

SUBJECT: SKILL BASED ELECTIVE-II: ARCHAEOLOGY

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DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

GOVERNMENT ARTS COLLEGE, (AUTONOMOUS),CBE-18

UNIT-II

INDIAN ARCHAEOLOGY- ORIGIN AND GROWTH

In 1861 the **Archaeological** Survey of **India** was established and this was broadly the period when in Denmark the Prehistoric Museum was being established by organizing amateurs. A.C. Carlleyle discovered microliths in the rock-shelters in Mirzapur along with Mesolithic cave paintings during 1863-1885.

Excavations begun by **Sir Alexander Cunningham, the father** of Indian archaeology, in 1863–64 and 1872–73...

India's Youngest Archaeologist, Arsh Ali Is Just 17 & Already Has 13 Years of Experience! One of the research papers he is currently working on is about the dispersion of Buddhism to Egypt by Ashoka, where Arsh has found new evidence linking Ashoka's Dhamma to Egypt.

1600, "ancient history," from French archéologie (16c.) or directly from Greek arkhaiologia "the study of ancient things;" see archaeo- + -ology. **Meaning** "scientific study of ancient peoples and past civilizations" is recorded by 1825.

William Flinders Petrie is another man who may legitimately be called the Father of Archaeology. **Petrie** was the first to scientifically investigate the Great Pyramid in Egypt during the 1880s.

Origin of modern archaeology

The history of archaeology began in Western Europe, and the earliest scholars to take an interest in the archaeology of the Indian subcontinent were Western European travelers in the 16th, 17th and early 18th centuries. The earliest European written accounts of India's ancient monuments and Hindu temples were produced by sailors and travelers in the 16th, 17th and early 18th centuries CE. Some of these accounts included ground plans and drawings of the buildings, however they lacked any historical discussion of their origins, with the exception of several references to Alexander the Great, the Macedonian emperor who had conquered much of Northern India in the 4th century BCE.

The history of Indian archaeology spans from the 19th century to the present, and includes a wide variety of archaeologists investigating the region's history. The history of archaeology began in Western Europe, and the earliest scholars to take an interest in the archaeology of the Indian subcontinent were Western European travelers in the 16th, 17th and early 18th centuries

Some notable archaeological sites in India include Rakhigarhi, an archaeological site located in the state of Haryana, India. Mohenjo-Daro^[2] and Harappa are also ancient archaeological sites that were once a part of India, but now lie within the borders of Pakistan. The Harappan civilization was also called the Indus River Valley Civilization.^[3]

Mortimer Wheeler Mortimer Wheeler was at the helm of the Archaeological Survey for only four years (1944--8) out of which one was lost in the turmoil of Independence and Partition. Yet what he achieved and initiated during this short period was considerable, and is reflected in the notes and articles that he wrote for the first five issues of Ancient India, a new Survey journal which was started by him in 1946. In retrospect the following features stand out. First, he took a total view of archaeology beginning with the Palaeolithic stage and emphasized the need for scientific analyses in archaeology.

One can cite a few good scientific analyses from the earlier period, such as the study of animal, human and crop remains at the Indus cities of Mohenjo Daro and Harappa, and the chemical analyses of metal samples from some sites, but it was Wheeler who first argued the basic necessity of scientific aids in archaeology in India.

Second, he put strong emphasis on careful archaeological planning, both on the level of an individual site and in terms of a wider area. This was something novel for India.

Third, by excavating at Taxila, Harappa and Arikamedu he not only demonstrated the significance of such planning by solving major problems related to these sites but also introduced to India the modern concept of archaeological stratigraphy. He also introduced there for the first time the significance of the study of stratified ceramic material for determining the cultural succession at excavated sites and its importance in comparative study of material between different sites.

Fourth, he gave field training in his methods to a large number of Indian students who have kept his excavation tradition alive since then. He also wrote a number of articles on the excavation procedures for his Indian colleagues and students in Ancient India.

Fifth, he was wise enough to realize that archaeological research in such a large territory as India could not be done by the Archaeological Survey alone - effective participation by the universities was necessary - and, it was under his inspiration that several Indian universities started archaeological

Alexander Cunningham and Archaeological Survey of India

Scholarly investigation into Indian archaeology was largely influenced by Alexander Cunningham, who became the first director of the Archaeological Survey of India, which was established in 1861. Cunningham along with various assistants visited many sites and monuments of archaeological importance in India. Their trips ranged from simply visiting sites to study and report on to excavations as well¹

Paleolithic archaeological sites (2,500,000–250,000 BC)

Palaeolithic sites in India are characterised by the Madrasian culture and Soanian culture. Bhimbetka rock shelters is also a paleolithic (Old Stone Age) and mesolithic (Middle Stone Age) site.

Mesolithic sites (250,000 BC–10,000 BC)

Bhimbetka rock shelters has continuity of paleolithic to mesolithic phase.

Neolithic sites (10,800–3300 BC)^[edit]

Neolithic sites in India are characterised by the Bhorrana Culture (7570–6200 BC), Mehrgarh Culture (7000–3300 BC) and Edakkal Culture (5000–3000 BC).

Sanganakallu, Kupgal petroglyphs, Sonda rock art, dwellings of Anegundi are neolithic sites. Brahmagiri archaeological site has neolithic and mesolithic phases.

Chalcolithic (Copper age) archaeological sites (3500–1500 BC)^[edit]

Chalcolithic cultures^[edit]

Chalcolithic sites in India are characterised by the following cultures.

- Anarta tradition (c. 3950–1900 BC)
- Ahar-Banas Culture (3000–1500 BC)
- Pandu Culture (1600–1500 BC)
- Malwa Culture (1600–1300 BC)
- Jorwe Culture (1400–700 BC)

Megalithic archaeological sites of India

Burial and non-burial megalithic sites

Megalith of India date back to 5000 BC in southern India, before 3000 BC in upper Indus valley in northern India,^[6] and megaliths in eastern India are of much later date.^{[7][8]} Many of these sites are associated with burial or post burial rituals which may have been connected with ancestor worship, including memorials for those whose remains may or may not be

available.^{[9][10][11]} There is another distinct class of megaliths that are not associated with burials.^[9]

Main megalithic monuments^[edit]

Man-made **Megalithic** monuments in India include **Anegundi**, **Byse** rock art, **Chovvanur burial cave**, **Hirapur dolmen**, **Hire Benakal**, **Kudakkallu Parambu**, **Sidlaphadi**.

Bronze age archaeological sites (3300–1300 BC)^[edit]

Bronze Age India in the Indian subcontinent begins around 3000 BCE, and it was succeeded by the Iron Age in India beginning in around 1000 BCE. IVC was entirely within bronze age. Early and middle Vedic era falls within bronze age.

Bronze age sites include **Hire Benakal**.

Indus valley civilisation (IVC)^[edit]

Main article: [Indus valley civilisation](#)

In the **prehistory of the Indian subcontinent**, the **Iron Age in India** cultures are the **Painted Grey Ware culture** (1300 to 300 BCE)^{[12][13]} and the **Northern Black Polished Ware** (700 to 200 BCE), the later corresponds to the transition of the **Vedic period Janapada** principalities to the sixteen **Mahajanapadas** region-states of the early historic period, culminating in the emergence of the **Maurya Empire** towards the end of the period.

Phases of IVC^[edit]

Phases of IVC

- **Early Harappan Culture** (3300–2600 BC)
- **Mature Harappan Culture** (2600–1900 BC)
- **Late Harappan Culture** (1900–1300 BC)

IVC burial sites^[edit]

More than 50 IVC burial sites have been found, among those main sites in India are **Rakhigarhi** (first site with genetic testing) and **Farmana** in Haryana, **Sanauli** in Uttar Pradesh, **Kalibangan** in Rajasthan, **Lothal** and **Dholavira** in Gujarat. Other IVC burial sites outside India have been found in Pakistan in **Mehrgarh**, **Harappa**, and **Mohenjo-daro**.^[14]

Main IVC sites^[edit]

See also: [List of Indus Valley Civilisation sites](#)

Rakhigarhi^[edit]

Main article: [Rakhigarhi](#)

In 1963, **Archaeological Survey of India** (ASI) began excavations at this site, and, though little has been published about the excavations.^{[15][16]} Further excavations were conducted the ASI headed by the archaeologist, **Amarendra Nath**, between 1997 and 2000.^{[17][note 1]} The more recent excavations have been performed by Vasant Shinde, an archaeologist from the **Deccan College**.^[18]

Analysis and mapping of this site has shown it to be even larger than Mohenjo Daro.^[18] Radiocarbon dating was used at this site to analyze soil samples. The results showed that the soil samples were dated back to the millennium of 2000 years BC^[19]

Bronze age: Vedic Civilisation (2000–1500 BC)[\[edit\]](#)

Early [Vedic Civilisation](#), which falls in the bronze age, is characterised by the following cultures:

- [Ochre Coloured Pottery culture](#) (2000–1600 BC)
- [Swat culture](#) (1600–500 BC)

Iron age archaeological sites (1500–200 BC)[\[edit\]](#)

Iron age north India: Vedic Civilisation (1500–500 BC)[\[edit\]](#)

[Vedic Civilisation](#) which originated in bronze age, evolved through the following stages in the iron age:

- [Janapadas](#) (1500–600 BC)
- [Black and Red ware culture](#) (1300–1000 BC)
- [Painted Grey Ware culture](#) (1200–600 BC)
- [Northern Black Polished Ware](#) (700–200 BC)
- [Pradyota Dynasty](#) (799–684 BC)
- [Haryanka Dynasty](#) (684–424 BC)
- [Three Crowned Kingdoms](#) (c. 600 BC – AD 1600)
- [Maha Janapadas](#) (c. 600–300 BC)

Iron age south India[\[edit\]](#)

Iron Age sites in south India are [Adichanallur](#) in Tamilnadu, [Hallur](#) in Haveri district of Karnataka, etc.

Early to mid middle ages archaeological sites (500 BC – 1,000)[\[edit\]](#)

- [Achaemenid Empire](#) (550–330 BC)
- [Ror Dynasty](#) (450 BC – AD 489)
- [Nanda Empire](#) (380–321 BC)
- [Macedonian Empire](#) (330–323 BC)
- [Maurya Empire](#) (321–184 BC)

Middle Kingdoms archaeological sites (230 BC – AD 1206)[\[edit\]](#)

Following were either largest in area and/or longest reigning or had watershed moment impact:

- [Satavahana Empire](#) (230 BC – AD 220)
- [Shunga Empire](#) (185–73 BC)
- [Indo-Greek Kingdom](#) (180 BC – AD 10)
- [Indo-Scythian Kingdom](#) (50 BC – AD 400)
- [Indo-Parthian Kingdom](#) (AD 21 – c. 130)

- [Kushan Empire](#) (AD 60–240)

Late medieval archaeological sites (1206–1526)[\[edit\]](#)

The sites related to the following:

- [Delhi Sultanate](#) (1206–1526)
- [Ahom Kingdom](#) (1228–1826)
- [Chitradurga Kingdom](#) (1300–1779)
- [Reddy Kingdom](#) (1325–1448)
- [Vijayanagara Empire](#) (1336–1646)

Early modern archaeological sites (1526–1858)[\[edit\]](#)

Some of the main sites are related to the

- [Mughal Empire](#) (1526–1858)
- [Madurai Kingdom](#) (1559–1736)
- [Thanjavur Kingdom](#) (1532–1673)
- [Sikkim Kingdom](#) (1642–1975)
- [Maratha Empire](#) (1674–1818)
- [Sikh Confederacy](#) (1707–1799)
- [Sikh Empire](#) (1799–1849)
- [Travancore Kingdom](#) (1729–1947)

Colonial archaeological sites (1510–1961)[\[edit\]](#)

The sites are related to the following colonial rulers:

- [Portuguese India](#) (1510–1961)
- [Dutch India](#) (1605–1825)
- [Danish India](#) (1620–1869)
- [French India](#) (1759–1954)
- [Company Raj](#) (1757–1858)
- [British Raj](#) (1858–1947)

Alexander Cunningham

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General Alexander Cunningham (1814–1893) was director general of archaeological survey of India. He was a British army engineer with the Bengal Engineer Group who later took an interest in the history and archaeology of India which led to his appointment in 1861 to the newly created position of archaeological surveyor to the government of India. He founded and organized what later became the Archaeological Survey of India.

□ He wrote numerous books and monographs and made massive collections of artefacts. Some of his collections were lost but most of the gold and silver coins in his collection were bought by the British Museum. Two of his brothers, Francis Cunningham and Joseph Cunningham became well known for their work in British India while another, Peter Cunningham, became famous for his Handbook of London (1849). [Joseph Davey Cunningham](#) (1849). Cunningham's History of the Sikhs. John Murray. pp. xii–xiv.

Archaeological Survey of India

Cunningham had taken a keen interest in antiquities early in his career. Following Jean-Baptiste Ventura, general of [Ranjit Singh](#), who inspired by the French explorers in [Egypt](#) had excavated the bases of pillars to discover large stashes of [Bactrian](#) and [Roman](#) coins, excavations became a regular activity among British antiquarians.

- In **1834** he wrote to the Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, an appendix to James Prinsep's article on the relics in the Manikyala Tope.
- He had conducted excavations at [Sarnath](#) in **1837** along with Colonel F.C. Maisey and made careful drawings of the sculptures.
- In **1842** he excavated at [Sankisa](#) and at [Sanchi](#) in 1851.
- In **1848**, he identified some of the places mentioned in the travels of [Hwan Thsang](#).^[1]
- In **1854** he published The [Bhilsa Topes](#), an attempt to establish the history of [Buddhism](#) based on architectural evidence.
- By **1851** he also began to communicate to William Henry Sykes and the East India Company on the value of an archaeological survey.
- In **1861**, Charles John Canning, then the viceroy of India appointed Cunningham as archaeological surveyor to the government of India. This position was held from 1861 to 1865 but this was terminated due to lack of funds.

- Cunningham returned to England and wrote the first part of his [Ancient Geography of India](#) (1871) to cover the [Buddhist](#) period but failed to complete the second part to cover the Muslim period. During this period in London he worked as director of the Delhi and London Bank.
- In **1870**, Lord Mayo re-established the Archaeological Survey of India with Cunningham as its director-general from 1 January 1871.
- Cunningham returned to India and made field explorations each winter, conducting excavations and surveys from [Taxila](#) to [Gaur](#).
- He produced twenty-four reports, thirteen as author and the rest under his supervision by others such as J. D. Beglar.

Other major works included - the first volume of **Corpus inscriptionum Indicarum** (1877) which included copies of the edicts of [Asoka](#), the [Stupa of Bharhut](#) (1879) and the Book of Indian Eras (1883) which allowed dating of Indian antiquities. He retired from the Archaeological Survey on 30 September **1885** and returned to London to continue his research and writing.^[2]

Cunningham made a large numismatic collection, but much of this was lost when the steamship he was travelling in, the [Indus](#), was wrecked off the coast of Sri Lanka in November 1884. The British Museum however obtained most of the gold and silver coins. He had suggested to the British Museum that they should use the arch from the [Sanchi Stupa](#) to mark the entrance of a new section on Indian history. He also published numerous papers in the Journal of the Asiatic Society and the Numismatic Chronicle.^[3]

The Books written by him

- LADĀK: Physical, Statistical, and Historical with Notices of the Surrounding Countries (1854).
- [Bhilsa Topes](#) (1854), a history of Buddhism
- [The Ancient Geography of India](#) (1871)
- Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum. Volume 1. (1877)
- [The Stupa of Bharhut](#): A Buddhist Monument Ornamented with Numerous Sculptures Illustrative of Buddhist Legend and History in the Third Century B.C. (1879)
- The Book of Indian Eras (1883)
- Coins of Ancient India (1891)
- Mahâbodhi, or the great Buddhist temple under the Bodhi tree at Buddha-Gaya (1892)

John Marshall (archaeologist)

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Sir John Marshall



Sir John Marshall working at his desk

Born 19 March 1876

[Chester](#)

Died 17 August 1958 (aged 82)

[Guildford](#)

Nationality British

Citizenship British

Alma mater [King's College, Cambridge](#)

Known for	excavations in Harappa , Mohenjodaro , Sanchi , Sarnath , Taxila , Crete and Knossos
Awards	CIE Knighthood FBA
Scientific career	
Fields	History, Archaeology
Institutions	Archaeological Survey of India
Influences	James Prinsep , H. H. Wilson , John Leyden , Henry Thomas Colebrooke , Colin Mackenzie and William Jones

Sir John Hubert Marshall [CIE](#) [FBA](#) (19 March 1876, [Chester](#), England – 17 August 1958, [Guildford](#), England) was the Director-General of the [Archaeological Survey of India](#) from 1902 to 1928.^[1] He oversaw the excavations of [Harappa](#) and [Mohenjodaro](#), two of the main cities that comprise the [Indus Valley Civilization](#).

Personal history and career[\[edit\]](#)

Marshall was educated at [Dulwich College](#) as well as [King's College, Cambridge](#).^[2] In 1898, he won the [Porson Prize](#).^[3]

In 1902, the new [viceroy of India](#), [Lord Curzon](#), appointed Marshall as Director-General of Archaeology within the [British Indian](#) administration. Marshall modernised the approach to archaeology on that continent, introducing a programme of cataloguing and conservation of ancient monuments and artefacts.

Marshall began the practice of allowing Indians to participate in [excavations](#) in their own country. In 1913, he began the [excavations at Taxila](#), which lasted for twenty years. In 1918, he laid the foundation stone for the [Taxila Museum](#), which today hosts many artifacts and one of Marshall's few portraits. He then moved on to other sites, including the [Buddhist](#) centres of [Sanchi](#) and [Sarnath](#).

His work provided evidence of age of Indian civilisation especially [Indus Valley Civilization](#) and [Mauryan](#) age ([Ashoka](#)'s Age). Following the lead of his predecessor [Alexander Cunningham](#), Marshall, in 1920, initiated a dig at [Harappa](#) with [Daya Ram Sahni](#) as director. In 1922, work began at [Mohenjo-Daro](#). The results of these efforts, which revealed a seeming ancient culture with its own writing system, were published in the [Illustrated London News](#) on 20 September 1924. Scholars linked the artifacts with the ancient civilisation of [Sumer](#) in

Mesopotamia. Subsequent excavation showed Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro to be sophisticated [planned cities](#) with [plumbing](#) and [baths](#).^[4]

Marshall also led excavations at the prehistoric [Sohr Damb](#) mound near Nal in [Baluchistan](#); a small representative collection of pottery vessels from the site is now in the [British Museum](#).^[5] He is also known for his important part in excavations at [Knossos](#) and various other sites on [Crete](#) between 1898 and 1901 .

Marshall was appointed a [Companion of the Order of the Indian Empire \(CIE\)](#) in June 1910^[6] and [knighted](#) in January 1915.^[7]

Publications^[edit]

- *Marshall, John (ed.) (1931). [Mohenjo-Daro and the Indus Civilization](#).*
 - [Volume 1](#)
 - [Volume 2](#)
- *Marshall, John H. (1960). [The Buddhist Art of Gandhara: the Story of the Early School, Its Birth, Growth and Decline](#). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.*
- *Marshall, John H. (1960). [A Guide to Taxila \(4th ed.\)](#). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.*
 - [Taxila Achaaeological Excavations Vol.III](#)
- *Marshall, John H.; M. B. Garde (1927). [The Bagh Caves in the Gwalior State](#). London: The India Society.*
- *Marshall, John H.; Foucher, Alfred. [The Monuments of Sanchi \(3 vol.\)](#).*
- *Marshall, John H. (1918). [A Guide to Sanchi](#). Calcutta: Superintendent, Government Printing.*

Mortimer Wheeler

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Sir Mortimer Wheeler

[CH](#) [CIE](#) [MC](#) [TD](#) [FSA](#) [FRS](#) [FBA](#)



Mortimer Wheeler in 1956

Born Robert Eric Mortimer Wheeler



10 September 1890

[Glasgow](#), Scotland

Died 22 July 1976 (aged 85)

[Leatherhead](#), England

Nationality British

Alma mater	University College London
Spouse(s)	<p>Tessa Verney</p> <p>(m. 1914; died 1936)</p> <p>Mavis de Vere Cole</p> <p>(m. 1939; div. 1942)</p> <p>Margaret Collingridge</p> <p>(m. 1945)</p>
Children	Michael Mortimer Wheeler
	Scientific career
Fields	Archaeology
Influences	Augustus Pitt-Rivers
	Military career
Allegiance	 United Kingdom
Service/branch	 British Army
Years of service	1914–1921 1939–1948
Rank	Brigadier

Unit	Royal Artillery
Commands held	42nd Mobile Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment
Battles/wars	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> First World War <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Western Front <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Battle of Passchendaele ○ Italian Front ○ Hundred Days Offensive <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Second Battle of Bapaume Second World War <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Western Desert campaign <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Second Battle of El Alamein ○ Allied invasion of Italy
Awards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Military Cross Territorial Decoration

Sir Robert Eric Mortimer Wheeler [FRS](#) [FBA](#) [FSA](#) (10 September 1890 – 22 July 1976) was a British [archaeologist](#) and officer in the [British Army](#). Over the course of his career, he served as Director of both the [National Museum of Wales](#) and [London Museum](#), Director-General of the [Archaeological Survey of India](#), and the founder and Honorary Director of the [Institute of Archaeology](#) in [London](#), in addition to writing twenty-four books on archaeological subjects.

Born in [Glasgow](#) to a middle-class family, Wheeler was raised largely in [Yorkshire](#) before moving to London in his teenage years. After studying [classics](#) at [University College London](#) (UCL), he began working professionally in archaeology, specialising in the [Romano-British](#) period. During [World War I](#) he volunteered for service in the [Royal Artillery](#), being stationed on the [Western Front](#), where he rose to the rank of [major](#) and was awarded the [Military Cross](#). Returning to Britain, he obtained his doctorate from UCL before taking on a position at the National Museum of Wales, first as Keeper of Archaeology and then as Director, during which time he oversaw [excavation](#) at the Roman forts of [Segontium](#), [Y Gaer](#), and [Isca Augusta](#) with the aid of his first wife, [Tessa Wheeler](#). Influenced by the archaeologist [Augustus Pitt Rivers](#), Wheeler argued that excavation and the recording of [stratigraphic context](#) required an increasingly scientific and methodical approach, developing the "[Wheeler method](#)".

In 1934, he established the Institute of Archaeology as part of the federal [University of London](#), adopting the position of Honorary Director. In this period, he oversaw excavations of the Roman sites at [Lydney Park](#) and [Verulamium](#) and the [Iron Age hill fort](#) of [Maiden Castle](#). During [World War II](#), he re-joined the [Armed Forces](#) and rose to the rank of [brigadier](#), serving in the [North African Campaign](#) and then the [Allied invasion of Italy](#). In 1944 he was appointed Director-General of the Archaeological Survey of India, through which he oversaw excavations of sites at [Harappa](#), [Arikamedu](#), and [Brahmagiri](#), and implemented reforms to the subcontinent's archaeological establishment. Returning to Britain in 1948, he divided his time between lecturing for the Institute of Archaeology and acting as archaeological adviser to Pakistan's government. In later life, his popular books, [cruise ship](#) lectures, and appearances on radio and television, particularly the [BBC](#) series *[Animal, Vegetable, Mineral?](#)*, helped to bring archaeology to a mass audience. Appointed Honorary Secretary of the [British Academy](#), he raised large sums of money for archaeological projects, and was appointed British representative for several [UNESCO](#) projects.

Wheeler is recognised as one of the most important British archaeologists of the twentieth century, responsible for successfully encouraging British public interest in the discipline and advancing methodologies of excavation and recording. Furthermore, he is widely acclaimed as a major figure in the establishment of South Asian archaeology. However, many of his specific interpretations of archaeological sites have been discredited or reinterpreted and he was often criticised for bullying colleagues and sexually harassing young women.



Early life^[edit]

Childhood: 1890–1907^[edit]

Mortimer Wheeler was born on 10 September 1890 in the city of [Glasgow](#), Scotland.^[1] He was the first child of the journalist Robert Mortimer Wheeler and his second wife Emily Wheeler (*née* Baynes).^[2] The son of a tea merchant based in [Bristol](#), in youth Robert had considered becoming a [Baptist](#) minister, but instead became a staunch [freethinker](#) while studying at the [University of Edinburgh](#). Initially working as a lecturer in [English literature](#) Robert turned to journalism after his first wife died in childbirth.^[3] His second wife, Emily, shared her husband's interest in English literature, and was the niece of [Thomas Spencer Baynes](#), a [Shakespearean](#) scholar at [St. Andrews University](#).^[2] Their marriage was emotionally strained,^[4] a situation exacerbated by their financial insecurity.^[5] Within two years of their son's birth, the family moved to [Edinburgh](#), where a daughter named Amy was born.^[2] The couple gave their two children nicknames, with Mortimer being "Boberic" and Amy being "Totsy".^[5]



During childhood, Wheeler took an interest in the prehistoric carvings of Ilkley Moor.

When Wheeler was four, his father was appointed chief [leader](#) writer for the [Bradford Observer](#). The family relocated to [Saltaire](#), a village northwest of [Bradford](#), a cosmopolitan city in [Yorkshire](#), northeast England, which was then in the midst of the wool trade boom.^[6] Wheeler was inspired by the moors surrounding Saltaire and fascinated by the area's archaeology. He later wrote about discovering [a late prehistoric cup-marked stone](#), searching for [lithics](#) on [Ilkley Moor](#), and digging into a [barrow](#) on Baildon Moor.^[7] Although suffering from ill health, Emily Wheeler taught her two children with the help of a [maid](#) up to the age of seven or eight.^[5] Mortimer remained emotionally distant from his mother, instead being far closer to his father,^[4] whose company he favoured over that of other children.^[6] His father had a keen interest in [natural history](#) and a love of fishing and shooting, rural pursuits in which he encouraged Mortimer to take part.^[9] Robert acquired many books for his son, particularly on the subject of [art history](#),^[10] with Wheeler loving to both read and paint.^[11]

In 1899, Wheeler joined [Bradford Grammar School](#) shortly before his ninth birthday, where he proceeded straight to the second form.^[12] In 1902 Robert and Emily had a second daughter, whom they named Betty; Mortimer showed little interest in this younger sister.^[13] In 1905, Robert agreed to take over as head of the London office of his newspaper, by then renamed the *Yorkshire Daily Observer*, and so the family relocated to the southeast of the city in December, settling into a house named Carlton Lodge on South Croydon Road, [West Dulwich](#).^[14] In 1908 they moved to 14 Rollescourt Avenue in nearby [Herne Hill](#).^[15] Rather than being sent for a conventional education, when he was 15 Wheeler was instructed to educate himself by spending time in London, where he frequented the [National Gallery](#) and the [Victoria and Albert Museum](#).^[16]

University and early career: 1907–14^[edit]



Wheeler undertook his BA and MA at University College London (pictured).

After passing the [entrance exam](#) on his second attempt, in 1907 Wheeler was awarded a scholarship to read [classical studies](#) at [University College London](#) (UCL),

commuting daily from his parental home to the university campus in [Bloomsbury](#), central London.^[17] At UCL, he was taught by the prominent classicist [A. E. Housman](#).^[18] During his undergraduate studies, he became editor of the *Union Magazine*, for which he produced a number of illustrated cartoons.^[19] Increasingly interested in art, he decided to switch from classical studies to a course at UCL's [art school](#), the [Slade School of Fine Art](#); he returned to his previous subject after coming to the opinion that – in his words – he never became more than "a conventionally accomplished picture maker".^[20] This interlude had adversely affected his classical studies, and he received a [second class](#) BA on graduating.^[21]

Wheeler began studying for a [Master of Arts](#) degree in classical studies, which he attained in 1912.^[22] During this period, he also gained employment as the personal secretary of the UCL Provost [Gregory Foster](#),^[23] although he later criticised Foster for transforming the university from "a college in the truly academic sense [into] a hypertrophied monstrosity as little like a college as a plesiosaurus is like a man".^[24] It was also at this time of life that he met and began a relationship with [Tessa Verney](#), a student then studying history at UCL, when they were both serving on the committee of the University College Literary Society.^[25]

During his studies, Wheeler had developed his love of archaeology, having joined an [excavation](#) of [Viroconium Cornoviorum](#), a [Romano-British](#) settlement in [Wroxeter](#), in 1913.^[26] Considering a profession in the discipline, he won a studentship that had been established jointly by the University of London and the [Society of Antiquaries](#) in memory of [Augustus Wollaston Franks](#). The prominent archaeologist [Sir Arthur Evans](#) doubled the amount of money that went with the studentship. Wheeler's proposed project had been to analyse Romano-Rhenish pottery, and with the grant he funded a trip to the [Rhineland](#) in Germany, there studying the Roman pottery housed in local museums; his research into this subject was never published.^[27]

At this period, there were very few jobs available within British archaeology; as the later archaeologist [Stuart Piggott](#) related, "the young Wheeler was looking for a professional job where the profession had yet to be created."^[28] In 1913 Wheeler secured a position as junior investigator for the [English Royal Commission on Historical Monuments](#), who were embarking on a project to assess the state of all structures in the nation that pre-dated 1714. As part of this, he was first sent to [Stebbing](#) in [Essex](#) to assess Late Medieval buildings, although once that was accomplished he focused on studying the Romano-British remains of that county.^[29] In summer 1914 he married Tessa in a low-key, secular wedding ceremony, before they moved into Wheeler's parental home in Herne Hill.^[30]

First World War: 1914–18^[edit]

"I cannot attempt to describe the conditions under which we are fighting. Anything I could write about them would seem exaggeration but would in reality be miles below the truth. The whole battlefield for miles is a congested mess of sodden, rain-filled shell-holes, which are being added to every moment. The mud is not so much mud as fathomless sticky morass ... If it were not for the [cement pill boxes](#) left by [the Boche](#), not a thing could live many hours."

— Wheeler, in a letter to his wife, October 1917^[31]

After the United Kingdom's entry into [World War I](#) in 1914, Wheeler [volunteered for the armed forces](#).^[32] Although preferring solitary to group activities, Wheeler found that he greatly enjoyed soldiering,^[33] and on 9 November 1914 was commissioned a temporary [second lieutenant](#) in the University of London [Officer Training Corps](#), serving with its artillery unit as an instructor.^[34] ^[32] It was during this period, in January

1915, that a son was born to the Wheelers, and named Michael.^[35] [Michael Wheeler](#) was their only child, something that was a social anomaly at the time, although it is unknown if this was by choice or not.^[36] In May 1915, Wheeler transferred to the 1st Lowland Brigade of the [Royal Field Artillery \(Territorial Force\)](#), and was confirmed in his rank on 1 July, with a promotion to temporary [lieutenant](#) from the same date.^[37] Shortly thereafter, on 16 July, Wheeler was promoted to temporary [captain](#).^[38] In this position he was stationed at various bases across Britain, often bringing his wife and child with him; his responsibility was as a battery commander, initially of field guns and later of [howitzers](#).^[39]

In October 1917 Wheeler was posted to the 76th Army Field Artillery Brigade, one of the [Royal Field Artillery](#) brigades under the direct control of the [General Officer Commanding, Third Army](#). The brigade was then stationed in Belgium, where it had been engaged in the [Battle of Passchendaele](#) against German troops along the [Western Front](#). By now a substantive lieutenant (temporary captain), on 7 October he was appointed second-in-command of an [artillery battery](#) with the acting rank of captain,^[40] but on 21 October became commander of a battery with the acting rank of [major](#),^[41] replacing a major who had been poisoned by [mustard gas](#).^[42] He was part of the Left Group of artillery covering the advancing [Allied](#) infantry in the battle.^[43] Throughout, he maintained correspondences with his wife, his sister Amy, and his parents.^[44] After the Allied victory in the battle, the brigade was transferred to Italy.^[45]

Wheeler and the brigade arrived in Italy on 20 November, and proceeded through the [Italian Riviera](#) to reach [Caporetto](#), where it had been sent to bolster the Italian troops against [a German and Austro-Hungarian advance](#).^[46] As the [Russian Republic](#) removed itself from the war, the German Army refocused its efforts on the Western Front, and so in March 1918 Wheeler's brigade was ordered to leave Italy, getting a train from [Castelfranco](#) to [Vieux Rouen](#) in France.^[47] Back on the Western Front, the brigade was assigned to the [2nd Division](#), again part of [Julian Byng](#)'s Third Army, reaching a stable area of the front in April. Here, Wheeler was engaged in artillery fire for several months, before the British went on the offensive in August.^[48] On 24 August, in between the ruined villages of Achiet and [Sapignies](#), he led an expedition which captured two German field guns while under heavy fire from a castle mound; he was later awarded the [Military Cross](#) for this action:^[49]

For conspicuous gallantry and initiative. While making a reconnaissance he saw two enemy field guns limbered up without horses within 300 yards of the outpost line. He returned for two six-horse teams, and under heavy fire, in full view of the enemy, successfully brought back both guns to his battery position and turned them on the enemy. He did fine work.^[50]

Wheeler continued as part of the British forces pushing westward until the German surrender in November 1918,^[51] receiving a [mention in dispatches](#) on 8 November.^[52] He was not demobilised for several months, instead being stationed at [Pulheim](#) in Germany until March; during this time he wrote up his earlier research on Romano-Rhenish pottery, making use of access to local museums, before returning to London in July 1919.^[53] Reverting to his permanent rank of lieutenant on 16 September,^[54] Wheeler was finally discharged from service on 30 September 1921, retaining the rank of major.^[55]

National Museum of Wales: 1919–26^[edit]

On returning to London, Wheeler moved into a top-floor flat near [Gordon Square](#) with his wife and child.^[56] He returned to working for the Royal Commission, examining and cataloguing the historic structures of Essex.^[56] In doing so, he produced his first publication, an [academic paper](#) on Colchester's Roman [Balkerne Gate](#) which was published in the *Transactions of the [Essex Archaeological Society](#)* in 1920.^[57] He soon followed this with two papers in the *[Journal of Roman Studies](#)*; the first offered a wider analysis of Roman Colchester, while the latter outlined his discovery of the vaulting for the city's Temple of [Claudius](#) which was destroyed by [Boudica](#)'s revolt. In doing so, he developed a reputation as a Roman archaeologist in Britain.^[57] He then submitted his research on Romano-Rhenish pots to the University of London, on the basis of which he was awarded his [Doctorate of Letters](#); thenceforth until his knighthood he styled himself as Dr Wheeler.^[58] He was unsatisfied with his job in the commission, unhappy that he was receiving less pay and a lower status than he had had in the army, and so began to seek out alternative employment.^[59]



While Keeper of Antiquities, Wheeler oversaw excavation of the Roman forts at Segontium (left) and Y Gaer (right)

He obtained a post as the Keeper of Archaeology at the [National Museum of Wales](#), a job that also entailed becoming a lecturer in archaeology at the [University College of South Wales and Monmouthshire](#). Taking up this position, he moved to [Cardiff](#) with his family in August 1920, although he initially disliked the city.^[60] The museum was in disarray; prior to the war, construction had begun on a new purpose-built building to house the collections. This had ceased during the conflict and the edifice was left abandoned during Cardiff's post-war economic slump.^[61] Wheeler recognised that Wales was very divided regionally, with many Welsh people having little loyalty to Cardiff; thus, he made a point of touring the country, lecturing to local societies about archaeology.^[62] According to the later archaeologist Lydia C. Carr, the

Wheeler's work for the cause of the museum was part of a wider "cultural-nationalist movement" linked to growing [Welsh nationalism](#) during this period; for instance, the Welsh nationalist party [Plaid Cymru](#) was founded in 1925.^[63]

Wheeler was impatient to start excavations, and in July 1921 started a six-week project to excavate at the Roman fort of [Segontium](#); accompanied by his wife, he used up his holiday to oversee the project. A second season of excavation at the site followed in 1922.^[64] Greatly influenced by the writings of the archaeologist [Augustus Pitt-Rivers](#), Wheeler emphasised the need for a strong, developed methodology when undertaking an archaeological excavation, believing in the need for strategic planning, or what he termed "controlled discovery", with clear objectives in mind for a project.^[65] Further emphasising the importance of prompt publication of research results, he wrote full seasonal reports for [Archaeologia Cambrensis](#) before publishing a full report, *Segontium and the Roman Occupation of Wales*.^[66] Wheeler was keen on training new generations of archaeologists, and two of the most prominent students to excavate with him at Segontium were [Victor Nash-Williams](#) and [Ian Richmond](#).^[67]

Over the field seasons of 1924 and 1925, Wheeler ran excavations of the Roman fort of [Y Gaer](#) near [Brecon](#), a project aided by his wife and two archaeological students, [Nowell Myres](#) and [Christopher Hawkes](#).^[68] During this project, he was visited by the prominent Egyptologist [Sir Flinders Petrie](#) and his wife [Hilda Petrie](#); Wheeler greatly admired Petrie's emphasis on strong archaeological methodologies.^[69] Wheeler published the results of his excavation in *The Roman Fort Near Brecon*.^[70] He then began excavations at [Isca Augusta](#), a Roman site in [Caerleon](#), where he focused on revealing the Roman amphitheatre. Intent on attracting press attention to both raise public awareness of archaeology and attract new sources of funding, he contacted the press and organised a sponsorship of the excavation by the [middle-market newspaper](#) the *Daily Mail*. In doing so, he emphasised the folkloric and legendary associations that the site had with [King Arthur](#).^[71] In 1925, [Oxford University Press](#) published Wheeler's first book for a general audience, *Prehistoric and Roman Wales*; he later expressed the opinion that it was not a good book.^[72]

In 1924, the Director of the National Museum of Wales, [William Evans Hoyle](#), resigned amid ill health.^[73] Wheeler applied to take on the role of his replacement, providing supportive testimonials from [Charles Reed Peers](#), [Robert Bosanquet](#), and [H. J. Fleure](#).^[73] Although he had no prior museum experience, he was successful in his application and was appointed Director.^[74] He then employed a close friend, [Cyril Fox](#), to take on the vacated position of Keeper of Archaeology.^[75] Wheeler's proposed reforms included extending the institution's reach and influence throughout Wales by building affiliations with regional museums, and focusing on fundraising to finance the completion of the new museum premises.^[73] He obtained a £21,367 donation from the wealthy shipowner [William Reardon Smith](#) and appointed Smith to be the museum's treasurer, and also travelled to [Whitehall](#), London, where he successfully urged the [British Treasury](#) to provide further funding for the museum.^[76] As a result, construction on the museum's new building was able to continue, and it was officially opened by King [George V](#) in 1927.^[77]

London Museum: 1926–33^[edit]



Lancaster House, where London Museum was based

Upon the retirement of the Keeper of the [London Museum](#), Harmon Oates, Wheeler was invited to fill the vacancy. He had been considering a return to London for some time and eagerly agreed, taking on the post, which was based at [Lancaster House](#) in the [St James's](#) area, in July 1926.^[78] In Wales, many felt that Wheeler had simply taken the directorship of the National Museum to advance his own career prospects, and that he had abandoned them when a better offer came along. Wheeler himself disagreed, believing that he had left Fox at the Museum as his obvious successor, and that the reforms he had implemented would therefore continue.^[79] The position initially provided Wheeler with an annual salary of £600, which resulted in a decline in living standards for his family, who moved into a flat near to [Victoria Station](#).^[80]

Tessa's biographer L. C. Carr later commented that together, the Wheelers "professionalized the London Museum".^[81] Wheeler expressed his opinion that the museum "had to be cleaned, expurgated, and catalogued; in general, turned from a junk shop into a tolerably rational institution".^[82] Focusing on reorganising the exhibits and developing a more efficient method of cataloguing the artefacts, he also authored *A Short Guide to the Collections*, before using the items in the museum to write three books: *London and the Vikings*, *London and the Saxons*, and *London and the Romans*.^[83] Upon his arrival, the Treasury allocated the museum an annual budget of £5,000, which Wheeler deemed insufficient for its needs.^[84] In 1930, Wheeler persuaded them to increase that budget, as he highlighted increasing visitor numbers, publications, and acquisitions, as well as a rise in the number of educational projects. With this additional funding, he was able to employ more staff and increase his own annual salary to £900.^[85]

Soon after joining the museum, Wheeler was elected to the council of the Society of Antiquaries.^[86] Through the Society, he became involved in the debate as to who should finance archaeological supervision of building projects in [Greater London](#); his argument was that the [City of London Corporation](#) should provide the funding, although in 1926 it was agreed that the Society itself would employ a director of excavation based in Lancaster House to take on the position.^[87] Also involved in the largely moribund [Royal Archaeological Institute](#), Wheeler organised its relocation to Lancaster House.^[88] In 1927, Wheeler took on an unpaid lectureship at University College London, where he established a [graduate diploma](#) course on archaeology;

one of the first to enroll was Stuart Piggott.^[89] In 1928, Wheeler curated an exhibit at UCL on "Recent Work in British Archaeology", for which he attracted much press attention.^[90]



Wheeler excavated at Verulamium; the city's Roman theatre is depicted.

Wheeler was keen to continue archaeological fieldwork outside London, undertaking excavations every year from 1926 to 1939.^[91] After completing his excavation of the Carlaeon amphitheatre in 1928, he began fieldwork at the Roman settlement and temple in [Lydney Park, Gloucestershire](#), having been invited to do so by the aristocratic landowner, [Charles Bathurst](#).^[92] It was during these investigations that Wheeler personally discovered the Lydney Hoard of coinage.^[93] Wheeler and his wife jointly published their excavation report in 1932 as *Report on the Excavation of the Prehistoric, Roman and Post-Roman Site in Lydney Park, Gloucestershire*,^[94] which Piggott noted had "set the pattern" for all Wheeler's future excavation reports.^[95]

From there, Wheeler was invited to direct a Society of Antiquaries excavation at the Roman settlement of [Verulamium](#), which existed on land recently acquired by the Corporation of St Albans. He took on this role for four seasons from 1930 to 1933, before leaving a fifth season of excavation under the control of the archaeologist [Kathleen Kenyon](#) and the architect A. W. G. Lowther.^[96] Wheeler enjoyed the opportunity to excavate at a civilian as opposed to military site, and also liked its proximity to his home in London.^[97] He was particularly interested in searching for a pre-Roman Iron Age [oppidum](#) at the site, noting that the existence of a nearby [Catuvellauni](#) settlement was attested to in both classical texts and numismatic evidence.^[98] With Wheeler focusing his attention on potential Iron Age evidence, Tessa concentrated on excavating the inside of the city walls; Wheeler had affairs with at least three assistants during the project.^[99] After Tessa wrote two interim reports, the final excavation report was finally published in 1936 as *Verulamium: A Belgic and Two Roman Cities*, jointly written by Wheeler and his wife.^[100] The report resulted in the first major published criticism of Wheeler, produced by the young archaeologist Nowell Myres in a review for [Antiquity](#); although stating that there was much to praise about the work, he critiqued Wheeler's selective excavation, dubious dating, and guesswork. Wheeler responded with a piece in which he defended his work and launched a personal attack on both Myres and Myres's employer, [Christ Church, Oxford](#).^[101]

Institute of Archaeology: 1934–39^[edit]



Wheeler led excavations at the Iron Age hill fort of Maiden Castle. Photograph by Major George Allen, October 1937

Wheeler had long desired to establish an academic institution devoted to archaeology that could be based in London.^[102] He hoped that it could become a centre in which to establish the professionalisation of archaeology as a discipline, with systematic training of students in methodological techniques of excavation and conservation and recognised professional standards; in his words, he hoped "to convert archaeology into a discipline worthy of that name in all senses".^[103] He further described his intention that the Institute should become "a laboratory: a laboratory of archaeological science".^[104] Many archaeologists shared his hopes, and to this end Petrie had donated much of his collection of Near Eastern artefacts to Wheeler, in the hope that it would be included in such an institution.^[102] Wheeler was later able to persuade the University of London, a federation of institutions across the capital, to support the venture, and both he and Tessa began raising funds from wealthy backers.^[105] In 1934, the [Institute of Archaeology](#) was officially opened, albeit at this point without premises or academic staff; the first students to enroll were Rachel Clay and Barbara Parker, who went on to have careers in the discipline.^[105] While Wheeler – who was still Keeper of the London Museum – took on the role of Honorary Director of the institute, he installed the archaeologist Kathleen Kenyon as secretary of the Management Committee, describing her as "a level-headed person, with useful experience".^[106] That June, he was appointed an Officer of the [Order of Saint John](#) (OStJ).^[107]

After ending his work at Verulamium, Wheeler turned his attention to the late Iron Age hill-fort of [Maiden Castle](#) near to [Dorchester](#), [Dorset](#), where he excavated for four seasons from 1934 to 1937.^[108] Co-directed by Wheeler, Tessa, and the Curator of [Dorset County Museum](#), Charles Drew, the project was carried out under the joint auspices of the Society of Antiquaries and the Dorset Field Club.

Wheeler's excavation report was published in 1943 as *Maiden Castle, Dorset*.^[113] The report's publication allowed further criticism to be voiced of Wheeler's approach and interpretations; in his review of the book, the archaeologist [W. F. Grimes](#) criticised the highly selective nature of the excavation, noting that Wheeler had not asked questions regarding the socio-economic issues of the community at Maiden Castle, aspects of past societies that had come to be of increasing interest to British archaeology.^[114] Over coming decades, as further excavations were carried out at the site and archaeologists developed a greater knowledge of Iron Age Britain, much of Wheeler's interpretation of the site and its development was shown to be wrong, in particular by the work of the archaeologist Niall Sharples.^[115]

In 1936, Wheeler embarked on a visit to the [Near East](#), sailing from [Marseilles](#) to [Port Said](#), where he visited the [Old Kingdom](#) tombs of [Sakkara](#). From there he went via [Sinai](#) to Palestine, Lebanon, and Syria. During this trip, he visited various archaeological projects, but was dismayed by the quality of their excavations; in particular, he noted that the American-run excavation at [Tel Megiddo](#) was adopting standards that had been rejected in Britain twenty-five years previously.^[116] He was away for six weeks, and upon his return to Europe discovered that his wife Tessa had died of a [pulmonary embolism](#) after a minor operation on her toe.^[117] According to Tessa's biographer, for Wheeler this discovery was "the peak of mental misery, and marked the end of his ability to feel a certain kind of love".^[118] That winter, his father also died.^[119] By the summer of 1937, he had embarked on a new romance, with a young woman named Mavis de Vere Cole, widow of [Horace de Vere Cole](#), who had first met Wheeler when visiting the Maiden Castle excavations with her then-lover, the painter [Augustus John](#).^[120] After she eventually agreed to his repeated requests for marriage, the two were wedded early in 1939 in a ceremony held at [Caxton Hall](#), with a reception at Shelley House.^[121] They proceeded on a [honeymoon](#) to the Middle East.^[122]



St. John's Lodge in Regent's Park, the first building to house the Institute of Archaeology

After a search that had taken several years, Wheeler was able to secure a premises for the Institute of Archaeology: [St. John's Lodge](#) in [Regent's Park](#), central London. Left empty since its use as a hospital during the First World War, the building was owned by the Crown and was controlled by the [First Commissioner of Works](#), [William Ormsby-Gore](#); he was very sympathetic to archaeology, and leased the building to the Institute at a low rent.^[123] The St. John's Lodge premises were officially opened on 29 April 1937. During his speech at the ceremony, the University of London's Vice-Chancellor Charles Reed Peers made it clear that the building was only intended as a temporary home for the institute, which it was hoped would be able to move to Bloomsbury, the city's academic hub.^[124] In his speech, the university's Chancellor, [Alexander Cambridge, 1st Earl of Athlone](#), compared the new institution to both the [Institute of Historical Research](#) and the [Courtauld Institute of Art](#).^[125]

Wheeler had also become President of the [Museums Association](#), and in a presidential address given in [Belfast](#) talked on the topic of preserving museum collections in war time, believing that Britain's involvement in a second European conflict was imminent.^[126] In anticipation of this event, in August 1939 he arranged for the London Museum to place many of its most important collections into safe keeping.^[127] He was also awarded an [honorary doctorate](#) from [Bristol University](#), and at the award ceremony met the Conservative Party politician [Winston Churchill](#), who was then engaged in writing his multi-volume [A History of the English-Speaking Peoples](#); Churchill asked Wheeler to aid him in writing about late prehistoric and early medieval Britain, to which the latter agreed.^[128]

After Maiden Castle, Wheeler turned his attention to France, where the archaeological investigation of Iron Age sites had lagged behind developments in Britain. There, he oversaw a series of surveys and excavations with the aid of Leslie Scott, beginning with a survey tour of [Brittany](#) in the winter of 1936–37.^[129] After this, Wheeler decided to excavate the oppidum at Camp d'Artus, near [Huelgoat](#), [Finistère](#). In addition to bringing many British archaeologists to work on the site, he hired six local Breton workmen to assist the project, coming to the belief that the oppidum had been erected by local Iron Age tribes to defend themselves from the Roman invasion led by [Julius Caesar](#). Meanwhile, Scott had been placed in charge of an excavation at the smaller nearby hill fort of Ker-caradec, near [Quimper](#).^[130] In July 1939, the project focused its attention on [Normandy](#), with excavations beginning at the Iron Age hill forts of Camp de Canada and [Duclair](#). They were brought to an abrupt halt in September 1939 as the [Second World War](#) broke out in Europe, and the team evacuated back to Britain.^[131] Wheeler's excavation report, co-written with Katherine Richardson, was eventually published as *Hill-forts of Northern France* in 1957.^[132]

Second World War: 1939–45^[edit]

Wheeler had been expecting and openly hoping for war with [Nazi Germany](#) for a year prior to the outbreak of hostilities; he believed that the United Kingdom's involvement in the conflict would remedy the shame that he thought had been brought upon the country by its signing of the [Munich Agreement](#) in September 1938.^[132] Volunteering for the armed services, on 18 July 1939 he returned to active service as a major (Special List).^[133] He was assigned to assemble the 48th Light Anti-Aircraft Battery at [Enfield](#), where he set about recruiting volunteers, including his son [Michael](#).^[134] As the 48th swelled in size, it was converted into the 42nd Mobile Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment in the [Royal Artillery](#), which consisted of four batteries and was led by Wheeler – now promoted to the temporary rank of [lieutenant-colonel](#) (effective 27 January 1940) – as Commanding Officer.^{[135][136]} Given the nickname of "Flash Alf" by those serving under him,^[137] he was recognised by colleagues as a ruthless disciplinarian and was blamed by many for the death of one of his soldiers from [influenza](#) during training.^[138] Having been appointed secretary of the Society of Antiquaries in 1939 and then director in 1940, he travelled to London to deal with society affairs on various occasions.^[139] In 1941 Wheeler was awarded a Fellowship of the British Academy.^[140] Cole had meanwhile entered into an affair with a man named Clive Entwistle, who lambasted Wheeler as "that whiskered baboon". When Wheeler discovered Entwistle in bed with his wife, he initiated divorce proceedings that were finalised in March 1942.^[141]

In the summer of 1941, Wheeler and three of his batteries were assigned to fight against German and Italian forces in the [North African Campaign](#). In September, they set sail from Glasgow aboard the [RMS Empress of Russia](#); because the Mediterranean was controlled largely by enemy naval forces, they were forced to travel via the [Cape of Good Hope](#), before taking shore leave in [Durban](#). There, Wheeler visited the local [kraals](#) to compare them with the settlements of Iron Age Britain.^[142] The ship docked in [Aden](#), where Wheeler and his men again took shore leave.^[143] They soon reached the British-controlled [Suez](#), where they disembarked and were stationed on the shores of the [Great Bitter Lake](#).^[144] There, Wheeler took a brief leave of absence to travel to [Jerusalem](#), where he visited Petrie on his hospital deathbed.^[145] Back in Egypt, he gained permission to fly as a front gunner in a [Wellington bomber](#) on a bombing raid against Axis forces, to better understand what it was like for aircrew to be fired on by an anti-aircraft battery.^[146]



In North Africa, Wheeler sought to preserve archaeological remains, such as those of Leptis Magna (pictured), from being damaged by occupying troops.

Serving with the [Eighth Army](#), Wheeler was present in North Africa when the Axis armies pushed the Allies back to [El Alamein](#). He was also part of the Allied counter-push, taking part in the [Second Battle of El Alamein](#) and the advance on Axis-held [Tripoli](#).^[147] On the way he became concerned that the archaeological sites of North Africa were being threatened both by the fighting and the occupying forces. After the British secured control of Libya, Wheeler visited Tripoli and [Leptis Magna](#), where he found that Roman remains had been damaged and vandalised by British troops; he brought about reforms to prevent this, lecturing to the troops on the importance of preserving archaeology, making many monuments out-of-bounds, and ensuring that the [Royal Air Force](#) changed its plans to construct a radar station in the midst of a Roman settlement.^[148] Aware that the British were planning to invade and occupy the Italian island of [Sicily](#), he insisted that measures be introduced to preserve the historic and archaeological monuments on the island.^[149]

Promoted to the acting rank of [brigadier](#) on 1 May 1943,^[150] after the German surrender in North Africa, Wheeler was sent to [Algiers](#) where he was part of the staff committee planning [the invasion of Italy](#).^[151] There, he learned that the [India Office](#) had requested that the army relieve him of his duties to permit him to be appointed Director General of Archaeology in India. Although he had never been to the country, he agreed that he would take the job on the condition that he be permitted to take part in the invasion of Italy first.^[152] As intended, Wheeler and his 12th Anti-Aircraft Brigade then took part in the invasion of Sicily and then mainland Italy, where they were ordered to use their anti-aircraft guns to protect the [British 10th Corps](#).^[153] As the Allies advanced north through Italy, Wheeler spent time in [Naples](#) and then [Capri](#), where he met various aristocrats who had anti-fascist sympathies.^[154]

Wheeler left Italy in November 1943 and returned to London. There, he resigned as the director of the London Museum and focused on organising the Institute of Archaeology, preparing it for its adoption of a new director, [V. Gordon Childe](#), after the war. He also resigned as director of the Society of Antiquaries, but was appointed the group's representative to the newly formed [Council for British Archaeology](#).^[155] He developed a relationship with a woman named Kim Collingridge, and asked her to marry him. As she was a devout [Roman Catholic](#), he officially converted to the religion, something which shocked many of his friends, who believed that he was being dishonest because he did not genuinely believe in the doctrines of the faith.^[156] He then set sail for [Bombay](#) aboard a transport ship, the *City of Exeter*, in February 1944.^[157]

Archaeological Survey of India: 1944–48^[edit]

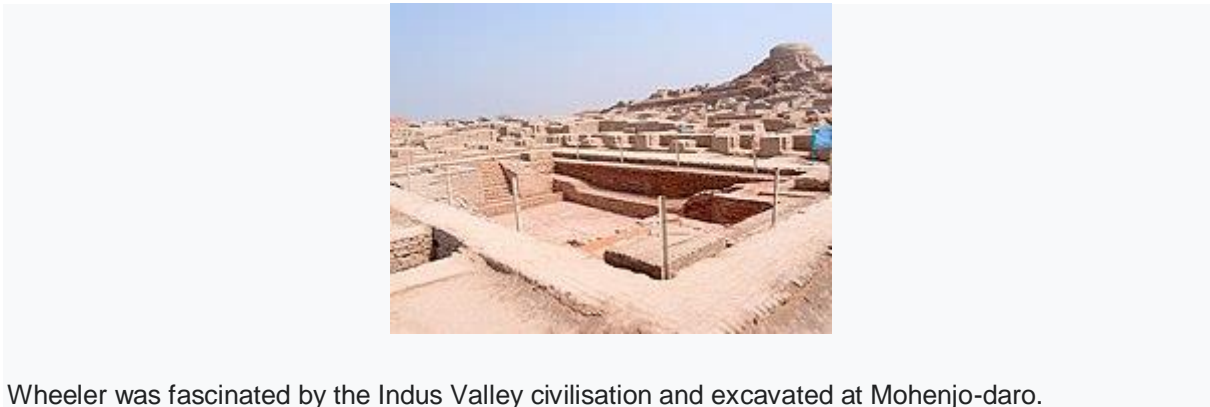


It was Wheeler who discovered evidence for Roman trade links at Arikamedu, as evidenced by ceramics such as this.

Wheeler arrived in Bombay in the spring of 1944. There, he was welcomed by the city's governor, [John Colville](#), before heading by train to [Delhi](#) and then [Simla](#), where the headquarters of the [Archaeological Survey of India](#) were located.^[158] Wheeler had been suggested for the job by [Archibald Wavell](#), the [Viceroy of India](#), who had been acting on the recommendations of the archaeologist [Leonard Woolley](#), who had authored a report lamenting the state of the archaeological establishment in the British-controlled subcontinent.^[159] Wheeler recognised this state of affairs, in a letter to a friend complaining about the lack of finances and equipment, commenting that "We're back in 1850".^[160] He initially found much to dislike in India, and in his letters to friends in Britain expressed derogatory and [racist](#) sentiments toward Indians: he stated that "they feed wrongly and think wrongly and live wrongly ... I already find myself regarding them as ill-made clockwork toys rather than as human beings, and I find myself bullying them most brutally."^[160] He expelled those staff members whom he deemed too idle, and physically beat others in an attempt to motivate them.^[160]

From the beginning of his tenure, he sought to distance himself from previous Directors-General and their administrations by criticising them in print and attempting to introduce new staff who had no loyalty to his predecessors.^[161] Assigned with a four-year contract, Wheeler attempted to recruit two archaeologists from Britain, [Glyn Daniel](#) and Stuart Piggott, to aid him in reforming the Archaeological Survey, although they declined the offer.^[162] He then toured the subcontinent, seeking to meet all of the Survey's staff members.^[163] He had drawn up a prospectus containing research questions that he wanted the Survey to focus on; these included understanding the period between the Bronze Age [Indus Valley Civilization](#) and the [Achaemenid Empire](#), discerning the socio-cultural background to the [Vedas](#), dating the [Aryan invasion](#), and establishing a dating system for southern India prior to the sixth century CE.^[164] During his time in office he also achieved a 25 per cent budget increase for the Archaeological Survey,^[165] and convinced the government to agree to the construction of a [National Museum of Archaeology](#), to be built in New Delhi.^[166]

Turning his attention to southern India, Wheeler discovered remnants of a Roman [amphora](#) in a museum, and began excavations at [Arikamedu](#), revealing a port from the first century CE which had traded in goods from the Roman Empire. The excavation had been plagued by severe rains and tropical heat, although it was during the excavation that World War II ended; in celebration, Wheeler gave all his workers an extra [rupee](#) for the day.^[172] It has since been alleged that while Wheeler took credit for discovering the significance of this site, it had previously been established by [A. Aiyappan](#), the Superintendent of the Government Museum in Madras, and the French archaeologist Jouveau Dubreuil, with Wheeler intentionally ignoring their contribution.^[173] He later undertook excavations of six megalithic tombs in [Brahmagiri](#), [Mysore](#), which enabled him to gain a chronology for the archaeology of much of southern India.^[174]



Wheeler was fascinated by the Indus Valley civilisation and excavated at Mohenjo-daro.

Wheeler established a new archaeological journal, [Ancient India](#), planning for it to be published twice a year. He had trouble securing printing paper and faced various delays; the first issue was released in January 1946, and he would release three further volumes during his stay.^[175] Wheeler married Kim Collingridge in Simla,^[176] before he and his wife took part in an Indian Cultural Mission to Iran. The Indian government had deemed Wheeler ideal to lead the group, which departed via train to [Zahidan](#) before visiting [Persepolis](#), [Tehran](#), [Isfahan](#), [Shiraz](#), [Pasargadae](#), and [Kashan](#). Wheeler enjoyed the trip, and was envious of Tehran's archaeological museum and library, which was far in advance of anything then found in India. Crossing into Iraq, in [Baghdad](#) the team caught a flight back to Delhi.^[177] In 1946, he was involved in a second cultural mission, this time to Afghanistan, where he expressed a particular interest in the kingdom of ancient [Bactria](#) and visited the archaeology of [Balkh](#).^[178]

As their relationship had become increasingly strained, his wife had left and returned to Britain.^[183] Although hoping to leave his post in India several months early, he was concerned for his economic prospects, and desperately searched for a new position. Through friends in the British archaeological community, he was offered a job as the Secretary of the [Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales](#), although he was upset that this would mean a drop in his professional status and income and decided to turn it down.^[184] Instead, he agreed to take up a chair in the Archaeology of the Roman Provinces at the Institute of Archaeology.^[185] In addition, the Pakistani Minister of Education invited him to become the Archaeological Adviser to the Pakistani government; he agreed to also take up this position, on the condition that he would only spend several months in the country each year over the next three.^[186] On 1 September 1948, having exceeded the age

limit, he relinquished his Territorial Army commission, ending his military service as a war-substantive lieutenant-colonel (honorary brigadier).^[187] He was awarded the [Territorial Decoration](#) (TD) in September 1956.^[188]

Later life^[edit]

Between Britain and Pakistan: 1948–52^[edit]

Returning to London, Wheeler moved into the [Hallam Street](#) flat where his son and daughter-in-law were living. Wheeler and the latter disliked each other, and so in summer 1950 he moved out and began renting an apartment in Mount Street.^[189] A year later he moved into his wife's house in [Mallord Street](#), in an unsuccessful hope of reigniting their relationship.^[190] Taking up his part-time professorship at the Institute of Archaeology, he began to lecture to students almost every day. There, he found that he developed a relationship of mutual respect with the director, Childe, despite their strong personal and professional differences.^[191] In April 1949, after the retirement of Cyril Fox, Wheeler was nominated for the Presidency of the Society of Antiquaries, but lost to [James Mann](#); many archaeologists, including Childe and [O. G. S. Crawford](#), resigned from the Society in protest, deeming Wheeler to have been a far more appropriate candidate for the position. Wheeler was nevertheless elected director of the Society.^[192] In 1950 he was awarded the [Petrie Medal](#),^[193] and was knighted in the [1952 Birthday Honours](#), with his investiture by the Queen taking place at [Buckingham Palace](#) on 8 July.^{[194][195][193]} That same year he was invited to give the [Norton lectures](#) for the [Archaeological Institute of America](#), and while in the United States was also awarded the Lucy Wharton Drexel medal at Pennsylvania. He nevertheless disliked the country, and in later life exhibited [anti-Americanism](#).^[193]



Wheeler excavated at Stanwick Iron Age fortifications; the section pictured is today known as Wheeler's Wall.

Popular fame: 1952–69 [\[edit\]](#)

In 1956, Wheeler retired from his part-time professorship at the Institute of Archaeology.^[210] Childe was also retiring from his position of director that year, and Wheeler involved himself in the arguments surrounding who should replace him. Wheeler vocally opposed the nomination of W.F. Grimes, deeming his career undistinguished; instead, he championed Glyn Daniel as a candidate, although ultimately Grimes was selected.^[211] That year, Wheeler's marriage broke down, and he moved from his wife's house to a former brothel at 27 Whitcomb Street in central London.^[212] From 1954 to 1959, he served as the President of the Society of Antiquaries, and after resigning supported Ian Richmond as his replacement; however, [Joan Evans](#) was selected.^[213] From 1964 to 1966 he served as Chairman of the [Ancient Monuments Board](#), stepping down when he concluded that he was too old for the role.^[214] In December 1963, Wheeler underwent a [prostate](#) operation that went wrong, and was hospitalised for over a month.^[215]