island's Southern Cluster.

Plate 20 A. H5-I/II walls, S118, S121, and S126.
B. H5-I/II walls, S118, S121, and S126.

Plate 21 A. H5-I, 2.1 shell deposit.
B. Detail of H5-I, 2.1 shell deposit.

Plate 22 A. H5-III and the corner of the Sponge-Divers House (S101).
B. H5-III with S130, the Arab wall (S128), the hearth (S132), and two small bins (S134a, b).
C. H5-III with S128, S130, and the features S132 and S134 and wall (S131) in between.
D. H5-III with S128, and the features S132 and S134.

Plate 23 A. H5-III's hearth (S132).
B. The bins (S134 a and b).

Plate 24 A. I6-I/II cleared to the 2.1 level.
B. I6-I/II cleared to the 3.1–6.1 levels.

Plate 25 A. Bin (S114) in the southwest corner of I6-I/II.
B. Hearth (S117) in center, west of I6-I/II.
C. View of the Sponge-Divers House (S101) and the island's Southern Cluster.

Plate 26 A. The Southern Cluster.
B. The Southern Cluster.

Plate 27 F4-III, showing S107.

Plate 28 A. Interior of S107 with a bin (S138) and an oven (S137).
B. Modern *tabun* used in Baharia Oasis home.

Plate 29 A. E4-III, E4-IV, and Room S102.
B. E4-III and Room S102, partially excavated.

Plate 30 A. E4-Center, E4-II/E, and E4-II/E, West Balk with S122a-c ramp.
B. E4-II/E.

Plate 31 A. E4-III/W Balk and S124 wall.
B. D4-I/II, S119 workshop, before removal of West Balk.

Plate 32 A. D4-I/II, S119 workshop, before removal of West Balk.
B. D4-I/II, S119 workshop, before removal of West Balk.

Plate 33 A. D4-I/II, 4.1: metal-production waste products.
B. Contemporary North Indian peasant's hut.

Plate 34 A. Matruh's green belt from the area of Bates's Libyan Cemetery.
B. The site of Cemetery A.

Plate 35 A. Cemetery A after clearing.
B. Tomb A.1.
C. Tomb A.2.

Plate 36 Finds from Bates's Tomb A.1.

Plate 37 A. Area II.
B. Area II.

Plate 38 A. Areas VIIA and B.
B. Surface spill of Shell-Tempered Ware B sherds, Area VIIA.

Plate 39 A. Area IX.
B. Area VI.
C. Area VIB, Bedouin (?) hearths.

Plate 40 A. Wadi Aghiba west of Râs Umm el-Rakham.
B. Uncataloged sherd of Shell-Tempered Ware A.
C. Uncataloged sherd of Shell-Tempered Ware B.

Plate 41 A. I8-III/S.
B. I8-III/S.
C. I8-III/S.

Plate 42 A. G6-I.
B. G6-I's *?*-shaped "storage containers" S113d and S113e.

Plate 43 A. Underwater wall feature (S111).
B. Underwater slot feature (S140).

Plate 44 A. J8-I/II.
B. J8-I/II's wall S109a.
C. J8-I/II's wall S109a.

Plate 45 A. Interior of the Sponge-Divers House (S101) before excavation.
B. The west wall and center interior of the Sponge-Divers House (S101) before excavation.

Plate 46 A. Interior of the Sponge-Divers House (S101) with G5-IV/ SW Test and H4-III partially excavated.
B. The south half of S101's interior with G5-IV/SW Test.

Plate 47 A. The northwest exterior corner and the west wall of the Sponge-Divers House (S101).
B. The leveling bed (?) of sand mixed with shells lying over the west wall of the Sponge-Divers House (S101).

# PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology's Expedition to Marsa Matruh, to give it its full title, came about as an indirect consequence of the abrupt and, as matters turned out, unplanned conclusion of the museum's work in 1981 in eastern Libya where several of the present authors had been previously engaged in archaeological research stretching over more than a decade.[i]

Searching for something that might enable the museum to build on its Cyrenaican experiences, my attention was drawn to the pioneering activities at the outbreak of World War I of Harvard University's Oric Bates, author of the classic study of the native eastern Libyan population,[ii] at the site of Marsa Matruh on the northwest coast of Egypt.[iii]

What was initially envisioned to be an extension of the University of Pennsylvania's earlier research on the historical Greeks along the northeast African littoral quickly turned into an effort to revive Bates's promising but largely neglected work on the pre-Greek, Late Bronze Age occupation of the Matruh area. Our attention soon came to rest in particular on the tiny island now bearing his name at the end of Matruh's first eastern lagoon.

A minuting of how the project unfolded between 1984 and 1989 is found in Chapter 2 and needs no further elaboration here. On the other hand, I am gratified to be able to express at long last my thanks to the many persons, some now deceased, for the project's conceptualization, its planning and organization in Egypt as well as back in Philadelphia, its financial support, and finally for its publication.

It is fitting to first take note of the representatives of the Egyptian Antiquities Organization or what is now the Supreme Council of Antiquities in Cairo and Marsa Matruh during the years in which the project ran. This includes the individual past chairmen of the SCA, Dr. Ahmed Kadry, Dr. M.A.H. Nur el-Din, Dr. Sayed Tawfik, Dr. Muhammad Ibrahim Bakr, and Dr. Ali Hassan. I also wish to give special thanks to Dr. Kamal Fahmy, then Director of Excavations for Lower Egypt, for his personal interventions and enlightened assistance throughout the project's duration, and Dr. Zahi Hawass who first implanted in me the idea of work in Egypt in the mid 1970s. In Marsa Matruh every representative of the SCA provided contributions that turned out to be indispensable to the success of our work, but I should like to mention in particular Messrs Feisal As-Mahwy, Ezzat Osman el-Hamhmy, Tarek Mohamed Farid, and Atif Abdel-Daym. The last two provided invaluable personal assistance during our final 1989 field season and in the study seasons that followed during the early 1990s.

It goes without saying that without the active sponsorship, collaboration, and encouragement of the American Research Center in Egypt, a project like ours would never have succeeded. I am, therefore, especially pleased to offer thanks to ARCE's US-based Executive Directors, Paul Walker and, more recently, Terence Waltz, and to the ARCE-Cairo directors, Richard Verdery, Robert Betts, Iliya Harik, and Mark Easton. And of course, as everyone knows who has ever been privileged to use ARCE's generous facilities, ARCE's Executive Secretary Madame Amira Khattab deserves our entire staff's warmest expressions of thanks.

Domestically, the project owes much to the University of Pennsylvania Museum and its directors. Robert Dyson generously aided the project during the years we were active in the field, and Jeremy Sabloff has continued to help by supplying us with all the essential research resources required to bring the project to publication. Many of the Museum's staff members have extended a wide variety of important services. I think in particular of Alan Waldt, its Associate Director for Finance, Stuart Fleming, Director of MASCA, Vincent Pigott, former MASCA Senior Research Scientist and contributor to Chapter seven, the Photographic Section's Fred Schoch and Francine Sarin, and lastly Bonnie Crosfield. Carl Beetz, who received his doctorate in Mesoamerican archaeology at the University of Pennsylvania, undertook the final reworking of most of Ken Schaar's and Jim Thorn's field drawings, while the remainder have been finished by Nicholas Griffith. Philip Betancourt, Consulting Scholar of the Museum's Mediterranean Section and INSTAP's Executive Director, and David O'Connor, the former Curator of the Museum's Egyptian Section, were both quick to provide me, a novice to Egypt as well as the general area of Aegean archaeology, with a helpful stream of information, help, and patient encouragement.

The project's field staff over three seasons was composed of Aala Shaheen, David Conwell, Eric Gieringer, Roy Green, Chris and Linda Hulin, Murray McClellan, Pamela Russell, Kenneth and Margaret Schaar, Stephanie Tyiska, James Thorn, and Arthur and Joan White. Murray McClellan ably served as the project's Assistant Director for the 1985 season, as did David Conwell in 1987. Working under circumstances that were seldom easy, and occasionally made even less so by the inexperience of the director, the entire team deserves the Museum's and my own personal thanks. In the same category I am happy to include all of the present co-authors, most of whom had to take time away from busy schedules to make special trips to Matruh in order to deal with their subject matter at first-hand. These include Don Bailey, Rita Gardner assisted by Martin Frost, Mohamed Nabil el-Hadidi, Linda Hulin, Murray McClellan, Vincent Pigott, David Reese, Pamela Russell, and Jim Thorn.

I am also gratified to be able to acknowledge here the many courtesies and services provided by Harvard University's Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology. It was of course the Peabody that originally sponsored Bates's 1913/14 expedition to Marsa Matruh. This has resulted in their more recent administration and staff becoming the target of a constant barrage of importunities from me since 1984. I particularly wish to thank its directors, Carl Lamberg-Karlovsky, David Tilbeam and Rubie Watson, its Collection Managers Una MacDowell, Katherine Skelly, and Gloria Greis, its Assistant Registrars Germaine

Juneau, Genevieve Fisher, and Kerstein Audette, its Photo Archivists Martha Labell and Barbara Isaac, and its Archivists Sarah Demb and Susan Hasskell for their help over the past decade and a half.

An excavation cannot survive on the contributions of just its participants in the field and lab. We have been especially fortunate in that the readiness of the Museum to provide seed money and research funds has been matched by many friends to whom, though their company has been sadly thinned by time, I owe an everlasting debt of gratitude. They are Mandon Bates, Mr. and Mrs. Woodruff Emlen, Mr. and Mrs. Willy Gorrissen, Mr. and Mrs. E. Gordon Keith, Catherine Lower, Mr. and Mrs. Robert Maxwell, Charles Saffer, and George Vaux. Of personal importance to me for reasons that transcend their repeated and substantial financial help are James and Natica Bates Satterthwaite. Tica, Oric Bates's daughter, and Jim, my long-suffering high school English teacher, have underwritten this work in ways too numerous and subtle to be adequately expressed here.

I have reserved for nearly the last my thanks to the Institute for Aegean Prehistory, which joined with the Museum at the project's outset to provide it with major financial support for our work in Egypt as well as help in defraying the costs of final publication. From his own scientific articles on the subject of Bronze Age archaeology to his generous sponsorship of museums and research stretching from New York to Crete, INSTAP's founder, Malcolm Wiener, has proven to be a remarkable benefactor and true friend to Classical archaeology and to this project. In addition, Philip Betancourt has undertaken an immense amount of work in helping to prepare this study for publication in his capacity as INSTAP's Executive Director and thus, once again, leaves me greatly in his debt.

Finally, I want here to express my love, gratitude and thanks to my wife Joan and my son Arthur, who after years of sharing the joys as well as the predictable vicissitudes of more than a decade of work in Libya, helped me initiate the Matruh project. Along with Tarek Mohamed and Atif Abdel-Daym, they set aside their own busy careers to bear the brunt of the actual digging during our final field season in 1989. Without their support and encouragement the Matruh project could never have taken the shape that it did.

*Donald White*

## Notes

i. Murray McClellan and James Thorn working at Cyrene, Donald Bailey at the Society for Libyan Studies project at Sidi Krebish, Benghazi. For the background to the conclusion of the Museum's work at Cyrene, see D. White, "Editorial Note," *The Extramural; Sanctuary of Demeter and Persephone at Cyrene, Libya* I: *Background and Introduction to the Excavations* (Philadelphia 1984) before title page.

ii. *Eastern Libyans*.

iii. *African Studies*. For more on Bates's work at Matruh during the winter of 1913/14, see *Resurfacing of Paraetonium,* passim and White, *Stranger,* 168, n. 36, as well as elsewhere throughout this study.