

## MERCY MONEY-COUTTS SEIRADAKI (1910-1993)

By Elizabeth Schofield

The Hon. Mercy Money-Coutts, daughter of an English aristocrat, was of much of her life linked to Crete. She worked there in the 1930s, later married a Cretan, and lived there for many years. Her archaeological mentor was John Pendlebury, whom she assisted in organizing the Stratigraphical Museum at Knossos, in excavating and publishing sites in the Lasithi Plain, and in researching and illustrating his most important book. Her particular area of expertise was Minoan pottery. During World War II she worked for British Intelligence, then for the Red Cross, and returned to Crete in 1944. There she joined UNRRA, and acquired almost legendary status for her heroic exploits. She met and married Michaeli Seiradakis, also a worker for UNRRA, and had two children. They lived in Western Crete, then moved to Athens in 1962. For several years she worked part-time as a library assistant in the British School at Athens. In 1991 they moved to Thessaloniki, where their son is a professor in the University. She died there in 1993.\*

The Hon. Mercy Money-Coutts was born 16 April 1910, the youngest child (and only daughter) of Hester Frances (née Russell) and Hugh Burdett Money-Coutts, landowner and gentleman farmer. Two years after her birth her paternal grandfather, Francis Money-Coutts, laid successful claim to the ancient title Baron Latymer, which had fallen into abeyance for more than 300 years. Hugh Money-Coutts succeeded his father as sixth Baron Latymer in 1923.<sup>1</sup>

Her family lived for several years at Stoodleigh Court, in Devon. The property was very extensive, comprising 5000 acres. By 1919 it had become too expensive to run, and her father bought instead a fair-sized property with 500 acres of land on the Hampshire-Dorset border. By 1926 he had concluded that taxes consequent to his father's death "had not left us the wherewithal further indulgence in farming, delightful hobby though it was."<sup>2</sup> The family then moved to a much smaller house at Shipton-under-Wychwood in Oxfordshire.

As was common practice among aristocratic families at that time, Mercy was privately educated at home. As a child she spent some time in France, and spoke good French. She was certainly taught to draw well, a skill that was later to be valuable in her archaeological work. She seems particularly to have enjoyed doing literary illustrations in watercolor and ink. She was always a voracious reader to the end of her life.

She also learned to ride and shoot. Lord Latymer was an ardent field sportsman, and the family had a summer home in Scotland, mostly used during the hunting season. Fox-hunting in England and deer-stalking in Scotland were favorite occupations, and Mercy, participated in the latter. She accompanied both parents on stalking expeditions in Scotland, probably particularly after her three elder brothers had left home, and once in New Zealand after her graduation.<sup>3</sup> Stalking in the wild requires enormous stamina, with

which she was well endowed. She became so proficient a shot that many years later, when she was married and living in Crete, she frequently won the target shooting competition which at that time was a traditional part of village celebrations: a marvel to all the other (male) competitors.

In 1929 she went up to Oxford University where she studied Modern History at Lady Margaret Hall, taking her BA Honours degree in 1932. It is not clear what triggered her first interest in eastern Mediterranean archaeology, although Oxford would have provided many opportunities. Perhaps she heard a lecture by Sir Arthur Evans, or at least saw exhibits of some of his Cretan finds in the Ashmolean Museum; and the publication of the third volume of The Palace of Minos at Knossos while she was an undergraduate was enough to keep public interest high. In any case, when she heard that Sir Arthur had announced new excavations and wanted student helpers, she wrote to him and was accepted.<sup>4</sup>

By the late 1920s Evans had long since concluded his major excavations at Knossos, and had donated all his personal property there, including the Palace itself, to the British School at Athens. His attention was now focused on conservation and reconstruction. There were, however, major excavation campaigns in 1930 within the area of the Palace itself, and in 1931 at the Temple Tomb. The former was supervised by John Pendlebury, whose major task as Curator of Knossos at this time was to complete the reorganization of the Stratigraphical Museum, where the arrears, already large, were building still more as a result of the campaigns of 1930-1931. Mercy was later to be heavily involved in this task, and may have had her first taste of it as an undergraduate.

Of the fourteen postgraduate students admitted to the British School at Athens for the 1933-1934 session, five were women.<sup>5</sup> Among them were Mercy Money-Coutts and Edith Eccles, the only two students who arrived with a particular interest in Minoan Crete. They formed a lasting friendship which saw them working and traveling together at intervals for years to come, in peacetime and in war.

Women had been admitted to the School since 1890, and permitted to reside in its Hostel since just after World War I. By the late 1920s they constituted a good proportion of the residents. Most students spent much time traveling, often to remote regions, in uncomfortable conditions; "but difficulties, hazards or discomfort were not admitted as deterrents even by the earliest women students."<sup>6</sup> Young women in pairs or threesomes might sometimes hire a guide and mules, but most journeys were made on foot. Mary Burn recalls one such journey she made in 1934 with Mercy Money-Coutts and Edith Eccles, walking over the rough mountain tracks of Arcadia to the temple at Bassae. They had a guide and a mule, but Mercy would never ride, even for a short rest on a long day's walk, on any of the excursions that they took together.

Until the mid to late 1930s the students were highly competitive in this regard, considering it "almost a matter of honour...to come back to the School with stories of trekking all day and bedding down with the mule."<sup>7</sup> The late 1920s had seen explorers admitted to the School whose feats were to become legendary, among them Sylvia

Benton and John Pendlebury. To compete in this environment required toughness, resourcefulness, and adaptability, qualities that Mercy possessed in full measure. Apart from Sylvia Benton, she is the only other person recorded who could beat Pendlebury to the top of a peak.

Mercy spent her first winter in Athens studying prehistoric pottery. In the spring she and Edith Eccles went to Crete, where they assisted Pendlebury to complete his catalogue of the Stratigraphical Museum at Knossos.

John Pendlebury had succeeded Duncan Mackenzie as the Curator of Knossos in 1929, at the age of twenty-five, and took up residence there with his wife Hilda early in 1930. The School's affairs were now in the hands of a new generation; Humfry Payne had at the same time been appointed Director, at the age of twenty-eight. They had few years in which to make their mark; both died in their thirties. They shared a similar approach and an impetus for change, as reported by Payne's wife, Dilys Powell, describing the ambitions of the new wave: "They were sometimes distrustful of the work of their predecessors. In particular they questioned the conclusions of the great nineteenth-and early twentieth century pioneers, whom they were inclined to regard as unscientific in sifting the evidence...Now a more deliberate and, it was suggested, a more scientific approach was the thing."<sup>8</sup> To her obvious pleasure, the scientific approach did not mean the end of "the good old traditions of obstinate individualism," for Pendlebury was an outstanding individualist. So, one might add, was Mercy Money-Coutts.

It had been Sir Arthur's idea to create a permanent reference collection at Knossos, and he was the first archaeologist in Greece to set up a stratigraphic collection of pottery from a major excavation. By the early 1920s some of the labels had become illegible, and Duncan Mackenzie began the task of replacing the original baskets with newly labeled wooden boxes. When Pendlebury succeeded as Curator, a massive amount of work had still to be done. With the help of his wife Hilda, and of Evans' foreman Manoli Akoumianos, he had by 1931 completed the task of transferring all the surviving potsherds from the Palace and its dependencies into 2000 boxes, and had organized a system whereby each area was identified by key numbers. The complete list was published in pamphlet form, including a brief history of the collection.<sup>9</sup>

There remained the huge undertaking of assigning a date to the sherds in every box. With Hilda's help he got through almost one-third of the total. For all the rest he had the assistance of Edith Eccles and Mercy Money-Coutts, the results being published in installments.<sup>10</sup> The 'museum' itself consisted of shelving erected in various areas of the Palace, in the Little Palace, and in the foreman's office. It remained thus dispersed until the early 1960s when Sinclair Hood, then Director of the British School, planned the construction of a new purpose-built museum at Knossos to accommodate both Evans' sherds and material from recent excavations. Mervyn Popham, the Assistant Director, organized the transfer. By then the conditions of storage had reverted to a state similar to that faced by Pendlebury: collapsing shelves, rotting boxes, missing or illegible labels. The job of identifying, reboxing, and preparing new labels would have been almost<sup>1</sup> impossible without the help of the various parts of the Guide prepared by Pendlebury

and his assistants.<sup>11</sup> The new Stratigraphical Museum opened in 1966, and has since served many scholars as they restudy and reinterpret Evans' material.

In addition to their museum work, Money-Coutts and Eccles undertook a number of expeditions in central Crete in April 1934, usually together, and usually with Pendlebury and one or two others. These ranged in length from one day to one week, and their purpose was to discover new sites and check on those already known.<sup>12</sup>

Since his first visit to Crete in 1928, Pendlebury had explored the island tirelessly. "Few... could have competed with the vigour of his exploratory habits. He was credited with having walked 1000 miles in Crete in the course of one season."<sup>13</sup> Hilda frequently accompanied him, and sometimes others did. By the early 1930s these travels had the particular aim of registering sites and routes. The end result was to be his indispensable handbook, The Archaeology of Crete: An Introduction (in which almost half the text illustrations were drawn by Mercy Money-Coutts, including all the drawings of seal stones and diagrammatic versions of pottery patterns).

Something of the flavor of his travels, other than the strictly archaeological descriptions, can be garnered from various sources.<sup>14</sup> They were always strenuous, frequently uncomfortable, but not without material consolations: "Of provisions I personally recommend a few idiotic luxuries; caviare, asparagus tips, paté de foie gras. These are the inessentials that make life worth living in a world of hard-boiled eggs and hacked meat."<sup>15</sup>

In addition to their Cretan travels in 1934, Money-Coutts and Eccles, accompanied by Mary Burn, set out to explore Peloponnesian sites: by train to Corinth and on to Olympia, into Arcadia on foot, with a guide and mule (the latter providing welcome respites for those made of less stern stuff than Mercy), then on by bus and train to Sparta, Nauplia, Mycenae. Mary Burn has vivid memories of dirty and uncomfortable transport, small bare rooms with occasional flea, unappetizing food, strenuous walking, and the breathtaking beauty of Bassae, in the days when "only archaeologists and botanists undertook the rigours of Greek travel."

Both Money-Coutts and Eccles returned to Crete in the spring of 1935. By this time Pendlebury had resigned as Knossos Curator, to be succeeded by R. W. Hutchinson,

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<sup>11</sup> I write from experience. I was the first to assist Popham, and personally handled the reboxing of more than half the total.

<sup>12</sup> J. D. S. Pendlebury, E. Eccles, M-B Money-Coutts, "Journeys in Crete, 1934," BSA 33 (1932-1933) 80-100.

<sup>13</sup> S. C. Roberts "Prefactory Note," in J. D. S. Pendlebury et al., John Pendlebury in Crete, Cambridge, 1938, x.

<sup>14</sup> For example, his own account of his first trip in Pendlebury et al., supra, note 13; Hilda Pendlebury, "A Journey in Crete," Archaeology 17, 1964, 162-168; Powell, supra note 7, 92-93.

with whom Edith now worked. But Mercy had committed her time and talents to Pendlebury, and for the few remaining years of her active archaeological career, she worked either with him, or for him, or under his influence.

The Pendleburys now had more time and freedom to follow their own pursuits, which naturally included several more long journeys. One focus of their travels, in some of which Mercy also participated, and Hutchinson too, was the upland plain of Lasithi in central Crete. Evans had done some exploration and noted a few sites in the area in the 1890s. But then it remained neglected by archaeologists until June 1935, when investigation suggested that excavations would be fruitful. Starting in May 1936, and in the following three years, Pendlebury conducted a series of digs in Lasithi, assisted by Hilda, Mercy, and a few other members of a generally small staff.

Between excavating and publication of the finds, in which she was heavily involved, Money-Coutts devoted a great deal of her time in the later 1930s to the Lasithi investigations. But she found time to travel extensively too, not only in Greece, but beyond. In the summer of 1936 she visited Chios with Eccles in search of prehistoric sites, and together they explored the cave which Eccles was to excavate two years later.<sup>16</sup> Earlier in the same year she traveled in Egypt, Palestine and Syria, having by then developed an interest in the relations between Minoan and Oriental cultures. Pendlebury had a similar interest, and indeed directed the excavations at Amarna in Egypt for many years (during some of which he was also Curator of Knossos).

Exploration of the Cycladic islands also engaged her interest, another one that she shared with Pendlebury. In the summer of 1938 she visited Melos, Paros and other islands. The following spring she traveled with Pendlebury in Kimolos, Syros and Naxos, in search of ancient sites.

Sir Arthur Evans did not come to Knossos during most of the years of Pendlebury's curatorship, and his last ever visit was in 1935. But he must have seen and heard enough about Mercy's abilities to be impressed, and in 1936 entrusted to her much of the organization of the Knossos section of the exhibition held in London in honor of the fiftieth anniversary of the British School. He appreciated her artistic talents too, and used one of her drawings of a hoard of gold double axes as an illustration in the last volume of his monumental work on the palace.<sup>17</sup>

The first of Pendlebury's Lasithi excavations took place in May 1936 at the cave of Trapeza. A handful of people were involved, of whom both the Pendleburys and Mercy Money-Coutts were present throughout and undertook the publication.<sup>18</sup> Mercy

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<sup>16</sup> Sinclair Hood, Excavations in Chios 1938-1955. Prehistoric Emporio and Ayia Gala I, BSA Suppl. 15, Oxford 1981, 11.

<sup>17</sup> Sir Arthur Evans, The Palace of Minos at Knossos, IV, London 1935, 346 fig. 290, 347 note 2.

<sup>18</sup> H. W. and J. D. S. Pendlebury and M. B. Money-Coutts, "Excavations in the Plain of Lasithi. I. The cave of Trapeza," BSA 36, 1935-1936, 5-131.

was responsible for the pottery, which was nearly all unstratified, covered a broad range from Neolithic to Middle Bronze Age, and had to be dated stylistically. As she pointed out, this was a difficult task, because of the regional overlapping of periods and the paucity of well stratified sites in Crete. Her solution was to divide the material according to shapes, to arrange the examples within each category in chronological order, and to offer a date for every piece. "This method seems to present fewer difficulties than any other, and to be the first step towards achieving a real corpus of Minoan pottery,"<sup>19</sup> All told, she catalogued and described 300 pieces, gave parallels from other sites, and illustrated with her own profile drawings, many of them with sections. She was not the very first to publish catalogs with section drawings, but she was among the first.

In addition to the pottery, she also published the seals, the metal objects, and miscellaneous small finds, in exemplary fashion. In all, about 75% of the total site publication is by Mercy Money-Coutts.

In June of the following year, Pendlebury resumed his excavations in Lasithi, assisted by Mercy and by Marian Pascoe, another student at the British School. Tests were conducted in two caves near the village of Tzermiadho, used for burials in prehistoric times, and larger scale digging at the settlement site of Kastellos.<sup>20</sup> Mercy was again responsible for publishing all the pottery, ranging from Late Neolithic to Late Minoan. Again her catalogs are illustrated with her own drawings, now all with sections. And whereas her earlier publication used a variety of scales, she had by now settled on a standard scale. From a perspective of 60 years on, it is a remarkably modern-looking publication.

Pendlebury's final, and perhaps best known, excavations in Lasithi took place in 1937-1939 at the post palatial settlement at Karphi and nearby tombs.<sup>21</sup> Again the staff was small, only three or four in the first and last seasons. Only John Pendlebury, Mercy Money-Coutts and Marian Pascoe were there throughout. Hilda Pendlebury participated in 1938, when a staff of nine included also H. L. Lorimer. Manoli Akoumianos was foreman, as he had been for all of Pendlebury's digs; and in those last pre-war months the workmen included "two Albanian murderers released from gaol on the Italian invasion, a lame sheep-stealer from Mt. Ida and an alleged leper from Cyprus."<sup>22</sup>

They lived in the village of Tzermiadho where the population were very welcoming, and climbed each day the steep, high peak of Karphi. Vronwy Hankey, who visited there in May 1939, writes in a personal letter: "Mercy was very happy on Lasithi.

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<sup>19</sup> M. B. Money-Coutts in H. W. Pendlebury et al., supra note 18, 25.

<sup>20</sup> H. W. and J. D. S. Pendlebury and M. B. Money-Coutts, "Excavations in the Plain of Lasithi. II," BSA 38, 1937-1938, 1-56.

<sup>21</sup> J. D. S. Pendlebury et al., "Excavations in the Plain of Lasithi. III. Karphi: A city of Refuge of the Early Iron Age in Crete. Excavated by Students of the British School of Archaeology at Athens, 1937-39," BSA 38, 1937-1938, 57-145.

<sup>22</sup> J. D. S. Pendlebury et al., supra note 21, 61, note 1.

She had a lot to do with the practical arrangements. I don't remember details, but retain the impression of efficient organization, and easy friendship with the Cretans. Her speed and nimbleness on a mountain were an unachievable standard for others. I think she could climb faster than John (he came down faster), and there was a hint of competition to see who could be first at the dig every morning." Tradition says that the workmen sometime laid bets on the outcome.

Vronwy Hankey, who was greatly impressed by Mercy Money-Coutts, also provides a description of her in 1939: "She was tall, slim but athletic in build, with straight light brown hair, cropped short, a sharp profile, piercing gray-green eyes, a whimsical smile, a curious distortion of the S-sound (not exactly a lisp), and a clipped enunciation of her words. In bearing and dress she was clearly an outdoor aristocrat, rather reserved (or shy), but friendly on closer acquaintance...She had a good store of verbal wit."

By the end of the last season they had cleared the section of settlement which lay on Karphi proper, probably less than one-third of the whole. There was no intention to dig more, even if the war had not intervened. Recognizing that the success of the project was a group effort, Pendlebury did not append his own or any other name as author(s) of the report, but simply listed all the members of the staff within the text.

The publication was incomplete. The pottery had not been mended by the end of the last season, and discussion of it was promised as soon as circumstances permitted. They did not permit. Not until many years after the war, and after Pendlebury's death, did Mercy find the opportunity to complete her last archaeological publication, that of the pottery from Karphi; though in fact most of it had been written, and approved by Pendlebury, by 1940.<sup>23</sup> The corpus of shapes had been compiled while the excavation was in progress, and the publication comprises a description and a discussion of each shape, with section drawings. A discussion of decoration is again illustrated with her own splendid scale drawings, some diagrammatic, other of individual sherds.

Publication of his prehistoric excavations in the Lasithi Plain was thus completed by Pendlebury himself and his closest collaborators. There remained, however, a series of Iron Age sites which he partly dug in 1937 and 1938. Not until 1980 did a summary account of them appear in print, not with Mercy's direct participation, but by her invitation.<sup>24</sup>

In the course of four seasons, John Pendlebury and his co-workers had excavated in part ten sites ranging in date from Neolithic cave burials, to an Early and Middle Bronze Age settlement and burials, to a refugee settlement dating to the very end of the Bronze Age and beyond, and to Iron Age buildings of the eighth, sixth, and third centuries BC. Until very recently, almost everything that was known about the history and distribution of settlements in the Plain of Lasithi was due to these explorations, and

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to their (for the most part) prompt publication in reports which “with their systematic publication of all the material found, and their clear and accurate drawings, were a landmark in the history of archaeological research in Crete, and still serve as a model.”<sup>25</sup>

Pendlebury wrote a brief interpretive essay on Lasithi, the result, he jocularly said, “of many symposia with Miss Money-Coutts and Miss Pascoe during the course of the dig. It is impossible to apportion the blame for any suggestion with certainty.”<sup>26</sup> Forty-five years later, L. V. Watrous produced a fuller account, still essentially based on Pendlebury’s investigations, and acknowledging the information supplied by Mercy Seiradaki.<sup>27</sup>

John Pendlebury returned to Crete in 1940, to recruit and organize guerilla bands. He was shot at the very start of the German invasion of Crete in May 1941.

Mercy Money-Coutts had been very fortunate in her mentor. While still a young graduate, she moved into the orbit of the most energetic, productive, and ambitious young Minoan archaeologist of the day, and had participated in several of his most exciting projects. Pendlebury was lucky too, for in Mercy he found an ideal assistant with all the gifts he needed: the physical energy and stamina to keep up with him, fortitude in the face of difficulties and discomfort, considerable organizational ability, an excellent understanding of Minoan pottery, and the talent for drawing it that makes the publications outstanding for their era. There can be little doubt that in his short life John Pendlebury could not have achieved his brilliant record of attainments in Cretan archaeology without the assistance of his most important collaborators: Hilda Pendlebury and Mercy Money-Coutts.

Mercy spent the first years of the war at Bletchley Park in rural Buckinghamshire, officially labeled a Department of the Foreign Office, but in fact the Government Code and Cypher School, where ultra secret intelligence was handled. It was at Bletchley that the German cipher code was cracked in 1940. No individual records were kept, and everybody worked in utmost secrecy, so Mercy’s precise job there is not documented. Her son reports that she worked as a secretary. All the wartime evidence about the situation in Crete came from the German ciphers, and possibly Mercy had a hand in their assessment; but she could not have specialized in Crete.

In 1944 she left Bletchley to join the British Red Cross and was sent to Egypt. There is no doubt that her main objective was to get back to Crete.

At Knossos as the Germans withdrew, the Villa Ariadne, Evans’ former home, was ‘liberated’ by, among others, Tom Dunbabin, Assistant Director of the British School, who had landed secretly in Crete in 1942 to help organize the resistance. The Villa soon became the headquarters of the British Area Commander, and the nearby

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‘Taverna’, home of the Knossos Curator in happier times, was handed over to UNRRA, the organization concerned with refugee relief.

There was still a German presence in Chania, and Crete was officially considered too dangerous for women. But with the help of Dunbabin, an expert at infiltration, Mercy Money-Coutts and Edith Eccles were transferred by a fisherman from Libya to the south coast of Crete, and then walked alone to Knossos. They took up residence in the Taverna, amidst a detachment of Greek troops, but later had it to themselves.

For several months in 1944-1945 the two women, Money-Coutts still with the Red Cross, Eccles representing UNRRA, delivered relief supplies to war-stricken villages. When Edith left Crete for Athens in 1945 Mercy, who for her efforts later received the Bronze Medal of the Greek Red Cross, stayed on in Crete, working for UNRRA until 1946. Her efforts were heroic, as many witnesses attest. She was ideally qualified for the job, with her great physical stamina, her years of experience with (and love of) Crete and the Cretans, her ability to speak the language, her organizational talents, and her manifest courage.

In March 1945 she was visited by Robin and Mary Burn, on leave from the British Embassy in Athens, with a brief to report back on the distribution of relief in Crete. Mary describes their experiences in a personal letter:

We were delighted when Mercy invited us to join her next trip, delivering relief supplies in the Amari valley, to villages savagely destroyed by the Germans....It was great to be traveling again with Mercy, this time in unaccustomed luxury, lying on a large load of blankets on an army 3 ton lorry...The first village was Anoyia, where, as in nearly all of them, we were given a tremendous welcome, Mercy with shouts of joy...We were happy to help, under Mercy’s supervision, since she knew so many of the people, in the distribution of the clothes. Then in the evening, we would all be invited to a meal. The people’s lives had been ruined, nearly all the women had had at least one of their men shot by the Germans, their homes destroyed, but in some mysterious way no disaster had diminished their hospitality. “And when we had our fill of eating and drinking...,” the Cretans began to sing. It was about the battle of Crete. “Nine days and nights we fought them there.” “No,” said another singer, “At Chania we fought for ten days.” “All right, ten days and nights we fought them there...” We felt that in like manner years were added to the Trojan War.

Later in 1945 R. W. Hutchinson resumed the Curatorship at Knossos. The Villa Ariadne was still the British headquarters, and the German surrender of Crete was signed there. When the Germans left Chania, Mercy’s center of operations moved mainly to western Crete, where she led UNRRA’s child care department. UNRRA’s local contact in southwestern Crete was Michaeli Seiradakis, and together they drove around Crete in an old army jeep in 1945-1946.

Mercy had a talent for getting things done. She was always quick at taking the right decision at the right time. She was listened to, and inspired respect. Among her achievements at this time was the establishment of a semi-boarding primary school in the village of Sougia, for the children of four villages destroyed during the war. And it was through her and Michaeli's initiative that the Chania road was extended down to Sougia on the south coast, serving the needs of 22 villages.

For her achievements she was greatly loved and admired. Her son reports that when she died, some of these villagers made the long journey to Thessaloniki for her funeral, at least one of them claiming that she was the only mother he ever knew. A small street in Sougia has been named after her. Indeed she attained something approaching sainthood, as her daughter describes:

Though her work in those days, she became almost a legendary figure in the area...Small children loved her as their savior (she was the provider of food and clothes as well as education, in their eyes) and the community at large adored her like a saint...My mother's photograph was posted up on a wall as the benefactor. When some time later a tornado struck the village of Sougia, it swept away most of the school but not the wall where my mother's photograph stood! This was interpreted as a miracle by most of the locals! To them she was certainly a saint!

Years later, whenever we visited the area...red carpets were spread out on the road for my mother to step on, the best donkeys all decorated with beautiful Cretan rugs were offered for our transportation, all the population of each village came out to greet us offering us the best of what they had...

After a few years Mercy, a very modest woman, either avoided the area entirely, or tried to steal through it without anybody's knowledge.

Michaeli Seiradakis came from a village family in southwestern Crete. Like his brothers and sisters, he worked for a living with his father from childhood, and had no opportunity for education beyond primary school. At the outbreak of World War II he was serving in the army at the front in northern Greece. When forced to retreat, he walked to Gytheion in the Peloponnese, and set sail for home. After difficulties and danger that nearly cost him his life, he reached Crete, and immediately joined the resistance with other members of his village. The village, Livadas (near Sougia), was completely destroyed by the Germans in retaliation.

Michaeli was the link between British forces' radio transmitters and the city of Chania. Eventually he was wounded and transferred by the British to a

hospital in Cairo, then returned and continued fighting. He was decorated with a large number of medals, both Greek and British, for all his acts of bravery. He had excellent contacts with the English-speaking allied forces in Crete, and was among the first to join UNRRA when the organization employed Cretans to help with the delivery of relief supplies.

Mercy had long since fallen in love with Crete. It is not to be wondered at that she fell in love with a true Cretan warrior. This “unprecedented event” (to quote her daughter) must have caused a sensation in the local Cretan community. Lord and Lady Latymer disapproved heartily, and no member of her family was present at the wedding of Mercy Money-Coutts and Michaeli Seiradakis at Chania in May 1947.

Family ties were not severed, however, and her father did not disinherit her. They were able to buy Bella Vista, a beautiful house by the sea in Halepa, a suburb of Chania. Their son John was born the following year. Michaeli became an olive oil merchant, selling both in Greece and Germany, not entirely successfully; he was too generous and honest, and people took advantage of him. The marriage was, however, a great success, and their happiness together gave much pleasure to their friends.

Sophia was born in 1949, a difficult birth which left Mercy bedridden for almost a year. For a couple of years thereafter she was not permitted to take long walks, a great deprivation; but she could swim, and continued to do so with much pleasure until she was eighty.

She was a good mother, relaxed and unfussy. Her children recall a very happy childhood. Their mother played with them, taught them to love books, took them fishing from nearby rocks, taught them how to paint. She did not bother with mundane details. John, who was allowed out to play football in winter without heavy clothing, was much envied by friends “dressed like onions.” She was always calm, never angry. Her children justifiably felt she could protect them if needed.

During these years she continued her involvement with the Red Cross, and was a member of the first British Council established in Chania. She also entertained at Bella Vista what seemed to Sophia at the time to be “the whole of the English speaking population that landed on Crete.” She welcomed students from the British School. Sinclair Hood has happy memories of time spent with the Seiradakis family.

In the 1950s she worked in the evenings at home on her drawings of the Karphi pottery. Once she took her children to Knossos when they were young, and they stayed in the Villa Ariadne. She was excited by archaeological discoveries until the end of her life, although she was never again to be directly involved in the field.

Lord Latymer died in 1949, and Mercy's eldest brother inherited the title. There were many family visits back and forth between Greece and England, although after Lady Latymer's death in 1961 Mercy was less keen to travel to England. Her last visit there was in the mid 1970s when John was working for his Ph.D. in radio astronomy at the University of Manchester. Both Mercy and Michaeli loved to travel, in Greece and abroad. Their last long trip was to the USA in 1979.

In 1962 the Seiradakis family transferred to Athens, partly because Michaeli's business was failing, but mostly to give their children a better education and the chance to go on to university. It was a successful move. John, an expert on neutron stars, is now Professor in the Physics Department at the University of Thessaloniki. Sophia, married to Professor Harry Papoutsakis, teaches at a High School in Heraklion, Crete.

At their new and smaller house in Athens, Mercy and Michaeli continued their tradition of warm hospitality. It took the Athenians a little time to adjust their ear to Mercy who, Sophia reports, spoke Greek in "a perfect combination of a proper Oxford and a heavy Cretan accent."

In Athens Mercy was able to become closely involved in the British School again. Mervyn Popham, then Assistant Director and Librarian, was responsible for her engagement as a part-time library assistant in 1965. The library collection was growing rapidly, and the workload had increased greatly. In addition a new extension to the library was completed in 1966, which entailed rearranging all the periodicals. Mercy's help for the next several years was thus much appreciated. She in turn enjoyed tremendously keeping in touch with the School's doings, and meeting old friends and new.

Her health started to deteriorate however. From the early 1970s she suffered increasingly from severe arthritis. She was not one to feel sorry for herself, enjoyed the company of her children and grandchildren, and continued traveling for some years. As time passed, she bore the pain gallantly, walked with a stick, helping where she could but not accepting much help herself. In 1991 she and Michaeli moved to Perea, Thessaloniki, to a separate apartment in John's family home.

For the last few years of her life she enjoyed the hospitality and simple life-style of a Greek village. She read several books a week and was alert to the end. She had many interests, and often surprised John with her knowledge of literature, science, philosophy, arts, social behavior, and sports.

She died at home of a stroke on 1 September 1993. The coat of arms of the Barons Latymer bears the motto Esse Quam Videri, "To be, not to seem." It may perhaps be a fitting epitaph for this remarkable woman.

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- I am deeply indebted to John and Sophia Seiradakis, who have generously shared with me much information and many memories of their parents, and provided photographs and other documents. Most of the details of Mercy's personal and family life are taken from their letters to me. I am very grateful also to those of her friends and associates who provided personal reminiscences: Mary Burn, Alison Duke, Vronwy Hankey, Sinclair Hood, Mervyn Popham; to Sir Henry Hinsley for setting me straight on Bletchley; and to Julie Courtenay, Archivist of Lady Margaret Hall, and Elizabeth Waywell, London Secretary of the British School at Athens, for their archival assistance. Much of the background for Mercy Money-Coutts' activities in Greece in the 1930s is provided by Helen Waterhouse's history of the British School, *infra* note 6. Vivid accounts of British archaeologists' life at Knossos before and during the time Mercy worked there can be found in Powell, *infra* note 7; the book contains much information about the life of John Pendlebury. The Annual Report of the Managing Committee, The British School at Athens is the prime source for the year-by-year activities of every student admitted.

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<sup>1</sup> The lineage of the Barons Latymer can be found in any edition of Debrett's Illustrated Peerage and Baronetage (London).

<sup>2</sup> Lord Latymer, Chances and Changes, Edinburgh and London 1931, 319.

<sup>3</sup> Lord Latymer, Stalking in Scotland and New Zealand, Edinburgh and London, 1935.

<sup>4</sup> I have been unable to document this information, which comes from John Seiradakis. He believes that his mother worked chiefly with potsherds.

<sup>5</sup> A list of "Students of the School 1886-1934" is printed in BSA 33 (1932-1933) 235-53. It is updated to 1938 in BSA 36 (1935-1936) 209-212.

<sup>6</sup> Helen Waterhouse, The British School at Athens: The First Hundred Years, London 1986, 126.

<sup>7</sup> Dilys Powell, The Villa Ariadne, London, 1973, 67.

<sup>8</sup> Powell (*supra*, note 7), 61.

<sup>9</sup> J. D. S. Pendlebury, A Guide to the Stratigraphical Museum in the Palace at Knossos, London, 1933.

<sup>10</sup> H. W. and J. D. S. Pendlebury, Knossos. Dating of the Pottery in the Stratigraphical Museum I, London 1935; E. Eccles, M. Money-Coutts and J. D. S. Pendlebury, Knossos.

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Dating of the Pottery in the Stratigraphical Museum II, London 1935; M. B. Money-Coutts and J. D. S. Pendlebury, Knossos. Dating of the Pottery in the Stratigraphical Museum III. The Plans, London 1935.

<sup>11</sup> I write from experience. I was the first to assist Popham, and personally handled the reboxing of more than half the total.

<sup>12</sup> J. D. S. Pendlebury, E. Eccles, M-B Money-Coutts, "Journeys in Crete, 1934," BSA 33 (1932-1933) 80-100.

<sup>13</sup> S. C. Roberts "Prefactory Note," in J. D. S. Pendlebury et al., John Pendlebury in Crete, Cambridge, 1938, x.

<sup>14</sup> For example, his own account of his first trip in Pendlebury et al., supra, note 13; Hilda Pendlebury, "A Journey in Crete," Archaeology 17, 1964, 162-168; Powell, supra note 7, 92-93.

<sup>15</sup> J. D. S. Pendlebury, "Travelling Hints," in Pendlebury et al., supra note 13, 11.

<sup>16</sup> Sinclair Hood, Excavations in Chios 1938-1955. Prehistoric Emporio and Ayia Gala, I, BSA Suppl. 15, Oxford 1981, 11.

<sup>17</sup> Sir Arthur Evans, The Palace of Minos at Knossos, IV,1, London 1935, 346 fig. 290, 347 note 2.

<sup>18</sup> H. W. and J. D. S. Pendlebury and M. B. Money-Coutts, "Excavations in the Plain of Lasithi. I. The cave of Trapeza," BSA 36, 1935-1936, 5-131.

<sup>19</sup> M. B. Money-Coutts in H. W. Pendlebury et al., supra note 18, 25.

<sup>20</sup> H. W. and J. D. S. Pendlebury and M. B. Money-Coutts, "Excavations in the Plain of Lasithi. II," BSA 38, 1937-1938, 1-56.

<sup>21</sup> J. D. S. Pendlebury et al., "Excavations in the Plain of Lasithi. III. Karphi: A City of Refuge of the Early Iron Age in Crete. Excavated by Students of the British School of Archaeology at Athens, 1937-39," BSA 38, 1937-1938, 57-145.

<sup>22</sup> J. D. S. Pendlebury et al., supra note 21, 61, note 1.

<sup>23</sup> Mary Seiradaki, Pottery from Karphi," BSA 55, 1960, 1-37.

<sup>24</sup> L. V. Watrous, "J. D. S. Pendlebury's Excavations in the Plain of Lasithi. The Iron Age Sites," BSA, 75, 1980, 269-83.

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<sup>25</sup> Sinclair Hood, "Obituary of Mercy Seiradaki," in The British School at Athens, Annual Report of the Managing Committee for the session 1992-1993, 46.

<sup>26</sup> J. D. S. Pendlebury, "Lasithi in Ancient Times," BSA 37, 1936-1937, 194, note 1.

<sup>27</sup> L. V. Watrous, Lasithi. A History of Settlement on a Highland Plain in Crete, Hesperia, Suppl. 18, Princeton 1982.

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