

## Establishment and Activities of the British School of Archaeology in Jerusalem in the wake of the WWI<sup>1</sup>

### 1. Dünya Savaşı Sonrası Kudüs İngiliz Arkeoloji Okulu'nun Kuruluşu ve Faaliyetleri

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**Abstract:** Antiquities in the Near East witnessed a historic transformation in the wake of the WWI and the collapse of the Ottoman Empire that had been ruling the region since the 16<sup>th</sup> century. British and French mandates in Iraq, Syria and Palestine organized extensive attempts to gather antiquities of the aforementioned region and put new regulations regarding antiquities into effect. The British School of Archaeology was established in Jerusalem in 1919 following the World War I in order to meet the necessity of such an institution with respect to increasing British interest on Middle Eastern antiquities. Beside existing French and American institutions of a similar kind, the referred school started to train young inspectors for the preservation of ancient monuments of the Holy Land and gave special instructive courses to the locals interested in archaeological study. Its staff undertook the organization and administration of the new department of Antiquities in accordance with recently emerging conjuncture appeared with the British mandate that differed from the previous Ottoman rule. This paper seeks an understanding for the basic motivations of establishment and activities during the initial years of the British School of Archaeology in Jerusalem (the BSAJ) based on the documents and primary sources acquired from the National Archives of the UK.

**Keywords:** British School of Archaeology in Jerusalem, Antiquities, Ottoman Empire, Palestine

**Öz:** 16. yüzyıldan itibaren Suriye ve Irak coğrafyasına hakim olan Osmanlı Devleti'nin 1. Dünya Savaşı sonrasında yıkılmasıyla birlikte Yakın Doğu eski eserleri tarihi bir dönüşüme sahne oldu. Irak, Suriye ve Filistin sahasında tesis edilen İngiliz ve Fransız mandaları bölgedeki eski eserlerin toplanması ve yeni yasal düzenlemelerin uygulamaya konulması hususunda oldukça hızlı davrandı. Yakın Doğu antik eserlerine karşı artan İngiliz merakının bir sonucu olarak 1. Dünya Savaşı'nın hemen sonrasında 1919 yılında Kudüs'te bir İngiliz Arkeoloji Okulu tesis edildi. Kudüs'te hali hazırda benzer türden mevcut olan Fransız ve Amerikan kurumlarına ek olarak İngiliz Arkeoloji Okulu, antik eserlerin muhafazası için müfettişler yetiştirmeye, eski eserlere karşı ilgi duyan kişilere özel kurslar sunmaya başladı. Okul görevlileri İngilizlerin bölgedeki eski eser politikalarını uygulayacak olan Eski Eser İdaresi'ni tesis etti. Böylece bölgede Osmanlı döneminde uygulanan asar-ı atika hukuku tamamen değiştirilmiş oldu. Bu çalışma Kudüs İngiliz Arkeoloji Okulu'nun kuruluş ve faaliyetlerinin altında yatan temel motivasyonlara İngiliz arşiv belgeleri zemininde ışık tutmayı hedeflemektedir.

**Anahtar Sözcükler:** Kudüs İngiliz Arkeoloji Okulu, asar-ı atika, Osmanlı Devleti, Filistin

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### **British School of Archaeology in Jerusalem**

The British interest in archaeological artifacts on Ottoman soils stretches back to the 17th century. The first sparks of this interest, which would continue through the centuries and reach a climax with the First World War, were seen in 1634, when an antiques dealer appointed by Earl of Arundel collected marble sculptures from ancient cities including Izmir, Ephesus, Priene and Miletus. British travellers and antiquities-seekers such as Richard Pococke, Richard Chandler, Martin Leake and W.R. Hamilton published works on the ancient cities of Anatolia and their ancient artifacts before the 19th century: these descriptions formed the grounds for many large-scale British excavations in the 1800s.<sup>2</sup> Among the foremost excavations carried out by the British in the last century of the Ottoman state were those carried out by Charles Fellows at Ksanthos in south-west Anatolia between 1838-1843, Henry Layard at Mosul-Nineva between 1846-1848,<sup>3</sup> Vice-Consol Charles Newton at Bodros, Knidos, Kos and Yatağan between 1853-1858, John Turtle Wood at Ephesus between 1863-1879, and D.G. Hogarth, Thomas E. Lawrence and Charles Leonard Wooley at Kargamış near Gaziantep between 1878-1920.<sup>4</sup> Some of these excavations took place on the authority of edicts from the sultan, while others were governed by the harsh 1894 and 1906 laws on antiquities, which banned the export of all discoveries from the country.<sup>5</sup>

Following the Ottoman state's defeat and exit from the First World War, the areas of Syria, Iraq and Palestine passed into the hands of the British and French. The discovery of antiques in this area, one of the richest in the world from the perspective of ancient artifacts, required the creation of the legal and institutional foundations for the conservation of these antiques and their eventual transfer to the museums of London and Paris.<sup>6</sup> As the lead actor in British archaeological activities, firstly in Palestine, then in Syria, Iraq and finally in Anatolia, Prof. John Garstang of Liverpool University was in the ascendant. He was proposed by the Archaeological Societies of Britain and appointed by the special request of Lord Curzon to Palestine, becoming the first director of The British School of Archaeology in Jerusalem (BSAJ) for the first time.<sup>7</sup> At the invitation of and in conjunction with the Palestine Exploration Fund, the British Academy appointed a committee in coordination with the Foreign Office for the purpose of establishing the BSAJ. The BSAJ was set up in 1919 by R.L. Mond, had F.G. Kenyon, the director of the British Museum, appointed as the head of its 27-

<sup>2</sup> Yaşar Yılmaz, *Anadolu'nun Gözyaşları* (Tears of Anatolia), Tem Yayın. İstanbul, 2015, p. 156.

<sup>3</sup> For the details and full story of Layard's uncovering several ancient Assyrian cities buried beneath the earth, including the capital of the Neo-Assyrian Empire, Nineveh, see. Austen Henry Layard, *Nineveh and Its Remains, A Popular Account of Discoveries at Nineveh*, and *Discoveries among the Ruins of Nineveh and Babylon*.

<sup>4</sup> Discussions on the Lycia, Caria and Ephesus excavations between 1840-1880 can be found in Debbie Challis, *From the Harpy Tomb to the Wonders of Ephesus*, Duckworth, London, 2008.

<sup>5</sup> Ahmet Mumcu, "Eski Eserler Hukuku ve Türkiye" (Laws on Antiquities and Turkey), *A.Ü. Hukuk Fakültesi Dergisi*, 1969, C. XXVI, S. 3-4, Ankara, pp. 45-78.

<sup>6</sup> David M. Wilson, *The British Museum*, The British Museum Press, London, 2002, p. 8-9. For an interesting example of rivalry between western powers over the antiquities in the Near East aftermath of the WWI, see İdris Yücel, "Between Science and Empire: the Diplomatic Struggle over Mesopotamian Antiquities in Lisbon (1914-1926)", *Mediterranean Historical Review*, Vol 31, No: 2, 165-180.

<sup>7</sup> National Archives of the UK, Public Record Office, London (hereafter **PRO**) Foreign Office (hereafter FO) 141-687-8703/3, *From Egyptian Expeditionary Officer to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs*, 7th April 1919; A.G. Auld, "The British School of Archaeology in Jerusalem", pp. 23-26 in A. Biran and J. Aviram (eds) *Biblical Archaeology Today*, 1990. *Proceedings of the Second International Congress on Biblical Archaeology*, Jerusalem, 1993; Shimon Gibson, *British Archaeological Institutions in Mandatory Palestine, 1917-1948 Palestine Exploration Quarterly* 1999, 131, 115-143.

member organizing committee. The committee would include among its renowned members the Archbishop of Canterbury, Viscount Bryce, Professor A. E. Gardner (London University), Professor P. Gardner (Oxford University), Sir Israel Gollancz, Canon Headlam (Regius Professor of Theology at Oxford), Professor D.S. Margoliouth, Professor W.M. Flinders Petrie and Sir Geo. Adam Smith.<sup>8</sup>

The committee appointed Prof. Garstang as school director and began operations. The first announcement from the committee referred to Britain's great responsibility in the "emancipation" of *the Near East*, making it clear that this responsibility included its ancient monuments and antiquities: Britain was to be the protector of the ancient antiquities of Mesopotamia and Palestine, which deserved the world's admiration. A second point emphasized by the committee was that competent bodies would now have the full opportunity of exploring these ancient sites. "*Now that these countries are emancipated*" the world would no longer tolerate any neglect of these antiquities and, on the contrary, expected the governments and societies that had accepted the mandates to protect them.<sup>9</sup> The committee, in its announcement, wanted to give the whole world a message through two important points. The first of these was to underline Britain's protective role in the occupation of the region and the mandates and to gain legitimacy through the use of the term "emancipation". The second was to establish that the Ottoman state, which had withdrawn from the region after the First World War, was an occupier which had not protected antiquities in any way; indeed, had done damage to them.<sup>10</sup>

The committee listed BSAJ's basic goals under four headings. These were that the school prioritize scientific research, that it gives education and guidance to students, that it trains administrators and excavators, and finally that it provides every sort of support to the excavations and discoveries of the Palestine Exploration Fund.<sup>11</sup> The BSAJ had a wide area of interest, ranging from the Stone Age and the early Civilizations of the Amorites and Canaanites through all the history of Palestine and Syria and their relations with the nations around them, including the Graeco-Roman Age, the Arab Conquest, the Crusades and the Later Mohammedan period. The BSAJ would contribute many different areas of archaeological knowledge, including art and antiquities of all kinds, the history of ancient religions, origins of the Jewish and Christian religions, topography, geography and other relevant studies.<sup>12</sup> Opening of the BSAJ and its early activities echoed at the British press of the time. According to *Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer* objectives of the school would

<sup>8</sup> "Researches in Bible Lands", *Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer*, 16 December 1919.

<sup>9</sup> PRO, FO 141-687-8703/3, *From Egyptian Expeditionary Officer to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs*, 7th April 1919.

<sup>10</sup> For an evaluation of the Western Governments' overt political and economic activities in colonised lands and especially in Mesopotamia and its importance in terms of Mesopotamian archaeological practices, see, Zainab Bahrani, *Conjuring Mesopotamia, Archaeology Under Fire*, Ed. Lynn Meskell, Routledge, New York, 2005, p. 160.

<sup>11</sup> The Palestine Exploration Fund (PEF) was founded under the patronage of Queen Victoria in 1865 to promote research into the archaeology and history, manners and customs and culture, topography, geology and natural sciences of biblical Palestine and the Levant. The PEF sponsored the following key projects in the Near East: 1867-1870: Excavations in Jerusalem by Warren and Birtles, 1871-1878: The Survey of Western Palestine conducted by Conder and Kitchener (among others), 1890-1893: Excavations at Tell el-Hesi directed by Petrie and Bliss, 1913-1914: The Wilderness of Zin Archaeological Survey conducted by Woolley and Lawrence. For the history of the PEF, see, <http://www.pef.org.uk/history/>

<sup>12</sup> PRO, FO 141-687-8703/3, *From Egyptian Expeditionary Officer to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs*, 7th April 1919.

be to facilitate the researches of scholars, to provide instruction and guidance for students, to train archaeological excavators and administrators, and to assist in every possible way the excavations and explorations of the Palestine Exploration Fund. Besides, the newspaper invited British readers for financial aid and membership subscriptions for the British school in Jerusalem.<sup>13</sup>

The BSAJ founding committee planned to establish ties with many important institutions both in Britain and in the Palestine region. The BSAJ came to an agreement to cooperate with the American School of Oriental Research in Jerusalem, and got in contact with French archaeologists as well for a similar type of outreach.<sup>14</sup> In addition, the school developed an intimate cooperation with the civil administration established in the region and the Department of Antiquities which was to be set up. At the same time, the committee planned to develop a close relationship with universities, theological institutions and academic bodies in Britain.<sup>15</sup>

The BSAJ, itself centered in Jerusalem, was to provide students the opportunity to work on many antique cities as far away as Sinai in the south, Anatolia in the north, Syria, and Iraq in the east, and new branches of the school would open in these regions to facilitate this. For instance, the opening of a British School of Archaeology in Baghdad was already being contemplated. In the light of all this information, the committee called on the British people to become BSAJ members and to contribute. Annual or lifetime subscriptions were proposed to the public at fees ranging between 1 and 500 pounds. Registration for students at the school would be completely free, though it was specified that gifts or bequests would be very welcome.<sup>16</sup>

In the first year of the school's founding, accommodation was secured and the organization plan was completed. The school was formed of a Students' Room, a Lecture Hall and the joint library of the American and British schools. The working system at the BSAJ was established in three main areas. These were studies, records and expeditions. In the records department, 5,000 antiquities under the control of the government inspector were registered in the first year. This represented an important step in the registration of Palestinian antiquities, and was carried out with the help of women volunteers from Jerusalem. An exhibition room

<sup>13</sup> "School of Archaeology in Jerusalem", *Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer*, 15 December 1919, Opening news of the BSAJ in parallel with the *Yorkshire Post* were also published in Welsh and Scottish part of the UK: "Proposed School of Archaeology in Jerusalem", *The Scotsman*, 15 December 1919, "School of Archaeology at Jerusalem", *Belfast News-Letter*, 07 January 1920.

<sup>14</sup> American School of Oriental Research has been active Since the end of the 19th century in the Near East. The school, founded in 1900 had its first headquarters in a hotel room in Jerusalem. It has started its first excavation by 1901 at the tombs at Sidon. For the history of the American School of Oriental Research, see, <http://www.asor.org/about/history.html> . French consulate, French missionaries and the French School of Archaeology in Jerusalem has been actively engaged in search for the historical artifacts and antiquities in the Bible Land through the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. For the archaeological activities of the French in Palestine, see Les archives diplomatiques du Ministère des Affaires Étrangères à La Courneuve, Turquie-Politique Interieur (1897-1914), Fouilles Archeologiques Vol 392 (1897-1899), Fouilles Archeologiques Vol 393 (1900-1903), Fouilles Archeologiques Vol 394 (1904-1908), Fouilles Archeologiques Vol 395 (1909-1912), Fouilles Archeologiques Vol 396 (1912-1915), Affaires Diverses Politiques (1815-1896), Turquie, Fouilles Archeologiques Vol 47. (1877-1896).

<sup>15</sup> PRO, FO 141-687-8703/3, *From Egyptian Expeditionary Officer to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs*, 7th April 1919

<sup>16</sup> PRO, FO 141-687-8703/3, *From Egyptian Expeditionary Officer to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs*, 7th April 1919.

was established on the entrance floor of the school to display the National Collection of Palestinian Antiquities. Mr. Phytian-Adams, as keeper of the museum, contributed papers on topics of local and Egyptian archaeology to the Palestine Oriental Society and other bodies.<sup>17</sup>

In the field of education, activities were carried out in close cooperation with the French School of Archaeology (Ecole de St. Etienne), which was only three minutes' walk away.<sup>18</sup> The French found their burden reduced both by the school library and by having lessons given by the BSAJ members. Good relations and cooperation between the BSAJ, the French and American archaeological schools and the Department of Antiquities, which was under mandatory control, led to students benefiting greatly on the subject of theoretical and practical techniques carried out there.<sup>19</sup>

Early activities of the BSAJ not only attracted British intelligentsia but also found greater support by the ruler elite in the UK. In March 1920, The BSAJ was honoured by the Prince of Wales becoming its patron and gradually furthered its field activities.<sup>20</sup> The excavations at Ascalon coordinated by the BSAJ on behalf of the Palestine Exploration Fund gave fruitful results, including the discovery of the splendid marble 'cloisters round a court' which Herod the Great is stated by Josephus to have presented to this native town.<sup>21</sup> At *the Illustrated London News*, D.G.Hogarth published a detailed news of the excavations undertaken in Palestine during the post-war period by western archaeologists. Hogarth emphasized the importance of these digs in terms of better understanding for the unknown culture of Philistine civilisation and shared the pictures of historical lands of Ascalon being excavated by Prof. Garstang.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, special investigation work was prepared for determining and comparing the stratifications of the mounds and sites in the plains, especially those in 1922 of Tell Amr and Harothiyeh, at the entrance to the Plain of Esdraelon.<sup>23</sup>

The comprehensive plan prepared by Garstang with the aim of taking possession of archaeological artifacts in the Palestine area was of crucial importance to BSAJ's activities. Garstang's organizational plan foresaw the appointment of a department of antiquities, an archaeological council and associated schools, a keeper of the museum, an inspector in chief and a keeper of monuments. Garstang believed that Palestine was not only home to antiques and works of historical work, but also the religion of the Americans, Europeans, the British and their colonies—that is, Christianity—and this by itself gave importance to his activities.

<sup>17</sup> PRO, FO 371-7785-E3923, *Second Annual Report of the British School of Archaeology*, 12 April 1922.

<sup>18</sup> For the French archaeological activities in Syria and the Middle East following the WWI, see, İdris Yücel, Suriye'de Fransız Mandası ve Asar-ı Atika Araştırmaları (French Archaeological Activities in Syria following the First World War), *Proceedings of the International Symposium on the World War I on its Centenary*, 3-5 November, Budapest, 2015.

<sup>19</sup> PRO, FO 371-7785-E3923, *Second Annual Report of the British School of Archaeology*, 12 April 1922.

<sup>20</sup> "The Prince and Archaeology", *Dundee Evening Telegraph*, 8 March 1920.

<sup>21</sup> Beginning of excavations at the famous Crusador city of Ascalon by Professor Garstang echoed at *the Aberdeen Press and Journal*, "A Crusader City", 6 September 1920. In August 1921, Dundee Evening Telegraph published some of the early results of the digs referring the discovery of the Court of Herod the Great. "Secrets of a Buried Biblical City", *Dundee Evening Telegraph*, 8 August 1921.

<sup>22</sup> "Post-War Resumption of Archaeological Excavation: No. III.- Askalon", *The Illustrated London News*, 21 August 1920.

<sup>23</sup> PRO, FO 371-7785-E3923, *Second Annual Report of the British School of Archaeology*, 12 April 1922.



Thus it was that General Allenby's soldiers had held the world rapt by their "emancipation" of Palestine.<sup>24</sup>

Following research and analysis in Palestine, Garstang stated his view that a Department of Antiquities should be immediately established. Garstang believed that the archaeological sites were liable to be tampered with, planted on, cultivated or otherwise appropriated, that monuments may be destroyed or defaced and that antiquities may be irretrievably lost through lack of special machinery to render the proclamations effective and to administer the law. Among the duties of the newly founded department of antiquities would be the preservation of the antiquities of Palestine, by which would be understood all historical monuments, sites, documents, or objects fashioned by human hands or human agency, found or to be found, within the area of British Administration to administer the law of antiquities. The director of the department's special qualifications were to include by general consent expert archaeological knowledge, administrative experience and admitted seniority of standing. The director would have at his command the staff, material and money necessary for the proper discharge of his functions. An archaeological council would also be associated with the director. The organization plan of the Department of Antiquities was formed, containing one director, an Archaeological Council, secretarial staff, a keeper of museums, an inspector in chief and a keeper of monuments.<sup>25</sup>

In order to be able to keep a check on archaeological activities throughout Palestine, the inspector in chief would have many powers. The inspector in chief would be knowledge of antiquities of Palestine, of the Arabic language, of photography, and be in vigorous health. His special duties would be the organization and control of a service of inspection for the protection of all ancient sites, historical buildings and monuments of antiquity in general. His staff would consist of three inspectors, whose qualifications would be of the same nature as those of the inspector in chief; and nine deputy inspectors, or in other words guards, as locally required. The inspector would be appointed by the director; their term of appointment would be for one year in the first instance. The inspectors would report to the inspector in chief for orders and discipline and to the local authorities of the government for such assistance. The chief inspector and the three inspectors would also have the powers of the judicial police in all matters affecting the discharge of their functions.<sup>26</sup>

The Archaeological Council that would form part of the Department of Antiquities in Prof. Garstang's formulation would be "supreme" in certain matters of universal interests and would act in general as an advisory board in all matters submitted to it. Of this council, the director himself would be the chairman ex-officio. Its other members would be directors or expert archaeological representatives of the associated schools. These schools consisted of the American, British, French and Italian schools of archaeology in Jerusalem. Upon the call of the Archaeological Council department director, representatives of these schools would come to a joint agreement on any issue.<sup>27</sup> It was to be formed of five members, and its decisions would

<sup>24</sup> PRO, FO 141-687-8703/3, *From Egyptian Expeditionary Officer to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs*, 7th April 1919.

<sup>25</sup> PRO, FO 141-687-8703/3, *From Egyptian Expeditionary Officer to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs*, 7th April 1919.

<sup>26</sup> PRO, FO 141-687-8703/3, *From Egyptian Expeditionary Officer to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs*, 7th April 1919.

<sup>27</sup> PRO, FO 141-687-8703/3, *From Egyptian Expeditionary Officer to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs*, 7th April 1919.

be by agreement. The council would decide on all matters provided for by the law within the below categories:

- a- The restoration or repair of any historical building.
- b- The conservation of the monuments and sites in historic Jerusalem.
- c- The conservation of sites in Jerusalem.
- d- The qualifications of applicants for licences to excavate.
- e- Regulations for the application or interpretation of the law.
- f- Co-ordination between the work of the department and that of the associated schools.

The income of the Department of Antiquities would come from four main sources. First, the entrance fee to the museum; second, the sale of superfluous duplicate antiquities, third, the tax of 25% on antiquities not purchased under the terms of the proclamation of March 1919 and fourth a suggested tax on non-commercial visitors.<sup>28</sup>

Another important activity initiated by the BSAJ director Prof. Garstang was the passing of a new law on antiquities. This law, came into effect to replace the existing 1906 Ottoman Law on Antiquities, took the Cypriot Law of Antiquities as its starting point. This law was comprised of nine articles under the headings the Department of Antiquities, the Advisory Board, Antiquities, Historical Sites, Excavations, the Trade of Antiquities, The Exportation of Antiquities, Penalties, and General Provisions.<sup>29</sup>

The most important difference between this law and the Ottoman law it replaced was the requirement that excavators give up half of the antiquities found and allowing antiquities to be exported abroad legally. According to the Ottoman antiquities law, excavators could only make copies and photographs of antiquities and could not under any circumstances take them out of the country.<sup>30</sup> Similarly, they could not be exported, either. These provisions were very strictly emphasized in both the 1884 and 1906 Ottoman laws on antiquities.

### Conclusion

As Palestine came under British control after the First World War, comprehensive work began with regard to the antiquities of the region. As the region had long been the site of war, it was necessary to take special steps to preserve the ancient artifacts of Palestine and the surrounding areas. The fundamental mission of the BSAJ, which was founded in Jerusalem in 1919, was to protect British archaeological interests in the region. This mission was foremost formed of coordinating excavations in the region, training students, making records of collections and preserving them. In addition, another crucial contribution of the school was to prepare the groundwork for a comprehensive archaeological administration in coordination with the British mandatory administration. School director Garstang made many important recommendations to the British Foreign Office on the archaeological bureaucracy to be formed

<sup>28</sup> PRO, FO 141-687-8703/3, *From Egyptian Expeditionary Officer to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs*, 7th April 1919.

<sup>29</sup> PRO, FO 371-5283-E11141, *From Sir H. Samuel to the Earl Curzon of Kedleston, Antiquities Ordinance for Palestine*, 28 August 1920.

<sup>30</sup> Alev Koçak, *The Ottoman Empire and Archaeological Excavations*, The Isis Press, Istanbul, 2011, p.100.

in Palestine, the archaeological museum, the new antiquities law and the coordination of excavations. Extremely important steps were taken for the preservation of the artifacts. However, while in the Ottoman era, the export of these artifacts to Europe and the United States was banned, the new law formulated by Garstang opened the way to export overseas. Thus, many unique antiquities found in excavations carried out in Syria, Palestine and Iraq were sent overseas.

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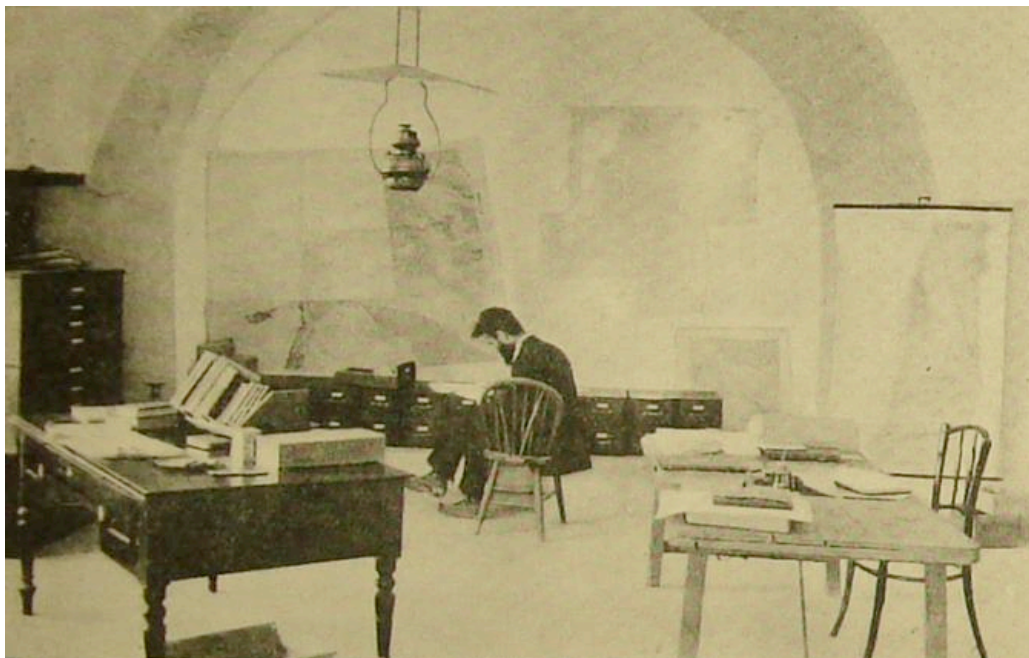
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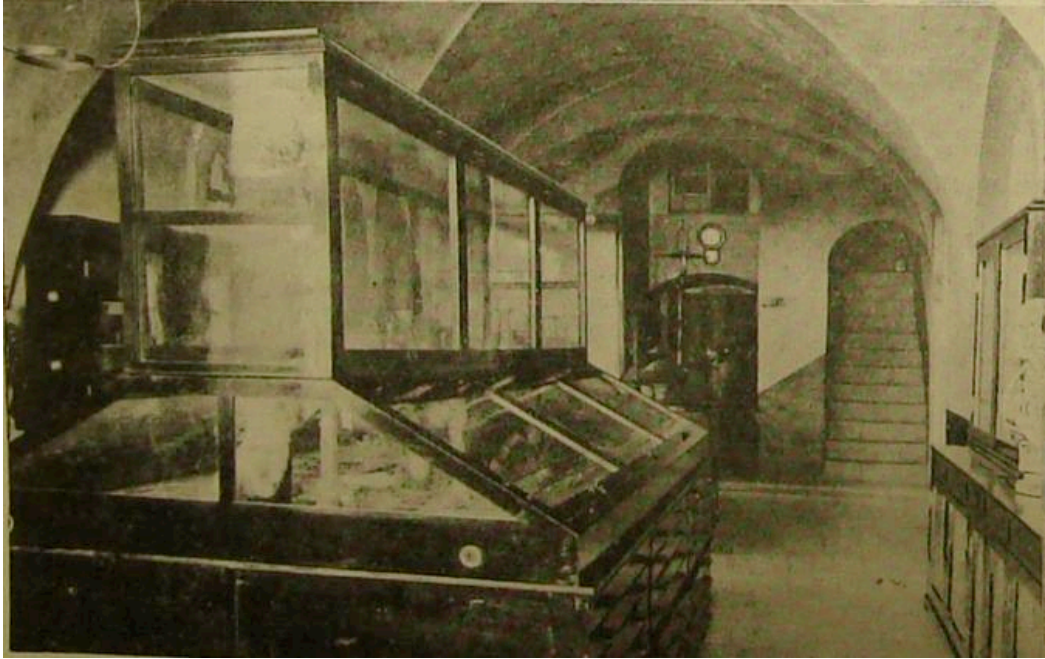
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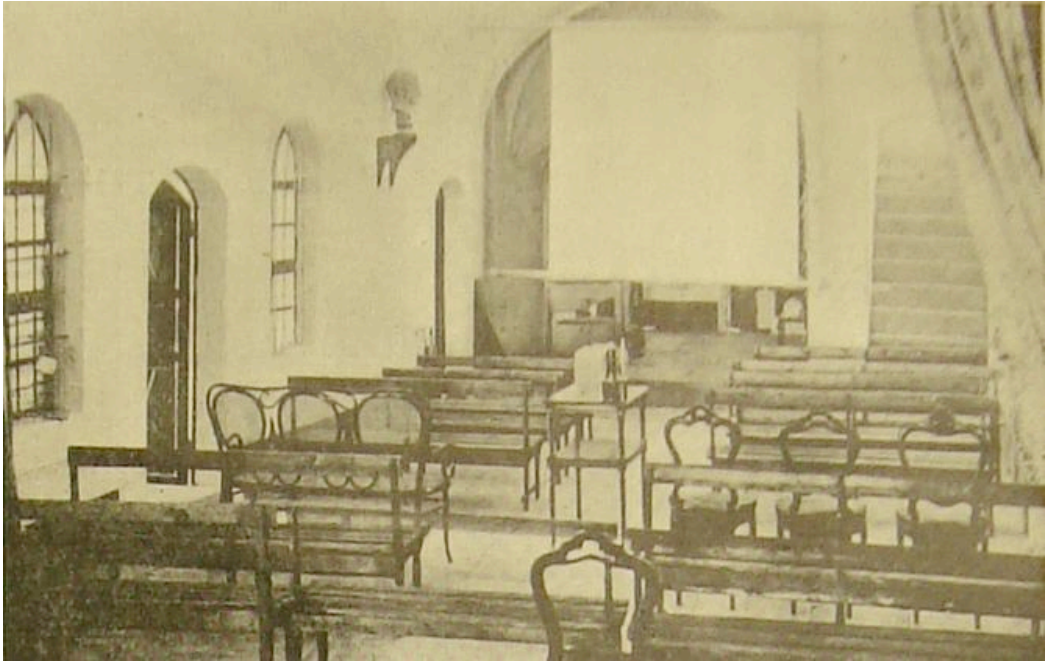
The school building of the British School of Archaeology  
(The National Archives of the UK, FO 371-7785)



Records and Map Room

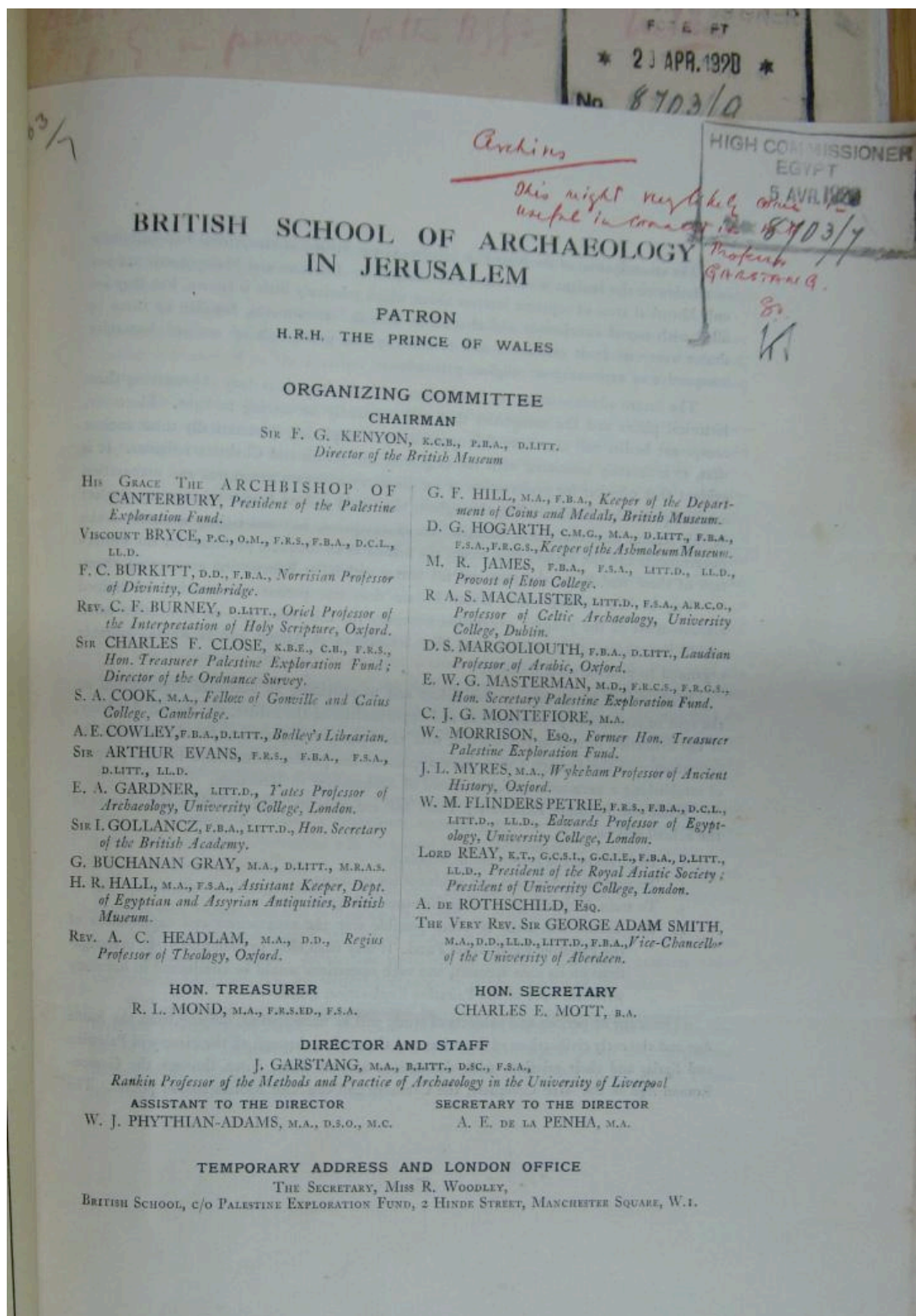


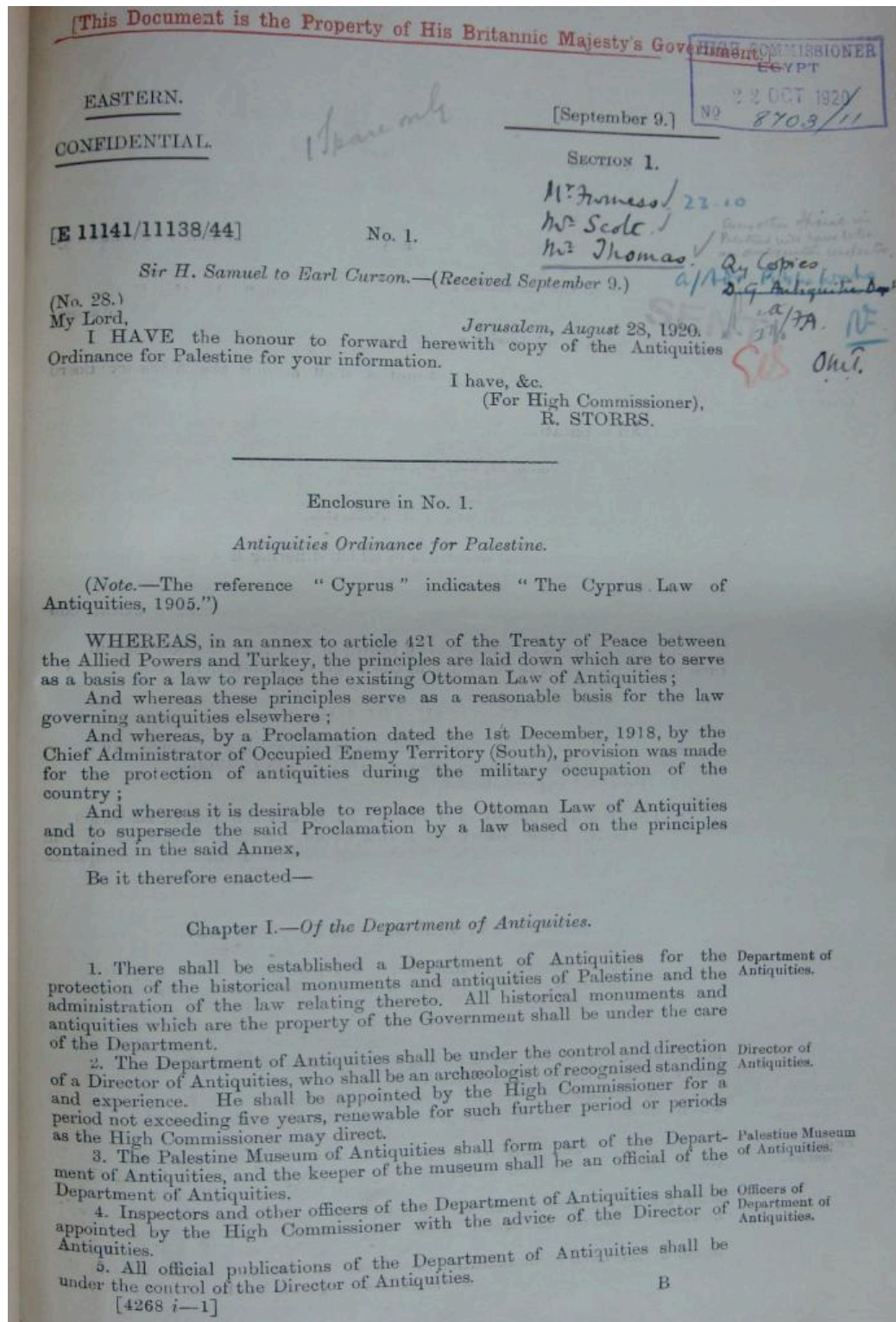
Central Hall of the Palestine Museum



Main Lecture Hall







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