Dorothy Lamb (1887–1967): A Pioneering Mediterranean Field-Archaeologist*

By David Gill

The period before the First World War witnessed the growing involvement of British women in fieldwork in the Mediterranean.¹ Women had been involved with museum-based studies and lectures in London from the late nineteenth century,² but they soon became actively involved with the work on institutions such as the British School at Athens and the Egypt Exploration Fund.³ Dorothy Lamb was one of the series of Cambridge-educated women who continued their classical studies by attending the British School at Athens. Lamb was one of the first British women to work on a British field project in Greece, and is likely to have been the target of J.P. Droop’s warning about the dangers of ‘mixed’ excavations. In spite of her contribution to the Catalogue of the Acropolis Museum, Lamb’s work has tended to be overlooked.⁴

Dorothy Lamb was the youngest daughter of the mathematician Professor (Sir) Horace Lamb and his wife Elizabeth.⁵ She was born on 4 October 1887 after the family had returned to

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¹ I am grateful to Dr Christopher Stray for providing me with information about Newnham College. Alison Heath, the Archivist of Wycombe Abbey School kindly provided me with information about Dorothy Lamb’s early career. Nicholas Griffin and Sheila Turcon me with supplied information about Dorothy Lamb from the Bertrand Russell archive at McMaster University. Andrew Hambling, the Haileybury archivist, supplied information about John Reeve Brooke.

The following abbreviations have been used:


⁴ ‘Brodrick, Mary (1858-1933)’, in ODNB.
⁵ Sir Horace Lamb (1849–1934), son of John Lamb of Stockport. He had studied at Trinity College, Cambridge. He was later Professor Mathematics at the University of Adelaide (1875–85) and the University of Manchester (1885–1920). He married Elizabeth Marv Foot (d.
Manchester from Adelaide so that her father could take up a chair in pure mathematics at Owens College in Manchester. She was educated at the Manchester High School\(^6\) followed by a year at Wycombe Abbey School as a member of Rubens House.\(^7\) The newly-established Wycombe Abbey School was designed to emulate English public (i.e. private) schools which were only open for boys. The founder of the school, Miss (later Dame) Frances Jane Dove (1847-1942),\(^8\) held set aims:

Now what we want is a new type, girls healthy in body, tireless in energy and exercise, full of wide interests and public spirit. If they marry they will make sensible, competent housewives and splendid mothers of sons. If they do not—and we must remember there are far, far more women than men in our class of society—they will be infinitely more fitted than their grandmothers to play their part in the world.\(^9\)

The regime of the school was described as follows:

We must have cold baths, fresh air and games, real games—hockey, lacrosse and cricket. There must be no sitting up at night, no overwork, plenty of plain healthy food and no gifts of sweets or rubbish. No corsets if we can put sense into their mothers, and a healthy rational dress for games and drill. And as regards their characters, a sense of responsibility must be given by the prefect system, public spirit by learning to devote themselves to the welfare of their school and house, and wider interests by intelligent reading of good newspapers, interest in a special Home Mission of their own, and attention to good literature. In short ... our girls must have the advantages of their brothers. It is our public schools which have made England, and our women in future must be trained in public schools for their own sex.\(^10\)

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\(^6\) According to the Wycombe Abbey School Register Lamb had already taken the Cambridge Higher Local and Manchester University Matriculation before arriving at Wycombe Abbey.


\(^8\) See Kate Perry, 'Dove, Dame (Jane) Frances (1847-1942)', in *ODNB*.

\(^9\) Peck, *A Little Learning* 113. This description relates to the period of time when Lamb attended Wycombe Abbey.

Part of Wycombe Abbey’s emphasis was on Classics, initially on Latin and from the age of fifteen, Greek. Classics was the subject Lamb chose to read at the all-women Newnham College, Cambridge from 1906–10. Her sister Helen had read History at Newnham, and her brother Walter was already at Cambridge. At one point there seems to have been the suggestion that Dorothy might have married Dillwyn (‘Dilly’) Knox, a Fellow in Classics at King’s College, Cambridge, and friend of her brother Henry. From Cambridge, with the encouragement of Jane Harrison, Lamb went out to Greece and was admitted as a student of the British School at Athens from 1910–11; she was the Creighton Memorial Prize Winner for 1911. As such she was the second of a number of former members of Newnham College to go out to the British School at Athens. The first had been Miss M.K. Welsh, who had been admitted to the School for the 1903–04 session. Lamb overlapped at Newnham with Margaret M. Hardie who was

11 Peck, A Little Learning 124, 126. The choice was made between Greek or German. Classics, like Mathematics, was important to obtain a School Leaving Certificate. Winifred Peck recalls that the classical teachers at Wycombe Abbey “were attractive women with real enthusiasm for literature” (A Little Learning 126).
12 Newnham Register i, 193. Miss Dove of Wycombe Abbey preferred “her” girls to go to Girton College, the other all women’s college at Cambridge (Peck, A Little Learning 127). Lamb gained a distinction in French in her Oxford and Cambridge Higher Certificate (1906). She obtained a 3rd class in Part I of the Classical Tripos (1909) and a 1st in Part II (1910).
13 Helen Elizabeth Lamb (1877–1954): Newnham Register i, 14. Helen Lamb had been at Newnham from 1897–1901, and had then been an Assistant Mistress at Kensington High School, South Hampstead High School and at Bedales School before marrying George William Palmer, a schoolmaster, in 1913. She was later to become at tutor at Newnham (1923–43) and Director of Studies in Architecture (1934–54).
14 For Walter Lamb’s circle: Holroyd, Lytton Strachey 138, 169, 179, 246, 273. In July 1905 Walter Lamb was described as “under our control” by Lytton Strachey to Leonard Woolf. Strachey nicknamed Lamb “the Corporal”. Walter was later secretary of the Royal Academy.
15 Fitzgerald, The Knox Brothers 112. The date for this seems to have been c. 1907. Lamb is described as “unconventional”. For the friendship between Henry Lamb and Dillwyn Knox (1883–1943): Fitzgerald, The Knox Brothers 75 (a proposed trip to Brittany in 1905). In 1906 Lytton Strachey thought that Henry’s brother Walter was in love with Dillwyn: Fitzgerald, The Knox Brothers 91; Holroyd, Lytton Strachey 246. Walter was later thought of as a possible husband for Virginia Stephen who in fact married Leonard Woolf (Holroyd, Lytton Strachey 490). In 1906 Henry Lamb was commissioned to paint the portrait of A.E. Housman: H. Maas (ed.), The Letters of A.E. Housman (London: Granada, 1971) 104. For details of Henry’s second wife, Lady Pansy Lamb: obituary in The Times [London] 1 March 1999.
16 For Jane Harrison’s links with Henry Lamb and his circle: Holroyd, Lytton Strachey 450. Correspondence in the archive of the British School at Athens reveals the personal intervention by Jane Harrison on Dorothy Lamb’s behalf. I am grateful to Christopher Stray for drawing my attention to the correspondence. For Harrison see Annabel Robinson, The Life and Work of Jane Ellen Harrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).
17 BSA 17 (1910–11), 286–87, 318. Lamb held a “special Studentship”. Lamb was admitted to the School along with Miss Lilian E. Tennant, a member of the Hellenic Society. Their contemporary at the School was L.B. Tillard of St John’s College, Cambridge. Tennant married F.J. Watson Taylor on her return to England (cf. BSA 19 (1912–13), 271 where she is listed as Mrs F.J. Watson-Taylor). During the 1912–13 session, after her marriage, she “took part in the humane task of feeding nursing the refugees in Epeiros” (BSA 19 (1912–13), 266).
18 This Newnham College prize was given for a postgraduate thesis.
20 Newnham Register i, *. She held the Marion Kennedy Studentship. She married A.M. Daniel, who was elected an associate of the School in 1903. They lived in Scarborough on the Yorkshire coast. Her husband was later librarian at the British School at Rome, and subsequently Director of the National Gallery in London (when he was knighted). A letter from the Secretary of the British School at Athens to Dorothy Lamb (BSA Archive, 28 July 1910) notes: ‘I understand that you are in communication with Mrs Daniel and you certainly could have no better adviser as to loving in Athens’. I am grateful to Christopher Stray for drawing my attention to this letter.
admitted to the British School for the 1911–12 session. This emphasis on women from Newnham replaced the earlier links between the all-women’s Girton College, and the School.

The British School at that time had as its director Richard M. Dawkins; A.M. Woodward was acting Assistant Director during F.W. Hasluck’s leave of absence. Dawkins’ period as Director saw members of the School involved in excavations at Sparta, in Boeotia, and in Macedonia. Lamb’s year at the School also saw the celebration of 25 years of existence. Dawkins was himself looking to excavate in Anatolia and during the 1910–11 session had obtained an excavation permit from the Imperial Ottoman Government. He hoped to explore an archaic sanctuary at Datcha to the east of Knidos. In fact the excavation never went ahead due to the outbreak of the First Balkan War in 1912.

Lamb had gone out to Athens specifically to work on the catalogue of the terracottas in the Acropolis Museum. The British School had been invited to undertake the Catalogue of the Acropolis Museum as a result of the success of the Catalogue of the Sparta Museum which had appeared in 1906. Lamb devoted herself to the project through the winter and by the end of the session it was reported that “good progress has been made”. In this work Lamb was assisted by Lilian Tennant. In the spring Lamb and Tennant joined the British School’s excavations at Phylakopi on Melos under the direction of Dawkins. Tennant assisted with the work on the

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22 Girton women at the British School were: Eugénie Sellers (Mrs S. Strong) (1890-91), C. Amy Hutton (1896–7), O.C. Köhler (Mrs Charles Smith) (1899–1900), Hilda L. Lorimer (1901–02), and Gisela M.A. Richter (1904–05).


24 Dawkins as Director: Waterhouse, BSA 19–22; David W.J. Gill, ‘Dawkins, Richard MacGillivray’, in ODNB. Dorothy’s brother Henry was later to make a portrait of Dawkins which is now in Exeter College, Oxford. Work in Laconia concluded in 1909.

25 Waterhouse, BSA 20. The work was conducted by Professor R.M. Burrows and then by Professor and Mrs Percy Ure. See Victoria Sabetai, ‘Burrows, R.M.’ and ‘Ure, P.N.’, in The Dictionary of British Classicists (Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 2004).

26 Waterhouse, BSA 20. The work was conducted by A.J.B. Wace and M. Thompson. For Wace: David W.J. Gill, ‘Wace, Alan J.B.’, in ODNB.

27 Waterhouse, BSA 22.

28 BSA 17 (1910–11) 284–85; Waterhouse, BSA 22. Dawkins had visited the proposed site twice.


31 BSA 17 (1910–11) 286. A grant was made specifically for this purpose.

32 Tod and Wace, Catalogue of the Sparta Museum (1906). See also Waterhouse, BSA 20.

33 BSA 17 (1910–11) 286.

34 BSA 17 (1910–11) 287.

One of the excavation team was John Percival Droop (1882-1963). His experiences of working with women on excavations were to be formulated in *Archaeological Excavation* (1915), a volume dedicated to Dawkins. In the epilogue, which on the Mycenae excavation of 1922 was called by May Herford and Winifred Lamb ‘Droop’s Seventh’, Droop noted, ‘Of a mixed dig however I have seen something, and it is an experiment that I would be reluctant to try again; I would grant if need be that women are admirably fitted for the work, yet I would uphold that they should undertake it by themselves’. The only excavation attended by Droop and where women were present appears to have been at Phylakopi.

Lamb used the rest of her time in Greece travelling in Euboea, Crete, Aetolia and the Peloponnese. She returned to England via Paris where she studied terracotta figurines in the Louvre to provide comparative material for her Acropolis catalogue. Lamb continued to work on the catalogue which she completed in 1912, the first volume edited by Guy Dickins was in fact published by Cambridge University Press in that year. However the British School’s publications committee suggested some revisions, and at the Annual Meeting of the British School in 1913 it was reported that “the catalogue of terracottas is practically ready for the press”. As a result Lamb left England in January 1914 to resume work on the catalogue. She arrived at the British School at Athens in March and spent the month making revisions before going to Nauplia in April “to see the Tiryns terracottas for purposes of the catalogue”. These final changes were made and the final manuscript was delivered to Cambridge University Press that summer. However with the outbreak of war, publication was delayed. Guy Dickins died from wounds on 17 July 1916, and the second volume with Lamb’s contribution did not appear until 1921.

After her first session at the British School, Lamb had held a Lectureship at Bryn Mawr College (USA) from 1912 to 1913. Bryn Mawr had been founded as a women’s college in 1885 and had

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36 BSA 17 (1910–11) 287. J.P. Droop of Trinity College, Cambridge was responsible for the work on the pottery (BSA 17 (1910–11) 286).
40 BSA 17 (1910–11) 287. In these journeys she may have been accompanied by Tennant who travelled “on the mainland of Greece, among the islands and in Crete”. Tennant is also specifically mentioned as attending Dörpfeld’s lectures in Athens.
41 BSA 17 (1910–11) 287.
42 BSA 20 (1913–14) 137.
43 G. Dickins, *Catalogue of the Acropolis Museum I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1912). Dickins had married Mary Hamilton (University of St Andrews) who had been admitted to the School in 1905–06.
44 BSA 19 (1912–13) 271; see also BSA 20 (1913–14) 137.
45 BSA 20 (1913–14) 137.
a strong tradition in classical archaeology. Lamb was subsequently awarded the Mary Ewart Travelling Scholarship from Newnham College (1913–14). It was during this period that she revisited Athens to revise the terracotta catalogue. However this was part of a more comprehensive tour of museums and archaeological sites in the Mediterranean. Interestingly it shows an interest in a wide chronological and cultural range. After leaving England in January she had spent two weeks in Paris, presumably in the Louvre, researching Geometric and Ionian pottery. During February she was in Rome studying Christian mosaics, and then for March and April was in Greece working on the catalogue. She spent two weeks in Constantinople (Istanbul) “visiting museums and paying special attention to Byzantine and Ottoman arts and architecture”. Her return to Athens was made via mainland Anatolia which included Broussa (Prusa), Smyrna, Sardis, and Ephesus. Back in Athens she worked on a bibliography of Islamic, and in particular Seljuk, art. This resulted in a second trip to Anatolia later that summer to study the Seljuk buildings of Konya, notably the Mosque of Sultan Alaeddin, the Energheh Mosque, and the Indjeh Minareli Medresseh, which was written up in an article for the Annual of the British School at Athens. Lamb is also reported to have joined the American Archaeological Expedition in Melas (1913–14).

Lamb had clearly been developing what appeared to be a promising career in classical archaeology. However with the outbreak of war she became an assistant in the Ministry of National Service (1916–18) and subsequently at the Ministry of Food (1918–20). She was

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48 S.L. Dyson, Ancient Marbles to American Shores: Classical Archaeology in the United States (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998), 99–100, 190–92. In 1913 Rhys Carpenter was given the task of developing the subject at Bryn Mawr. One of Lamb’s colleagues, also joining the college in 1912, was Mary Hamilton Swindler. Tenney Frank also left Bryn Mawr in 1913. Dyson notes the recruitment of foreign scholars at Bryn Mawr such as Valentin Müller. See also E. Vermeule, “The key to the fields: the classics at Bryn Mawr”, in P.H. Labalme (ed.), A Century Recalled (Bryn Mawr [Pa.], 1987) 161–72. Lamb’s presence at Bryn Mawr was noted in a letter from Lucy Donnelly to Bertrand Russell in Cambridge (6 December 1912): “she is very spirited and sincere and unconventional”. I am grateful to Nicholas Griffin and Sheila Turcon for this information.

49 For other holders of this scholarship, e.g. Emma Morris who read Classics at Newnham from 1913–16 (Newnham Register i, 249).

50 BSA 20 (1913–14) 137.

51 It is not clear if she overlapped at Athens with Miss Mary Norah Lupton Taylor (1890–1967), also of Newnham College (1909–13), who was admitted to the British School at Athens for the 1913–14 session (BSA 20 [1913–14] 137). Taylor, like Lamb, worked on terracottas and on leaving Athens went to Rome to study Italo-Greek terracottas. Taylor held the Gilchrist Studentship at the British School at Rome during the 1915–16 session: Mary Taylor and H.C. Bradshaw, “Architectural terracottas from two temples at Falerii Veteres”, PBSR 8 (1916) 1–34. Taylor, like Dorothy Lamb, held a Mary Ewart Travelling Scholarship which enabled her to study at the British School at Rome in 1919 after her marriage to Harold Chalton Bradshaw in September 1918. See Newnham Register i, 216–17.


53 There is no apparent mention of this expedition in L.E. Lord, A History of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens, 1882–1942: an intercollegiate project (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press / American School of Classical Studies at Athens, 1947), nor in C. Gates, ‘American archaeologists in Turkey: intellectual and social dimensions’, Journal of American Studies of Turkey 4 (1996) 47–68. It has been suggested to me that Melas may have been an error in the Newnham College Roll for Milas, the ancient Mylasa in western Turkey. It is perhaps significant that there was interest in that site in this period, e.g. W.H. Buckler, “Documents from Mylasa”, BSA 22 (1916–18) 190–215. The stated date of this excavation would appear to eliminate the excavation of the British School at Athens on Melos in the spring of 1911.
secretary to the London Committee Supreme Economic Council, and became a Member of the Order of the British Empire (M.B.E.) in 1919.\textsuperscript{55} In 1920 she married (Sir) John Reeve Brooke.\textsuperscript{56} Although Lamb did not pursue her archaeological interests, she continued her interest in the classical world with an edition of Private Letters in translation in 1929; the volume itself was dedicated to her husband. A second volume, Pilgrims Were They All, was published in 1937. She also reviewed Mythology, in the Our Debt to Greece and Rome series, by her former Newnham tutor Jane Harrison for Classical Review in 1926.\textsuperscript{57} During the 1930s she was working on the Catalogue of Prints and Drawings owned by the Hellenic and Roman Societies.\textsuperscript{58} Lamb’s first husband died in 1937, and two years later she married Sir Walter Frederic Nicholson.\textsuperscript{59} Lamb was widowed for the second time in 1946 and she died in 1967.

Bibliography


\textsuperscript{55} The Order had been introduced in 1917.
\textsuperscript{56} Sir John Reeve Brooke (1880–1937). He was educated at Haileybury and Corpus Christi College, Oxford. He was knighted in 1919 for his work with the Electricity Board. After their marriage he was secretary to the Ministry of Transport (1923–27), and secretary to the Central Electricity Board (1927–29). Brooke was the friend of Edmund Knox, also at Corpus, who had tried to arrange a marriage between his brother Dillwyn and Dorothy (Fitzgerald, The Knox Brothers 179). For a short obituary: The Times 3 April 1937.
\textsuperscript{57} Mythology had been published by Marshall Jones of Boston in 1924.
\textsuperscript{58} Noted in “Proceedings. Session 1931-32”, JHS 52 (1932), xxvi. The collection had been presented to the Joint Library by Mr St Clair Baddeley: George A. Macmillan, “An outline of the history of the Hellenic Society”, JHS 49 (1929), xl. Baddeley was a member of council at the formation of the Roman Society.
\textsuperscript{59} Sir Walter (Frederic) Nicholson (1876–1946). He was educated at St Paul’s School and Balliol College, Oxford. Like Lamb’s first husband he was a career Civil Servant: first in the Admiralty (1899–1920), then as secretary to the Air Ministry (1920–1930) and then as the government nominee on the board of directors of Imperial Airways (1931–37).