

# J. David Hawkins

## 1940–2023

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Photo by Takayuki Oshima, courtesy of the Japanese Institute of Anatolian Archaeology.

David Hawkins, FBA, who was the president of the BIAA from 2008–2022, died after a protracted illness in December 2023. He is most well-known for his work in deciphering, collecting and publishing the inscriptions which we now know to be in the Luwian language, written in a hieroglyphic script indigenous to Anatolia that was developed during the second millennium and used at least into the

seventh century BC. Pride of place is given at the Museum of Anatolian Civilizations in Ankara to the large orthostats covered in this script from Malatya and Karkamish. It is largely due to David's efforts and those of his collaborators that we now broadly understand what they say.

After studying classics at University College, Oxford, David took a postgraduate diploma in Mesopotamian

Archaeology at the Institute of Archaeology in London. Also taking that diploma were Dominique Collon and Georgina Herrmann. In those days archaeology students of southwestern Asia were encouraged to learn Akkadian, which David studied at SOAS with Harry Saggs and Donald Wiseman, and Hebrew, which he studied at UCL with Saul Stein. In 1964 he was offered a position at SOAS as a Research Fellow, and was appointed to teach Akkadian and to learn Hittite with a view to teaching it. For that purpose he started to travel to Oxford once a week to read Hittite texts with Oliver Gurney. Later he attended a reading group in Oxford also attended by Anna Morpurgo-Davies, which led in 1973 to one of the breakthrough papers in the decipherment of Luwian hieroglyphs, co-authored with her and Günter Neumann.

In 1965 David, plunged in at the deep end, went on his first dig, the only season of excavations conducted at the Urartian site of Kayalidere by Seton Lloyd and Charles Burney. Forty-five years later his long-time close friend Dominique Collon published David's caricatures of team members in a *Festschrift* in his honour co-edited by herself and Andrew George as *Iraq 72* (2010). These serve as an eloquent reminder of his one-time ambition to be a political cartoonist, keeping the study of ancient languages as a hobby. This appreciation of graphic art was central to David's understanding of Luwian Hieroglyphs and his masterly ability to transcribe them into two-dimensional drawings. Also at Kayalidere came an early instance of David's unworldliness when it came to things practical. Charles Burney recounts having to settle a potentially violent altercation between two workmen with David, supposedly in charge, asking, 'But what case is he using?' On visits to the BIAA headquarters in later years David would find his way around the library with alacrity, but required assistance to post a letter. He never mastered a typewriter, let alone a computer. All his prodigious scholarly outputs were submitted handwritten, which on the one hand betrayed a clarity of thought that is rare in the modern world, but also meant he was always reliant on others.

He attended further excavations in Türkiye including Şar in 1968 with Richard Harper and İnci Bayburtluoğlu, and Pağnik in 1970 with Richard Harper. Otherwise, in Türkiye David's work concentrated on the study of Hieroglyphic inscriptions of the Hittite period and the Iron Age, in the field, at excavation depots and in museums. This was the field that he excelled in and made very much his own. During these years he travelled widely in Türkiye, notably in the company of Hatice Gonnet, visiting inscriptions at the same time as pursuing his deep interests in ancient geography first inspired by John Garstang and Oliver Gurney's *Geography of the Hittite Empire*, Founder

and long-standing President of the BIAA respectively. However, for a 13-year period he was unable to get permission from the Turkish Ministry to study inscriptions in the country, a trend which both began and ended under unclear circumstances. He was thrilled in his later years to publish the inscriptions from the Temple of the Storm God of Aleppo at the behest of Kay Kohlmeyer, and to be invited by Nicolò Marchetti to study the old and new epigraphic material at Karkamish on the Euphrates. Karkamish was the most important of the Syro-Hittite cities; he had visited in 1966 and devoted much of his career to studying it. A particularly moving moment from his visit there in 2015 was when Nicolò had some workers lift him off his feet by surprise and carry him down into the excavation trench.

The first two volumes of his *Corpus of Hieroglyphic Luwian Inscriptions: Inscriptions of the Iron Age*, with volume II being *Karatepe-Aslantaş* authored by Halet Çambel, were published in 2000 and 1999 respectively. He was helped particularly in the publication process by his student and colleague, Sanna Aro. David retired from SOAS in 2005 and was able to devote himself to numerous publication projects, most importantly the final volume III of the *Corpus*, covering the inscriptions from the Hittite Empire period and the new inscriptions of the Iron Age that had become available since 2000. In this he was aided by Junko Taniguchi, who edited his manuscript. He was working on this right up until his death. It was eventually published in May 2024.

One of David's last papers, posthumously published (*Israel Oriental Studies* 24), was on the extraordinary subject of James Mellaart's fantasised Hieroglyphic Luwian inscriptions. As David himself said, only he could have written this, given that he possessed a sufficient grasp of the script, language, background and the personalities involved, having been a colleague of Mellaart from 1964 to 1991.

David was honoured by two celebratory volumes, one in the journal *Iraq* and one edited by his friend Itamar Singer in Tel Aviv, both presented to him on his 70th birthday in 2010, at his home in Minster-Lovell, Oxfordshire. He will be deeply missed for his friendship, support, wit and congenial conviviality, his talent for cookery and expertise in gardening. He leaves behind his partner, the science-fiction writer Geoff Ryman, with whom he shared his life since 1973; a sister Denzil; brother Tim and their families. His inestimable academic contributions were on the subject dearest to his heart, Luwian Hieroglyphic inscriptions of the second and first millennia BCE. This *Corpus of Luwian Hieroglyphic Inscriptions* is a most fitting edifice by which he will long be remembered with fondness and admiration.