OBITUARY

NICHOLAS HALLAM STUART KINDERSLEY (1939–2015)

Nicholas Kindersley with his Lagonda at Aqar Quf, near Baghdad, winter of 1962–63

Nicholas Kindersley was a crucial member of staff during the 1961–1965 fieldwork of the British School of Archaeology in Iraq, now the British Institute for the Study of Iraq. He participated in the last three seasons of the School's excavations at Nimrud, and in the first two seasons of the excavations at Tell al Rimah which were jointly sponsored by the School and by the University of Pennsylvania Museum, Philadelphia. Much of what was achieved in those years was only possible through his hard work, talents and determination.

Nicholas as a schoolboy at Marlborough was described as "mature and self-disciplined, yet disinclined to follow the merely conventional". His father's circle of acquaintance ranged from Konya dervishes to Max Mallowan. Consequently Nicholas at the age of seventeen joined the 1957 excavations at Nimrud, earning himself a paragraph in Max's autobiography, *Mallowan's Memoirs* (1977: 280); although "not a profound academic", he combined many of the practical abilities and personal qualities most valuable for an archaeologist. Easy-going, imperturbable, considerate, perceptive and efficient, he had a natural capacity for establishing friendly relations with all kinds of people—Arab, Turk, Persian, Kurd, Greek, Assyrian, Indian and academic colleagues alike.

After reading Archaeology and Anthropology at King's College, Cambridge, he began as an itinerant digger in the Mediterranean and Middle East. Lisa French was impressed by his patience and good humour at Navplion: he excelled in rebuilding large water-jars from Mycenae, which may be partly why Max wished him to publish Assyrian pottery from Nimrud. He was duly appointed Leonard Woolley Memorial Fellow, residing at the School's headquarters in Karrada Mariam, Baghdad, and he did have a good knowledge of pottery, but wherever he was he always seemed to possess whichever additional skills turned out to be requisite. At Yarim Tepe, as David Stronach recounts, he had a rifle, and added to the pot by shooting boar in one of the nearby patches of forest. At the site itself "the tall reeds that grew out of the shallow waters of the Kara Su quickly became home to a large aggressive boar that totally terrified those of our workers who

were lodged in tents near the base of the mound. When an official "hunter" was employed to try and remove this dangerous creature, neither the hunter nor his dog proved ready to enter the pig's lair. At this point Nicholas drew up a new plan of action. While the greater part of the work force became very vocal beaters, advancing in one line while beating their metal trays as loudly as they could, Nicholas stood to one side near the point where, if all went well, the boar would come bursting out of the tall reeds. The strategy worked. His one shot missed, but the boar simply kept running at great speed and, mercifully, was never seen again."

At Nimrud only Nicholas really understood the ancient pressure lamps by whose harsh glare the rest of us cleaned ivories after dark. When publishable photographs were needed to illustrate a carved throne-base at the bottom of a deep trench, he it was who designed a scheme for lighting it by night. He was a brilliant driver on execrable tracks: I was surprised once as his passenger to discover that we were taking a short cut through the Tigris, which was beginning to flood the plain below the mound. He could also turn his hand to driving a bull-dozer, and could mend punctures if the spare tyre failed. In 1963, when both Land Rovers were in Mosul for repairs, we could still rely on the 1930s Lagonda he had brought out from England; he was even generous enough to let us drive it, while emphasising that the positions of accelerator and brake were reversed, in the opposite of the usual arrangement. He helped to plan and he oversaw the construction of the Rimah dig-house, an outstanding success where many scholars will remember working in comfort. It was at Rimah that Nicholas raised one of the Land Rovers on to blocks in the courtyard, and appeared to take the entire engine, brakes and transmission system apart; afterwards it worked properly.

In Baghdad he often helped visiting academics and others at the Iraq Museum, and was delighted when the illustrious Professor Lenzen, excavator of Uruk, identified him as the most promising of all young British archaeologists. At Can Hasan, Nicholas would discuss aims, priorities and techniques with David French, and I have clear memories of the constructive way in which, both there and with David Oates at Nimrud and Rimah, he would approach and solve all kinds of problem. His eyesight and powers of observation were exceptional; in 1963 for instance, at Nimrud, he showed us an unexpected comet in the evening sky. This was the year of his own most important discovery, when Jeffery Orchard fell ill, and Nicholas as the senior member of staff suddenly found himself in charge of, perhaps, 50 or 80 workmen investigating the city-wall beside Fort Shalmaneser. This led to the emergence of the famous stone postern gate, complete with wall-paintings and inscriptions of Esarhaddon, as described in *Ivories from Nimrud* VII, 1 (2013: 356–58).

Nicholas married in 1965. Susan and he settled in Ireland, managed their own hotel, and farmed, eventually moving to a wild and idyllic island in County Longford. The house there was crammed with machinery, and Nicholas took a local job whose main appeal, as he described it, was that it included responsibility for operating a freight train track. Susan died in 1996, and Nicholas later lived in Northumberland. He is survived by his second wife, Veronica, who cared for him during a long and difficult final illness, and by the children of his first marriage.

JULIAN READE[1]

[1] In compiling this brief account of Nicholas as an archaeologist, I have been grateful for information kindly provided by family, friends and colleagues, and by the archivists of King's College, Cambridge.

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