

J. P. Harland and the evolution of *Prehistoric Aigina*

Introduction

Prehistoric Aigina (1925) by James Penrose Harland remains of interest to students of the archaeology of Aigina because of his personal observations on the island and the fact that he saw and described finds from earlier archaeological investigations that have since been lost. The book announces itself as “A Dissertation Presented to the Faculty of Princeton University in Candidacy for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy”.

I read it some years ago and noted with particular interest Harland’s references to Keramopoullou, Stais and Pelekanos, figures of great importance in Aigina archaeology. The introduction (p.1, note) mentions several steps in the development of the work, and it was possible that the original text as actually presented might contain more in the way of raw observations and more about the people he met. I tried to track it down, but quite without success.

I learned, however, that there were Harland papers, including, crucially, diaries, in the Mudd Library of Princeton University (AC239). I was able to spend two days there in December 2009, and with my wife copied from the diaries from between 1913 and 1925. My interest is in Aigina; the diaries contain a great deal more. What follows is the story, as far as I have been able to work it out, of how the final published *Prehistoric Aigina* evolved. I have also included the odd comment on Harland’s love life, about which any reader of the diaries cannot help but learn a great deal.

All the information is from the diaries except as otherwise noted or in footnotes.

1913

In September, aged 22, after graduating from Princeton, Harland was offered the chance to go to Germany with one Doug Elliott, possibly as his tutor. They sailed on 4 October. In London he visited the British Museum and saw the Parthenon frieze. Going on to Germany he matriculated at the University of Bonn on 22 October and attended lectures in archaeology (among other subjects, I suppose).

1914

During the winter break, after Doug’s return to the US, Harland visited Munich and saw the Aigina sculptures in the Glyptothek. On returning to Bonn he read Furtwängler’s account of them. He stayed in Bonn until the beginning of March, then headed for Athens by way of Brindisi.

In Athens he enrolled as an associate member of the American School. He gave some help at excavations in Athens, then likewise with Carl Blegen in Corinth. In April he visited Mycenae, Argos, Tyrins, Delphi and Olympia.

On 23 April he went with friends to Aigina, seeing the temple of Aphaia, staying the night, and looking at the single column of the temple of Aphrodite (as it was then known) the next morning.

He went on to do more work with Blegen and others, and finally left Athens on 24 May. On the way home he visited Algiers, and got back to Philadelphia on 6 June. In the summer/fall he started graduate school at Princeton.

1915

The PhD requirements included examined courses, oral language examinations in French and German, and a thesis. His tutors included F.F. Abbott, E. Capps, W. K. Prentice and G.W. Elderkin. During the year he kept in touch with his friends in Athens, especially Stephen B. Luce, and gave talks on his stay.

In the fall he was hired to tutor the fifteen-year old Constance Russell in ancient history¹. Soon he and Constance had decided that they were in love and entered into a secret engagement. Over the next eighteen months the tutoring continued and there were other meetings, and telephone calls. Much of his diary consists of outpourings about Constance, and their repeated vows to “stick it out”, presumably, that is to say, to remain faithful and loyal until she was old enough to marry. In fact in the end her parents began to limit the couple’s contact, finally stopping it altogether.

In December he was thinking about a subject for his thesis. He wrote to Blegen suggesting the History of Corinth, but at a meeting later in the month Blegen told him that this was the subject he himself had chosen.

Also in December Harland was offered, and turned down, a one-term instructorship in Latin at Dartmouth College.

1916

He had recently looked at the Greek sculpture in the Metropolitan Museum, and was already tutoring in Archaeology.

On 10 January he discussed his thesis with Prentice at a Homer class, and suggested the History of Aigina. This became his subject early in March. His first step was to get hold of a copy of K.O. Müller’s *Aeginetica*. It took him a solid week to get through – “hard Latin, and fine rotten print”.

Over the spring and summer he worked solidly on his thesis. Early in August he came across About’s “Mémoire sur l’île d’Égine”. His first thought was, “it may dish my thesis, though much may have [been] found since 1854 when it was published.” But when he’d read it twice he decided that he didn’t after all need to drop his subject (he didn’t say why).

In the fall he was extracting material about Aigina from classical authors: he mentions Pindar, Plutarch, Thucydides, Herodotus and Pausanias. On 16 November he records

¹ Constance was the daughter of Archibald Douglas Russell. Her elder brother had been a near contemporary of Harland at Princeton.

I finished my last classical and ancient author for my thesis today (Pausanias). Now I shall work on Inscriptions, Coins and Modern works and periodicals ...

Work on the thesis continued through the winter, along with study of Modern Greek. He makes several references to articles by Wilamowitz.

1917

On 5 January he is “still working on the first war between Aigina and Athens”. On the 29th he “took out Furtwängler’s Aigina”.

On 2 Feb he mailed an application for “Athens Fellowship Exams”, which he was to take on 8-10 March and for which he started working.

On 20 February he had a discouraging meeting with Prentice:

I worked on Aigina all day and have all my data classified and listed. I doubt if I can get a thesis out of it, as Prof. Prentice wants definite proof and entirely new stuff. The latter is hard to find and what new stuff I have is in the early period (before the VIc BC) when definite proof is not available.

On 1 April there was the good news that he had been awarded an Athens Fellowship. But on the 2nd

Bickered with Prof Prentice about my thesis – unfavourable.

Either after the 20 February meeting or after that of 2 April he must have decided to restrict himself to the Bronze Age. This would mean having to abandon the greater part of his work up to that point. If the decision came in February, the 2 April meeting with Prentice would have been especially disheartening. If on the other hand the decision came after the latter meeting, it left him not much time to reform what he had left into something he could present. During the next five years or so he kept the intention of producing a complete history of Aigina, and from now on tended to refer to his thesis as “Part I”.

In any event he pressed on, and on 23 April he has

finished a chapter (probably the 3rd) of my thesis. I have 48 pages and about 8000 words.

On 15 May there was good news – he passed the “Preliminary Doctor’s exams”, and on the 22nd he handed in his thesis to Prentice, with the provisional title “Quaestiones Aigineticae – Problems in the early history of Aegina”.

I treated of the Early Greek migrations and the Dorization of Aegina which I date ca. XVI and XV c BC. My thesis goes down to ca. 1200 BC.

But Prentice evidently remained unconvinced. On 29 May

Received notice that my thesis would not be accepted in its present form, though having the material etc.

and the next day

Passed final exam for doctor’s degree but must revise thesis before getting PhD.

No copy of the thesis that failed at this point seems to exist.

One may surmise that, following the comments he had already had, the failure was not entirely unexpected, but nonetheless a blow. On 4 June he volunteered for the US Navy Coast Reserve.

In the next two and half years the pattern of his life changed dramatically. He served on several cruises, decoding messages, and was lived in New York.

1918

He opened his thesis again in July, did some work, wrote to [Duane R. ?] Stuart and Elderkin, but stopped again after a month.

No longer being engaged to Constance, he was going to Broadway shows and then writing to the chorus girls whose performances had impressed him. One of these, Blanche Terrell [her stage name], whose show he saw on 25 September, agreed to meet him. They met on 4 October, got engaged on 13 April the next year, and secretly married on 11 July. From the time that he met her his thoughts about Blanche become the dominant theme in his diary.

1919

In January he picked up his thesis again, but only for a couple of weeks. He resumed in March, and this time got as far as sending a revised version to Prentice, on 20 May. On 29 May he heard, somewhat oddly,

Kelly [Prentice] accepts my thesis but it must again be revised.

Then in June he was offered a job as the Athens representative of a Greek-run import/export firm in the US. He discussed this with Elderkin, who said he would try to find him a job at Princeton, but that the exporting business was the best bet.

In the event his next record is of starting with J. Walter Thompson in September.

1920

January finds him still with J. Walter Thompson, and deliriously happy about Blanche who, however, for some reason is in Cincinnati, evidently not missing him as much as he misses her, for she writes saying that she thinks they should separate. This, or simply some maturation since he had left Princeton, prompted him to go back more seriously to the questions of his thesis and the Athens fellowship. He was in touch with Blegen, and with Luce. On 31 January

Before leaving the house I received a letter from [Shirley] Weber. He took up my case with Elderkin, Abbott, Capps and [Howard Crosby] Butler. All want me to take the Athens Fellowship next fall, and all except Capps want me to take a vacant Procter fellowship this next term.

On 12 February he wrote to Blegen

I feel that the University career is my game, and while I have a bright outlook in this advertising business, still I think I should be better satisfied with a spade or a book.²

and on 26 Feb

I received a letter from Elderkin advising me to go to Greece.

² Letter in the Blegen Papers in ASCSA.

So he settled down to more serious thesis revision, and left J. Walter Thompson on 15 May. Nonetheless he was still not quite in one mind, since at the end of the month he applied, unsuccessfully, for a job at Norton Lilly.

On 10 June his revised thesis was accepted.

I met Kelly Prentice at 12, and he said that he and Mr Elderkin had accepted my Part I – Investigations in the Early History of Aigina

and on the 11th

Weber told me at the faculty meeting that I was voted the PhD. Mr Abbott gave a talk about me and explained that I had completed my work in 1917, was in the Navy and was going to Greece etc.

He received the degree on 15 June, and recorded

I had all my courses and examinations passed in May 1917, and my thesis was accepted as far as content was concerned, but it was rejected because of the form – it had been written only once. ...

On the [degree ceremony] program my thesis was given as “Investigations in the early history of Aigina” but it is to be called “Prehistoric Aigina” and will be Part I of my planned “History of Aigina”.

The 1920 thesis, like the 1917 version, does not seem to exist, at least not at Princeton or at Chapel Hill. And it is difficult to know what to make of the sequence of events.

On the one hand there is Harland’s story, given here, that the only problem with the original version was its “form”, also mentioned in 1917: “it would not be accepted in its present form”. And in 1917 he added, apparently quoting Elderkin, “though having the material etc.” This may be the simple truth. On the other hand Harland was clearly very able, systematic, good at languages and, given his apparently having no problem with written examinations, a fluent and effective writer. So it is a bit hard to imagine his submitting a thesis which, if its basic content was satisfactory, was incompetent in its presentation. Then there is Prentice’s requirement for “definite proof and entirely new stuff”. Finally there is Abbott’s odd speech on Harland’s behalf at the faculty meeting, following Weber’s having “taken up his case”. On the basis of these fragments it also seems possible that there was a kind conspiracy to let a good man through on the basis of the common opinion of him and the future he deserved, despite his work not being technically up to the mark.

Similarly, it may be that his intention all along in 1917, after America’s entry into the war, had been to volunteer for the navy after completing his PhD. But somehow it seems more believable that, if his thesis had passed in 1917, he would have taken up the Athens fellowship immediately.

On 4 July 1920, he wrote to Blegen

I just read your “Corinth in Prehistoric Times” and “Pre-Mycenaean Pottery of the Mainland” ... I am interested in the pre-historic period very much, and want to work more in it, though I have an awful lot to learn before I can enter into that field. I am woefully ignorant in that important field of pottery, and I want to learn more about this subject.

So far, of course, his only visit to Aigina had been two days in 1914. He now arranged to sail to Greece a bit earlier than was necessary for taking up his fellowship, explaining in another letter to Blegen

I have to spend some time on Aigina, and might as well do it this summer as mark time here.³

This suggests that he was not thinking of doing much work on the island during his year in Greece, and in fact he spent most of the four weeks after his arrival in Athens on 11 August preparing his thesis for publication, as though that was basically work that had been finished with.

He was also still deeply involved with Blanche, whose January letter had by no means signalled the end of their marriage. There were repeated letters of rejection, letters of apology, letters of making up, and misunderstandings because of delays in the post, all of which are treated at length in the diary.

On 21 August he met Antonios Keramopoulos

Ephor (and Director) of the Acropolis Museum and of Attika. He excavated some graves in the NW corner of Aigina in 1910 [sic] ... We bickered in German and Greek. He gave me names of people to see in Aigina.

On the 24th he notes Blanche's 23rd birthday.

On the 27th he wrote to Antonios Pelekanos.

He is the επιμελήτης [sic?] for the island and Mr Keramopoulos [sic] advised me to write to him.

On 1 September he records

I worked on "Aigina" all day and finished the revision and typing of the first half of the thesis (25 pages 5 sections)

and on the 9th

This AM corrected Chap I (sec 1-5) of "Prehistoric Aigina" ... I commenced retyping Chap 2.

In September he spent a week or so at Corinth with Blegen, and worked on prehistoric potsherds.

In between times he played a lot of tennis: he names as fellow players Blegen, [Alan] Wace, [L. D. ?] Caskey, [Benjamin D.] Merritt, and Lord Granville the British minister.

On 24 September he took the boat to Aigina. This was the first of nine visits over the following eleven months, varying in length from eight days to one. On several of them he went with a party, and on most of them he spent time at Kolona picking up sherds, chiefly Minyan and matt-painted. At that time the excavations were as they had been left by Stais and then Furtwängler, so Harland had access to the lower layers of the mound. He notes in "The Peloponnesos in the Bronze Age" (*Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*, XXXIV (1923):15, n.5)

The houses in which [Stais] found the infant burials and the adult osteotheke are said by him to be older than the Mykenaian Age, and I have found a quantity of Gray Minyan around these house-walls.

He met Stais in person on 20 November at the National Archaeological Museum.

1921

In early January he took about 300 sherds back to Athens and cleaned and sorted them, but went on collecting during subsequent trips to the island.⁴

³ Both letters in the Blegen papers in ASCSA.

He had twice looked at the exhibits in the museum, and in January he received permission from Ludwig Curtius to examine and publish the finds in the Museum store deriving from the German excavations. He spent two days in the store in March having had the relevant authorization from the Ministry, and took photographs and “squeezes” in August.

Otherwise, he spent a great deal of his time on Aigina walking the island. This included seven visits to Aphaia, three to the top of Oros, and two at least to the Zeus Panhellenios site at the foot of Oros. Wherever he went he picked up such sherds as he saw. On one visit to Aphaia he measured the cellas at the request of Jay Hambridge; and his walks included tracing the city wall “or rather its accompanying moat”. He sent a copy of his city wall plan to Karl Julius Beloch.

In Athens he attended lectures, and accompanied Blegen on digs, planning, we may suppose, for his fellowship paper, which emerged in 1923 as “The Peloponnesos in the Bronze Age”. He also investigated academic job possibilities.

He had been in contact with two publishers about his thesis in November 1920, and in February 1921 he declared it “ready for press apart from improving English”. But nothing came of this.

He got back to New York on 1 September, still without a job. Blanche met him and told him, again, that she wanted to separate – and this time, finally, it led to their divorce, on 23 December.

In Princeton Harland did some tutoring and worked on “Proto Pots and Peoples”, as he called his fellowship paper. Then he was taken on at Ann Arbor, where he started at the beginning of October.

1922, 1923

We don’t hear of his thesis again until the following January:

Rewrote the last page of Chap I of “Prehistoric Aigina”. Now it is ready to be typed and then in March

...typed 2 pages of Chapter II.

But the project lapsed for two more years.

In September he moved to his first post at Chapel Hill, and a year later to Cincinnati.

1924

On 2 February he married Agnes Westerlund, whose virtues the diary has extolled. And then on 22 March

This afternoon I broke out my Αἴγινα material and started in

On 28 July:

Finished Chapter III and started Chapter IV

⁴ Donald Haggis reports that some 35 of Harland’s sherds are extant at Chapel Hill. The fate of the rest remains unknown (they are not at ASCSA).

and on 2 August he finished Chapter IV, leaving only a short resumé to be done. On 23 August the work was complete, consisting of 116 pages of double spaced typing. This he sent to the publisher in Paris.

Some analysis

The first important and pervasive respect in which *Prehistoric Aigina* must differ from whatever Harland submitted in 1920 is that it is written within the framework of Wace and Blegen's classificatory scheme for the Bronze Age in mainland Greece. It seems that Harland only read "Pre-Mycenaean Pottery of the Mainland" after his thesis had already been accepted, and when Blegen's *Korakou* (1921) had not yet appeared.

The second significant difference is that most of the first chapter must post-date his visits to Aigina. It reflects quite faithfully his diary account of his activities on the island. There are also passages throughout the rest of the work that derive from his Aigina experience.

Beyond that, it is all a bit speculative.

The book consists of the following:

Chap	Title	Sect-ions	Pages	Words approx.
I	The archaeological evidence	9	37	9000
II	The early inhabitants of Aigina	4	13	3000
III	The colonization of Aigina	2	5	1000
IV	The provenance of the early Aiginetans	6	34	8000
V	The theory of a Kretan colony in Aigina	1	5	1000
VI	The Kalaurian Amphictyony	1	9	2000
VII	The island of Aigina in the Bronze Age [summary]			

It may be significant that he has two chapters in March 1922 and then, after a gap of two years, two more appear, one of them very quickly (in five days in fact). Chapter V and VI as published sit rather oddly with the rest of the work. He notes in Chapter V that he has already discussed the question earlier, and one is inclined to ask why in fact the material in Chapter V was not incorporated into the earlier discussion. As regards Chapter VI, it seems that by 1924 Harland's article on the Kalaurian Amphictyony (*AJA* 1925: 160-171) had been accepted for publication: he refers to it in *Prehistoric Aigina* (p.109, note). In *Prehistoric Aigina* it reads very like an afterthought; and a short chapter based on an already written article would certainly be quick to produce.

In sum, I am inclined to suspect that the two chapters that finished as V and VI formed no part of the original thesis and were the two described as III and IV in 1924.

That leaves us with the published chapters II, III and IV.

In April 1917 he apparently had three chapters and describes his subject as "Early Greek migrations and the Dorization of Aegina". In September 1920 he mentions two. A further straw in the wind are the links he makes between *Prehistoric Aigina* and "The Peloponnesos in the Bronze Age". In the former he writes (Chapter II, p.41)

In another little work – an expansion of a section of this one – which has been published under the title, *The Peloponnesos in the Bronze Age*, I attempted to reconstruct the history ...

and in n.2

The fact that this work [i.e. the article] originally formed a chapter of *Prehistoric Aigina* will, I hope, extenuate my frequent reference to this, my own *opusculum*.

In “The Peloponnesos in the Bronze Age” (p.61, n.1) he has

This paper is the result of an expansion of a section of my Doctor’s Dissertation, *Prehistoric Aigina*, the revision of which is about to be completed.

It is all a little obscure. But I would hazard that the published chapters II, III and IV, stripped of Wace and Blegen’s structuring, give the best sense of what the original thesis consisted of. This would imply quite a short work – but that is consistent with “48 pages and about 8000 words” in April 1917 and “the first half of the thesis (25 pages 5 sections)” in September 1920, as well of course with the fact that in 1917 he had had to abandon a substantial amount of what he had originally planned.

It may finally be noted that what he sent to Paris was not in the same form as what was finally published, since the former had only four chapters before the summary at the end instead of six. But that is a mystery too far.

For the student of the history of the archaeology of Aigina, the diaries are a disappointment. In Karamopoullou, Stais and Pelekanos, Harland was meeting the three people who knew more about excavations on Aigina than anyone else in Greece. Perhaps he thought to pick their brains. If so, would that he had also thought to record and preserve what they told him; and then what historical riches we might now have the benefit of.