

## **From the Archives**

### **The Gerald Lankester Harding Archive**

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# The Gerald Lankester Harding Archive

*Ian Carroll*

The material from Lankester Harding is one of the more recent additions to the Institute of Archaeology's archival holdings. It includes images, notebooks and a series of Pathe Baby 8 mm film stock<sup>1</sup> (some of the films can be viewed on YouTube). The contents of the archive represent Lankester Harding's archaeological and epigraphic work. They also show his wider interest in the lives of the people living in Jordan at the time. The material forms a unique record of the archaeology of the period and the lives of the people Lankester Harding befriended. The archive has a particular LGBTQ+ significance.

Lankester was born in China in 1901. He studied archaeology at evening classes taught by Dr Margaret Murray. She encouraged him to apply to join one of Flinders Petrie's excavations, where he worked closely with people such as Olga Tufnell and James Leslie Starkey.



**Figure 1** 'Dahmus', one of the Palestinians who worked at Tell el-Ajjul in 1932 (Source: © UCL Institute of Archaeology)



**Figure 2** A candid shot of some of the child workers from Tell Fara, c. 1928–9. Their role was to carry discarded soil away from the dig area and sieve it for finds (Source: © UCL Institute of Archaeology)



**Figure 3** An unidentified Palestinian boy visits the wadi at the foot of the Tell Fara (Source: © UCL Institute of Archaeology)



**Figure 4** Gerald Harding posing with survey equipment in the Tell Fara dig compound, c. 1929–30 (Source: © UCL Institute of Archaeology)

While excavating at Tell Jemmeh, Tell Fara and Tell el-Ajjul between 1926 and 1932 he quickly learnt to speak Arabic (see Figures 1–4). In 1932 he joined James Leslie Starky on the excavations at Tell ed-Duweir (Biblical Lachish) (see Figure 5).

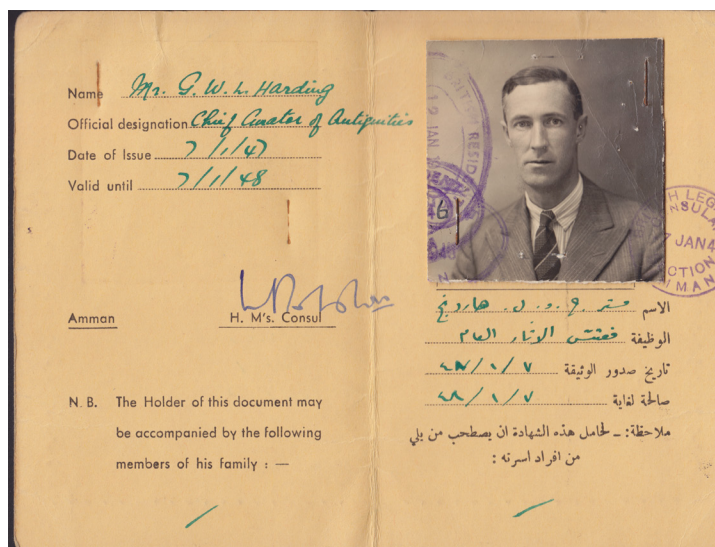
In 1936 he was made Chief Inspector of Antiquities of Transjordan (see Figure 6). Along with the help of his Bedouin assistant, Hasan Awad el-Qutshan, he revitalised the Department of Antiquities and set about exploring numerous sites in Jordan. He was involved in setting up the Archaeological Museum in Amman. He helped to train young Jordanian archaeologists to succeed him and gained funding to send one student to the Institute to study.

In 1948 he was involved in the work to recover the Dead Sea Scrolls and continued to work in the region until 1956. When the Suez Canal crisis happened in 1956, he and all British officials were dismissed by the Jordanian government. He continued to live and work in Lebanon, Jordan and Aden. He died in London in 1979. Out of respect for his services to the kingdom, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan allowed his ashes to be buried near the site of Jerash. Three further articles about the archive by Institute staff can be found in Sparks (2019) and Thornton (2014; 2016).





**Figure 5** A page from one of Harding's photo albums, showing workers at Lachish (Tell ed-Duweir) in 1932-3 (Source: © UCL Institute of Archaeology)



**Figure 6** Gerald Harding's 1947 identity certificate for the Transjordan/Palestine frontier. At the time, he was Chief Inspector of Antiquities of Transjordan (Source: © UCL Institute of Archaeology)

## Note

- 1 More information on the films can be found on the Filming Antiquities website: <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/archaeology/research/directory/filming-antiquity>.

## References

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