

ENCOUNTERS,
EXCAVATIONS AND
ARGOSIES

ESSAYS FOR RICHARD HODGES

edited by

John Mitchell, John Moreland and Bea Leal

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Cover illustration: Two eagles, dado in the crypt of Abbot Epyphanus, San Vincenzo al Volturno, c. 820
(Photo: Sarah Cocke)

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Bone plaque with hunting dog leaping over eye.
Butrint, Triconch Palace, c. AD 400. (© Butrint Foundation)

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Introduction

John Mitchell and John Moreland

'I maestro di color che sanno'

Dante, Purgatorio 4, 131

Richard is a traveller, an adventurer, an explorer, an observer; he is fascinated by nature, by people in all their kinds, in all their social and personal constructions. Somewhere above or below this he is one of the truly innovative and effective, some would say visionary, archaeologists of our time. Tirelessly operating between the academic quarries of excavation, technical analysis and interpretation and the public interests and audiences that he knows they must serve, he is at the same time a peerless administrator of institutions of learning and research, endlessly constructive and creative. He has transformed our understanding of the past – *Dark Age Economics* (1982) remains unsurpassed in its impact on medieval archaeology – and he has used that understanding to make a real, substantive, difference in the present – the establishment of the Butrint National Park owes most to him.

Behind this he is one of those beings, rarer than rare, who is constantly thinking, taking in and revolving experience and data, adjusting and reshaping hypotheses, figuring out tactics and strategies of academic path-finding, institutional advance or public engagement. He loves the countryside, debate, great literature, and convivial company.

Richard is an incomparable teacher, master and midwife of research, involving, inspiring, energizing young and old, first-year students and seasoned professors, to think, rethink, go and find out, and above all to produce, to achieve a tangible outcome. He is a leader – but also a team-builder, and a team-player. By putting faith in, especially, the junior members of his teams, trusting them in interpretation and publication, he makes their confidence and enables them to work to the height of and beyond what they think to be their abilities and capabilities. Many of the contributions, offerings, in this volume are by those who have been touched and transformed by Richard in this way, and we all have been tangibly affected, inflected, informed by his questioning, explaining, gentle but insistent critique and example. Richard is above all lastingly supportive, unfailingly loyal and a friend of us all. This volume is a token of this friendship.

Kim Bowes and Geneviève Heller gave invaluable advice and help in the course of the planning and preparation of this volume, and Susan Johnson and Maurizia Garzia at the American University of Rome generously assisted in securing an AUR subvention towards the production costs. Maurizia was also our invaluable 'insider' in the planning of the event (held at the British School at Rome) to present this volume to Richard. That event would have been impossible without the help and support of Professor Chris Smith, Director of the BSR.

Richard Hodges

Mother Miriam Benedict

In 1990 Mother Agnes Shaw and I went to San Vincenzo al Volturno to re-establish the monastic life there which had been dormant for many centuries. In addition to the work of the regular monastic life we found that there was work going on at the 'scavi' and that young British students were excavating under the direction of Richard Hodges. We soon became friends and whenever the group discovered something interesting they invited us to see it. They were very open with us and made us feel as if we were part of their life.

In 1992 Mother Philip Kline, who was working on her doctorate in Archaeology, joined us and she worked with the youngsters. She (and we) admired Richard, his ability to keep the enthusiasm in the young ones alive, and his way of handling the difficult situations which would arise. I admire him for his British professionalism, for his passion for the history of this sacred place, and for his care for, and ability to work with, young people. The excavations are still alive because of him.

Thank you, Richard.

Richard a San Vincenzo al Volturno, il 23 settembre 1985*

Franco Valente

Richard Hodges è un giovane professore di Sheffield del quale l'aspetto esteriore, gli atteggiamenti, i movimenti, in qualche modo riflettono il mestiere che esercita, quasi che nel tempo si sia verificata una simbiosi tra gli oggetti di studio e la sua figura. Di conseguenza il suo fisico longilineo, con un volto che mi ricorda il S. Giovanni Battista del Giotto, con i capelli biondi lievemente ondulati e abbastanza lunghi, una rada barba incolta ma comunque affilata a seguire la spigolosità del mento e delle guance, gli occhi azzurri tagliati a mandorla, sembrava uscito da un affresco apposta per farsi individuare come la naturale guida tra quei ruderi che contengono messaggi, notizie e fatti accaduti e che pochi, come lui, sono in grado di riconoscere.

* From Valente, F. 2013 *Incipit Apocalypsis. Intrigo carolingio in un'abbazia longobarda alle sorgenti del Volturno*. Campobasso, Regia Edizioni.

An ode to New Light on Early Medieval Monasticism

Neil Christie

I started on a paper
with academic goals in store
awash with learned elements
with target not to bore

To honour Richard Hodges
I needed something bright -
a spark, a jump, an idea -
to set readers alight

But how on earth to capture
some taste of work diverse
approaches, theories, findings
that stirred the archaeoverse?

For after all, he did inspire
me much in early days
as I ventured into late antique
and early medieval ways

Especially then I was searching
for something hard but new
Byzantines, Lombards, warfare
and urban issues too.

Fine Post-classical scholars
were starting new debates
names like Brogiolo, Francovich
were pushing open gates

And British names were forging progress
in town and country too
Ward-Perkins, Hudson, Carver,
and the BSR dig crew.

But what stood out like a beacon
in those heady rich 80s
was a project in Molise
on monastic archaeologies:

The San Vincenzo Project
to explore a famed abbey
yet not just to dig a cloister
but to read entirety.¹

Crypt and church and chapels
site roots and cemetery,²
the context and the landscape,³
its full community!

Armed with *Chronicon Volturnense*
and a host of experts too

¹ This major target was explicit and pursued from the start, as evident in all the publications generated in the 1980s (mainly articles, such as in *Archeologia Medievale*, but also a first monograph, Hodges and Mitchell (eds) 1985) and in monographs and articles in the 1990s looking back on the first decade of study: e.g. Hodges 1992; Hodges (ed.) 1993 and 1995.

² Key are the many chapters in Hodges (ed.) 1995.

³ On the landscape focus, see Bowes et al. (eds) 2006, plus papers on the terra by Chris Wickham, especially in the earlier excavation monographs – Hodges (ed.) 1993 and 1995.

like Chris Wickham and John Mitchell
and bright youngsters coming through

New names like Helen Patterson
who could decipher local wares
and Coutts, Moreland, Marazzi
who dug each and everywhere.⁴

Ambition and logistics
were mighty from the start
but paid dividends aplenty
in the small finds and the art.⁵

New insights came on abbots
In Franco-Lombard time
from Paul to father Joshua
and Epiphanius' prime;⁶

Plus names of ordinary brothers
or doodles, graffiti
on tiles in splendid Garden Court
and in Refectory.⁷

Stunning scope to uncover
San Vincenzo Maggiore
a mighty 9th-century structure
with crypts, relics, rich array;⁸

Painted plaster, marbles-like,
walls garish, prominent
which help us eas'ly visualise
impact on pilgrims sent.



Figure 1 Prophet, Assembly Hall,
San Vincenzo al Volturno, beginning of the 9th century
(Photo: John Mitchell)

⁴ See contributions already in Hodges and Mitchell (eds) 1985, and then in a majority of the subsequent and recent monographs, such as Bowes *et al.* (eds) 2006.

⁵ On finds from the earlier stages of the project, see Mitchell and Hansen (eds) 2001.

⁶ E.g. Wickham 1995.

⁷ Mitchell 1990, plus chapter 4 on the Refectory in Hodges (ed.) 1995.

⁸ See Hodges *et al.* 1997 and 2011, notably in the latter, John Mitchell's chapter on 'The 9th-century annular crypt and basilica'.

Plus strangely close by, unique space
of workshops for abbey⁹
products plenty rich, mundane –
a revelatory economy:

Metals for working and for books
enamels to impress
Gilded glass, bone carvings
plus buckles, horse harness;¹⁰



Figure 2 Set of sword-belt and snaffle-bit fittings, San Vincenzo al Volturno, c. 880
(Photo: James Barclay-Brown).

And fascinating details
of crafts and life undone
in the devastating onrush of
mercenary Arabs – 881¹¹

To seal the SV story
of early medieval highs¹²
but duly now uncovered
to eager scholars' eyes,

To challenge what a monastery
would look like and would do¹³
not just the art and buildings
but middens, resources too.

⁹ Hodges 2005; Hodges *et al.* 2011.

¹⁰ On the mass of diverse finds from the collective workshops and from related middens, see Hodges *et al.* 2011.

¹¹ Christie and Hodges 2016 give a diverse exploration of insecurity/security in monastic space generally, but offer an important case study on keys, locks, doors and security at San Vincenzo – elements all swept away in the AD 881 assault. The latter is considered in its archaeological detail in Hodges *et al.* 2011, though noting the limited traces in the basilica itself (p. 47).

¹² An ideal read to give the sense of excitement and unveiling of this early medieval site is Hodges 1997.

¹³ It would be more than valid to say that the San Vincenzo project has hugely modified how we think about monastic communities, sites and components, as part evidenced in the types of papers presented in the important collected volume by Dey and Fentress (eds) 2011 and also in the prominence of San Vincenzo as a key type-site in chapters on landscape and production in Augenti 2016.

And as important as the digging
were prompt thorough outputs full:
volumes, papers, lectures,
to share the findings all.

But to bring such all together
to make a project shout
make it question, challenge, theorise
you need someone with clout:

And he may be no relation
to that carparked Richard III
but to my mind I've no single doubt –
Richard H is royalty!

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