Dr. Graham Webster, OBE, our Honorary President, has died. He was a great archaeologist and a great man; this issue is devoted to him. It is a celebration of his life in a series of word pictures painted by some of the many who knew him well. Members of the ARA and other readers who did not know him, never met or read him, or attended his lectures or summer schools will, we hope, come closer to him through these pages; and those who thought they knew him will surely discover new facets to a life which spanned almost a century of Roman archaeology in Britain. Graham’s wife Diana reminded us that he regarded himself as an acteur manqué, he relished an audience, he enjoyed performing, and we hope a flavour of this is reproduced here.

Most of the contributions are headed by a short note on the author. Other contributors include: Tim Strickland, Chester City Archaeologist from 1973-88, now head of developers Giffords’ Archaeological Service; David Viner, for many years Curator of Cirencester’s award-winning Corinium Museum; Maggi Darling who, like Graham, is a polymath, doing everything from Lincolnshire to Caistor-on-Sea to pottery studies, and is now an Archaeological Consultant; and Beth Bishop, whose archaeological experience encompasses the West Midlands, Orkney, Essex, South Wales and now Gloucestershire and Wiltshire. She was first Secretary to the ARA Board and is now Assistant Editor.

We are also most grateful to Diana Bonakis Webster for her help in checking details of fact and providing many photographs from her private collection, some published here for the first time. Our Chairman, Grahame Soffe, helped with the editing; this issue contains his Annual Report on ARA events, and there is a Book Review by former Board Member, John Hyams.
Dr. Graham Alexander Webster was the best loved, and probably the greatest, scholar in post-war Romano-British archaeology. Born at Stamford, Lincolnshire, on 31 May 1913, he was educated at Stamford School where his life-long interest in antiquity began.

After leaving school he trained as a civil engineer, working in Peterborough and then in Canterbury, building a bridge over the River Stour. He married his first wife Margaret Baxendale in 1938 and they had two sons, Antony and Terry.

The rigorous practical discipline acquired as a civil engineer was of the greatest use as he became involved in archaeological excavation work, at first in the ruins of Canterbury during the Blitz, where bombing was revealing vestiges of the Roman city. His long association with pottery studies likewise began there, where he catalogued the samian ware in the museum. After war service with the Air Ministry in Scotland, constructing aerodromes, he was sent to Prestwick to take charge of building the Trans-Atlantic Air Terminal where he found and excavated a late Bronze Age urnfield, a rare excursion into prehistoric archaeology. In this enterprise he met Prof. Gordon Childe at Edinburgh, being warned in advance not to be surprised by the great man’s ‘very odd monkey-like face’!

After this he turned to Roman military archaeology, a field in which he would make a unique contribution. In 1941-2, in a relatively small excavation at the West Gate, Lincoln, he discovered for the first time parts of the remains of the Roman legionary fortress. Here he met Dr. Ian (later Professor Sir Ian) Richmond who was so impressed by him that he was engaged to work at the Roman forts at Newstead in Scotland and Hod Hill in Dorset. In 1945 when Graham was Senior Engineering Assistant in the Lincoln City Engineer’s Office, the Lincoln Archaeological Research Committee was founded and Richmond asked him to carry out a trial excavation under its aegis to investigate terracing on steeply sloping derelict land at Flaxengate in the lower Roman town (Fig. 1).

In the following year he continued his excavations of the fortress at North Row, and the Royal Archaeological Institute held its Summer Meeting at Lincoln. This was the occasion of his first meeting several eminent archaeologists, including Brian O’Neil, Christopher and Jacquetta Hawkes, and Philip Corder, who became a lifelong friend. Recognition of his status within the subject was marked by his election in 1947 to the Fellowship of the Society of Antiquaries of London.

In 1948 he was appointed to the first full-time curatorship of the Grosvenor Museum, Chester, (Fig. 2) where the Roman Gallery is now named after him. He set about reorganising the internationally important collection of sculptures and inscriptions, which had for many years been rather neglected. He was to record that he ‘not only transformed the museum but excavated parts of the legionary fortress every year’. He involved the local community as much as possible and with the aid of models of the fortress (some made for him by Kenneth Barton) and the first life-size mannequin of a Roman legionary soldier in Britain, he attempted to present as accurate an impression as possible of life in Roman times. He later recounted how he had spent an evening with his secretary carefully drawing hairs on the legionary’s legs! It was at Chester that he wrote two important booklets. The first was A Short Guide to the Roman Inscriptions and Sculptured Stones in the Grosvenor Museum, Chester (1950), appearing five years before R. P. Wright and Ian Richmond’s Catalogue of the same stones, and fifteen years before the national corpus of inscriptions was published. The second, The Roman Imperial Army, (1956) was the genesis of his most significant general work, The Roman Imperial Army. This book did not appear until 1969, but as has been
recently stated by Professor John Wilkes (Fig. 3), it was a major milestone in Roman archaeology, the first serious study in English of this important subject, which went through four editions and remains in print to this day.

He found time to work for an MA at Manchester University under his friend, Donald Atkinson, Professor of Ancient History, and he was to follow Atkinson as excavator of the Roman civitas capital of Wroxeter, Shropshire. At this time, too, he became an inspiring extra-mural teacher both in the classroom and in the field, starting with the Field School he ran with Philip Corder at Great Casterton, Rutland (Figs. 4 and 5).

Fig. 4. Excavations at Great Casterton 1956. Left to right: C. Green, Philip Corder, Graham, and Mary Thomas. Photo: courtesy D. B. Webster.

In 1954 he became Extra-Mural Tutor in Archaeology at Birmingham University, eventually rising by the time of his retirement in 1980 to Reader in Romano-British Archaeology. During his years at Birmingham he carried out a major project on the Fosse Way frontier, which resulted in the award of a PhD which was published as The Roman Military Advance under Ostriorus Scapula in the Archaeological Journal (1960). The university provided facilities for his excavations including the fort at Waddon Hill, Dorset, (Fig. 6) and the villa at Barnsley Park, Gloucestershire. At the latter he met Diana Bonakis, an archaeological illustrator and writer, who came to work with her first husband, the BBC producer, archaeological writer and broadcaster, Leonard Cottrell. The pair separated and Graham married Diana, in what was to become a long and happy partnership (Fig. 7).

His work at Barnsley Park (1961-79) provided the first-hand background and evidence required in his timely rethinking of the place of the farming villa in the Romano-British landscape and economy, best expressed in such seminal papers as The Future of Villa Studies (1969). To many, Graham's fame will rest in a large part on the great series of summer excavations at Wroxeter which he initiated as a training school over thirty annual seasons (1955-85). Thousands of students passed through his hands and they, both as professional and amateur practitioners, owe him a considerable debt (Fig. 8). These excavations are at last being fully published; the first volume written by him and edited by Peter Ellis came out in December 2000 and the second volume is currently at press. He not only cast a great deal of light on the Roman city but for the first time sampled the deeply stratified layers of the fortress, and made a start on cataloguing the Roman sculpture, a project now being brought to fruition by Dr. Martin Henig for the Corpus Signorum Imperii Romani. It was at Wroxeter also that Graham engaged in a fruitful collaboration with another great excavator, Philip Barker (Fig. 9), and they remained close friends for the rest of their lives.

Graham's interest in the early years of Roman Britain led to the publication with Donald Dudley of The Rebellion of Boudica (1962) and The Roman Conquest of Britain (1965). These later developed into what has become the classical account of the subject, Boudica (1978), The Roman Invasion of Britain (1980) and Rome Against Caratacus (1981). Later he was to take a particular interest in Romano-Celtic religion, and his book, The British Celts and their Gods under Rome (1986) shows his fascination with the native peoples of the Province. In some ways this later...
period of his life was his most fertile and revolutionary. The Cotswold region and its vicinity was central to his thinking. He wondered whether some of the great so-called 'villa' complexes such as Chedworth near Cirencester, were conventional residences or were in fact parts of religious sanctuaries. Dr. Martin Henig, writing on religion and art in Roman Britain under his tutelage, for he was academic editor of the Batsford Archaeological Series, found his comments on the originality of the Britons under Rome an inspiration. Graham pointed to the splendid plaque depicting Minerva from Lavington, Wiltshire, as a key work in demonstrating how 'the Celts imparted new life and vigour in the process of copying' and placed it on the cover of his own book.

While all these books are of continuing value to ancient historians and academic archaeologists, Graham’s handbook Practical Archaeology (1963) was in its time a clear guide to students of archaeological method. He went on to create the Study Group for Roman Pottery, and his contribution to this field was recognised by his Festschrift, published in 1981, Roman Pottery Research in Britain and North-West Europe. He was also instrumental in founding the Council for British Archaeology Air Photography Committee, which from the 1950s propagated archaeological knowledge derived from this expanding discipline and led ultimately to the establishment of the Air Photographs Unit and Library of the National Monuments Record led by John Hampton, initially under the English Royal Commission on Historical Monuments. In the early 1990s the Unit and Library moved from London to its new home in Swindon, and is now under the aegis of English Heritage. Graham’s interests were limitless. Always very anxious to help others to share his enthusiasm, he encouraged students not only in his own branches of the subject but, with rare empathy, anyone with something to contribute. Countless numbers of former students and those who sought his advice became devoted friends. To them he would expound his new (and sometimes revolutionary) ideas about Roman Britain, pointing out how much more there was to know about everything.

As Archaeological Advisor to Batsford he was instrumental in commissioning a prodigious list of works, most especially in Roman studies, reading each volume meticulously in typescript and making numerous pertinent comments in his distinctive hand. Writing a book for Graham was a privilege, an education in itself. In his letters, as when one met him, erudition was combined with warmth... but one had to meet him to
I first met Graham at the Lower Brooks site in Winchester in the summer of 1971. He and Diana had come to visit the excavations being directed by Donald Mackreth (Fig. 4, page 23) for the Winchester Research Unit, and I was responsible to Don for the excavation of St. Pancras’ Church (Fig. 1).

I was instantly aware of Graham’s strong personality and, as an observer, of the friendship between Graham and Don. Graham was also studying the pioneering use of the Harris Matrix which had been introduced at Winchester in response to the overwhelming complexity of deeply stratified urban excavations (Fig. 2). I was not to meet Graham again for another three years. This meeting, too, as I learnt later, would also be due to our mutual friendship with Don Mackreth.

In the summer of 1974 I had been excavating a series of sites close to the heart of the Roman legionary fortress at Chester which, as I had discovered, had also been Graham’s stamping-ground in the late ’40s and early ’50s. I was informed by the Grosvenor Museum that someone [headquarters building] in 1949. This was intriguing, for we had just had a need to re-examine that site, and had found Graham’s old trench. Graham then asked me to explain the discoveries at Crook Street and, together, we examined the traces of the timber-framed partition walls and the layout of the centurion’s quarters. No doubt we discussed many other things now forgotten in detail, but what I do remember clearly is our immediate rapport, Graham’s strong sense of humour, and his interest in my work and my ability to explain it. This was to be the start of a good friendship of which I remain very proud.

At the time, I was not to know that Graham had been looking for someone to assist him, with Don Mackreth, in the direction of the training-excavations at Wroxeter, and that he had really come up to Chester to see what he thought of me: in effect an interview!

Not long afterwards, Graham wrote to me to ask if I would like to join him at Wroxeter the following summer. My life and commitments at Chester were very full . . . it was the days of non-stop rescue archaeology . . . and it was normal for me to work for seven days a week for months on end; so I gave the matter a great deal of careful consideration before replying. In the end, as with so many other good decisions in my career, I allowed myself to be guided by the old adage ‘nothing ventured nothing gained’. Thus began several very enjoyable seasons with Graham at Wroxeter; a chapter in my life which continues to fill me with a warm glow of friendship and humour shared. The fun of being in Graham’s company on that site was commented on by others at the time. It was indeed a great and heartwarming experience (Fig. 3).

To it was added the enormous interest and importance of a major excavation associated with what, at that time, seemed to be the most critical historical contexts in Roman Britain: the late first century.
heard anything like it before and remember thinking that I must learn from Graham's lecturing technique. Later, among the many lecturing tips he gave me was the one 'always end on something funny if you want your audience to remember your subject-material.' I am very glad I joined Graham at Wroxeter although I recall that, at that time and since, there was some criticism of the way he directed and recorded the excavations. But, although technical excellence is essential, equally important is the ability to communicate; and in this there can be no doubt that Graham excelled.

During the later '70s and '80s at Chester we were endeavouring to establish our monograph-reports series, and I was deeply involved in writing up the manuscripts of several excavations in various parts of the legionary fortress. In this work, as always, Graham's interest and friendship were invaluable. In the event, I wrote five large report-drafts and Graham read each one of them with great care and advised on a number of improvements, both in content and grammar! It was immediately obvious that he had read and carefully considered every word.

From time to time, Graham and Di came to stay, often en-route to or from a lecture or conference. These visits were a delight, for the conversation ranged widely through Graham's many interests, both artistic and archaeological. I recall, among them, thoughts on Celtic religion which he was assembling for what would become another well-known book; and his fascinating list of the things we do not know about Roman Britain. It was all thought-provoking stuff. But, for me, the next real highlight of our friendship concerned the emergence, in 1987, of the 'Deva Roman Centre' proposals, which were intended to include the complete excavation and display, even partial reconstruction, of the Roman amphitheatre at Chester (Fig. 4). It was my job to advise the City Council and I recommended conditional support for the scheme. In due course, the Council indicated that it was mindful to grant consent but, given the scale and many implications of the proposals, it was perhaps inevitable that the Secretary of State would 'call it in' for a Public Inquiry.

When I asked Graham to act as an expert witness for the City Council in support of the scheme, he was delighted to accept. The Deva Roman Centre, he felt, could only be a good thing for Chester and for Roman archaeology in general (both for research and public appreciation of it). As a result, it became my task to secure Graham's written Proof-of-Evidence, and he came up to Chester to prepare it with my help. I still chuckle over his sharp criticism of the poor English which some of the officials tried to insert into his draft, and about the looks on their faces when Graham voiced some of his concerns publicly. 'There is no such phrase, to access something; you gain or facilitate access to something', said Graham. He was quite right of course.

The Public Inquiry was held early in 1988 and Graham and Di came to stay with us for the occasion. It was fun to be regaled by them both in the evenings as the Inquiry proceeded. Afterwards, Graham said that he had been driven by the need to support me and my work. Di's eye-witness account, painstakingly written in longhand in her diary, still makes fascinating reading. Chester was, of course, split down the middle between those in favour and those against, and the debates were very heated (and still are). But, as is now well known, the Inspector eventually delivered a rather inconclusive verdict and was then overruled by Nicholas Ridley, the Secretary of State, who came out in complete support of the proposal. It is a pity that subsequent events, including economic recession in the early '90s, prevented the scheme from getting under way. It was, and remains, the right way forward in my view. In this, Graham was in complete agreement, but, alas, it was not to be.

In 1989, the chance came my way to create and develop the
archaeological service within Gifford and Partners, with their various nationwide interests and commitments. This gave me an opportunity to catch up with Graham and Di again. They had moved from Chesterton to Wiltshire and had become deeply involved in the Roman Research Trust (RRT) of which Graham was a trustee. Complications had arisen in the development of the Trust with its inheritance of the Fresden Estate on the death of one of the Friends of the RRT, Audrey Barrie-Brown. To Graham, this seemed to be a wonderful opportunity to create a first-class centre for the study of Romano-British archaeology, but it was not to be. However, one good thing came from these developments. The Friends separated from the RRT and formed themselves into a new body, The Association for Roman Archaeology, with Graham as their President.

Graham and Di had moved to Sevenhampton, Wiltshire. I caught up with them again on trips to the South, but never as often as I would have liked. It was always good to see them and to be welcomed so warmly – and then – came Graham’s death, followed by his funeral near Highworth in May 2001. Although it was, of course, a sad occasion, it was also – as Di knew Graham would have wanted – an appropriately cheerful one on a bright early summer’s day, with a gathering of friends from all walks of life and stages in Graham’s career, and with heartwarming addresses by Grahame Soke and Martin Henig.

For me the memories of Graham remain, and will always do so; his teaching and guidance (“never become too important for anyone; write as you speak; never forget that your task is to throw light on history”, and so on), his humour and stimulating conversation on so many subjects. I will always be grateful for these things, for his friendship and for the chance to have known him well. For me, he is still there, and will always be.

experience his laughter and the twinkle in his eyes. Batsford published his last book Archaeologist at Large (1991), a collection of fascinatingly varied papers and a bibliography of nearly three hundred of his works.

Graham took a close interest in the excavations of the spectacular Roman villa in Littlecote Park, Wiltshire, directed by Bryn Walters and Bernard Phillips. When the Roman Research Trust was founded as a result of this project he was a natural choice as Trustee, but when that organisation broke into two factions the former “Friends” became The Association for Roman Archaeology with Graham as President. Other honours included the OBE in 1982, election as Corresponding Member of the Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts in 1965, and the degree of DLitt in 1987. Beyond his own academic studies he was an assiduous reader especially in anthropology (Sir James Frazer being a favourite) and psychology. He was a sensitive connoisseur of the fine arts, especially drawings and watercolours, as well as of the applied arts, notably majolica and jade.

Even in the 1990s he loved sharing his knowledge in day and weekend schools at numerous venues, and visiting Roman sites and excavations such as those at Blunsdon and Chiseldon, near Swindon, and Alchester, Oxfordshire, for by this time he had retired from Chesterton, Warwickshire to the Wiltshire village of Sevenhampton. In his last illness he was cared for by his wife and Luigi Thompson, the archaeological illustrator who shared their home. He died on 21 May 2001 and his funeral took place near Highworth in the theatrical atmosphere he so loved, accompanied by six Roman soldiers and the sound of Roman cornu trumpets. The laurel wreaths placed on the coffin of the great scholar, saluted as the ‘Last of the Romans’ provided a fitting end for a man who from first to last inspired so many people.
In this contribution Ken Barton describes how meeting Graham excavating in Chester changed his life. In 1996 Graham published his own account of the same meeting and how Ken came to specialise in medieval and post-medieval pottery, and at the Grosvenor Museum, Chester "took to model-making without any hesitation". Graham describes how "This began a career which made him one of the main European experts on medieval pottery and raised him to the post of Director of the Hampshire Museums Service, earning far more than ever I did". Ken retired in 1988.

When I first saw Graham he was at the bottom of a trench some 12 ft deep, 25 ft long and 4 ft 6 in wide. He was quite alone except for a long spindly wooden ladder propped against the side of the trench nearest the pathway on which I was standing. This was my first day at Chester after an absence of three years. That morning I had taken a job in an office, promotion from the shop floor, so I was in high spirits. A few minutes to spare on a shopping trip into town led me along a path next to Graham's trench.

I was stopped in my tracks by what I saw. Of course I knew that Chester was a Roman city and I had seen some trenches at the back of the Town Hall, but here was the real thing in action. I stood and watched as this middle-aged man knelt as if in prayer, scraping at the soil with a trowel, the blade of which was about the size of a half-crown piece. I was fascinated by the process, you could say transfixed. I stayed there for at least two hours, saying nothing, just watching. The man knew that I was there but said nothing until eventually he stood up, stretched and mounted the ladder. "Well" says he, "You've been here a long time." "Yes", says I, "What are you doing?"

He went on to tell me in simple terms that he was digging in the remains of the Roman military headquarters building. I asked him, as he was alone, if he could do with some help. He was slow to answer but eventually said that if I cared to return at 2.30 pm he would have something for me to do. I did return after lunch and was shown how to trowel and found some large pieces of black-burnished pottery. From that moment on I spent all my spare time in the museum or in the field; new and exciting vistas unfolded before me. Graham taught me how to repair pottery and draw it for publication; he taught me how to research the subject. Graham encouraged my interest in post-medieval pottery and the products of the Buckley, Flintshire, kilns. When I was ill he visited me bringing books and kind words, all the while tutoring me.

This went on for four years until the time came for him to move on. I was completely at a loss as to what to do and stayed away from the museum. One day, Dennis Petch, an Assistant Curator stopped me on my way home waving a copy of the Manchester Guardian, in which there was an advert for the post of Technician in the Ancient Monuments Inspectorate of the Ministry of Public Building and Works. Graham gave me a wonderful reference and I got the job.

The rest is history.
The excavation of this Romano-British villa near Cirencester took place from 1961 to 1979 as a joint training exercise for extra-mural students at Birmingham and Bristol Universities. Graham trained directors and supervisors in all techniques but his main object was "to try to bring to the humble troweller some concept of the organising and thinking behind an excavation." This was a major achievement in itself, but the project proved to be a turning point in revolutionising our understanding of villas as social and economic units over the long period they dominated the countryside. The site was untouched by the plough, so its complex history up to final abandonment could be studied in depth. The stone winged-corridor house was not built until after c. 360 but it was preceded and succeeded by other buildings - an earlier timber-framed house leaving very faint traces, and a later agricultural building standing on a stone platform. The house was surrounded by yards filled with interlocking and disassociated fragments of dry-stone buildings of different phases. The complicated enclosures, the sheer quantity of coins (910) and the 27 styli for record keeping suggest a marketing and management centre which expanded in the late 4th century, a time when many other villas ceased to function altogether. Graham published the full report on the excavation as two parts in Trans. Bristol & Gloucs. Archaeol. Soc. vols. 99 & 100 (1981-2), the second co-written with Dr. Lance Smith, Graham's Site Surveyor from 1975-9.

Lance Smith is an Architect by profession, with a special interest in historic and vernacular buildings.

Graham Webster was once asked, "how do you go about writing a book?" to which he gave the rather short answer, "you get a jumbo pad and a pencil and get cracking." A similar answer might have been given by him to someone who asked how to go about digging. He could indeed give very full and helpful advice, and was the author of a useful book on that very subject; but he relied on common sense, and on his area supervisors and other staff on a dig to possess that quality. Graham was scathing about archaeologists who turn a common-sense exercise in detective work into a theoretical and jargon-laden academic morass; he could do a very comic take-off of their lecture style.

I had only the slightest acquaintance with him before 1975 when, fancying a few weeks' relaxing trawelling and having omitted to make any more strenuous summer holiday arrangements, I was persuaded by a friend to join the dig at Barnsley Park. This was a dig which had been in progress since 1961, investigating a villa in the vicinity of Cirencester. Graham had started it in conjunction with Helen O'Neil (who first identified the site during the War) and with Harry Ross of Bristol University. The dig had started with the Wheeler box techniques then considered the most effective, but soon widened into an area excavation.

Having made considerable progress with the villa itself Graham was keen to recruit people to his team who would be prepared to work even more widely at the context of the villa in the landscape. This was a special interest of Ken Jermy and of the late Leighton Bishop, which had given Graham the opportunity to get this new branch of his work going. When I innocently turned up at the dig, trowel in hand, I found I had been put down on the year's personnel list as staff, was intended to join the landscape team, and might put my trowel away. Finding, however, that I would prefer involvement at the dig rather than in the surrounding parishes, Graham made me dig surveyor and I spent several happy summers thereafter, until the close of the site in 1979, as part of what I soon found was a very focussed and cooperative team. Graham engendered great loyalty in his team, and team was the right word. There was no them-and-us feeling.

I was not the only one thrown in at the deep end. An area supervisor (there were many changes in supervisors during the 18 years of the dig) told me that she too was plucked from obscurity, given an area and a group of students and told to get cracking. She was fortunate in...
following two previous supervisors of the same area whose notebooks were meticulously orderly and detailed, so learning supervision was no more of a task than following a good precedent already laid down. I can assure the area supervisors their notebooks were intensively studied when the final reports were in gestation.

Not all the notebooks and drawings were of the highest standard, but all were a sufficient record. What became apparent, especially to me as I continued with Graham into the post excavation analysis and the writing up of the reports, was Graham's very exact knowledge of the site. He kept his own private notes, recording his observations of all points of a very poor opinion of a class of unintelligent archaeologists who rely on meticulous recording as a substitute for thought, hoping that all will become clear in time. Only clarification of detail should be left to the post excavation period. He was also very scathing about archaeologists who do not know their pottery properly.

Graham's attention to analysis of detail was phenomenal. Some may balance the evidence and decide what is most likely to have been the sequence of events on their sites—but Graham was not satisfied until he had reviewed all the evidence to the point of getting as near as he could to the definitive answer. If a detail of the evidence did not fit, it had to be argued over until the interpretation was adjusted to take it into proper account. For an assistant this could be a little wearing.

The team feeling of the dig at Barnsley Park was enhanced by the off-hours life. We were fortunate in having the use of Bledisloe Lodge as our residential headquarters, a large mansion about 10 miles from the dig. This was in term time a students' residence for the Royal Agricultural College, Cirencester, so none too luxurious though very satisfactory. At first, John Pagett tells me, more domestic staff were kept on during the out-of-term period and it was more luxurious than I remember it. The diggers all breakfasted and dined together, Graham presiding. Colin Baddeley made sure that there was a plentiful supply of wines to suit all tastes. Each evening Graham gave a 90-minute lecture; there might even be a slide or two. But I never remember Graham speaking from notes, although everything was lucid and methodical. The 'home' life of the dig had its moments too—one day two of the staff and two students rushed back to base before anyone else and made everyone (Graham included) an apple pie bed. They had the sense to do their own as well, so were not detected (or so they say). On another occasion, during a visit by Leonard Cottrell, an eminent author and archaeologist, the Lion Gate of Mycenae was built of chairs outside his room, and collapsed noisily during the night. Unfortunately, he was not in residence that night, so the full force of the prank was lost. There was an incident concerning Jeff Perry and a large bag of flour—I don't know how they ever cleaned his room. Hair was well let down at the end-of-dig parties; Graham did not have to undergo vast theatrical make-up to appear as Bacchus.

As a research dig over numerous summer seasons, Barnsley Park accumulated its stalwarts and characters. A big event was the annual visit of the late and eminent Barbara Nodine, to 'do' the bones; she was not averse to sitting at the rear during Graham's evening lecture, knitting audibly. The late Harry Ross was in charge of the practicalities of the dig from the start, and he continued visiting when his diminishing health reduced his involvement in the later years. Bill Webb then undertook much of the care of the dig equipment, knowing how to make a silk purse out of a sow's ear; Julie Sanders was the leader of the area supervisors, and successor to Helen O'Neill—Julie had originally dug under Kathleen Kenyon at Jericho. Terry Fry (who had dug under Wheeler at Maiden Castle) attended briefly every year.
and made an incomparable educational film record, it always being a big event for the diggers to see the previous year’s activities again on screen. Perhaps the only one to attend the whole dig from first to last was John Pagett, who was already a Wroxeter old hand when Barnsley started.

Graham was good-humouredly uncomplimentary about his staff. One of them, he said, in his contented tone of voice, a ‘good coarse digger’. One year several were asked to contribute specialist notes to an information pack for the students. The contributions were deemed by Graham to be of uneven quality, and he said so with that slight emphasis that left us wondering whose contribution was being pointed out as not up to the mark. But he didn’t say which.

It was the intention of the dig to be an advanced training exercise, not just research, and students ‘who have already received basic training’ were recruited on the basis of having some familiarity with the duties and skills of the troweller. There were at first 24 students, and later generally about 30 to 40, attending for two or three weeks, many from the USA; the social life of Barnsley Park owed much to them and to their good humour and keenness. The heavy involvement of American students originated from a time, early in the dig, when Graham had spent a sabbatical period in the USA. There were occasional odd cases; one foreign student, in his cups, assisted his comprehension of Graham’s evening lecture by muttering a simultaneous translation of it into Italian, none too sotto voce, which earned one of Graham’s few rebukes. Another complained that as a student she expected formal instruction, as if at school, not appreciating that she had the example before her eyes of one of the country’s leading archaeologists at work, and she only had to see what was being done, listen to the lectures, and learn.

Graham Webster was a museum curator as well as a practising archaeologist (he was curator of the Grosvenor Museum in Chester – “six years of furiously hard work” from 1948 - 54).

So it is not surprising that he was always very fond of the Corinium Museum in Cirencester, where he frequently provided expert advice to the staff on objects in the collections, and appropriately, where the site finds and archive from his important long-running excavation programme at nearby Barnsley Park can now be found, an invaluable resource and one of the many archive collections in the museum.

This brief memoir recalls Graham’s interest in Cirencester and his contributions to the work of Cirencester Excavation Committee (1958 - 89), an umbrella body very much of its time, which encompassed the great, the good and those who could get things done. It came into existence in response to a series of problems with development damage to key Roman sites and pressures to manage better the town’s archaeology generally. Graham was one of those applying the pressure.

Apart from some work on the town wall in 1952 by Mary Rennie, there had been little if any excavation activity in the centre of the historic town for decades, before an opportunity came up in 1957 at Dyer Court, off Dyer Street and quite close to the Market Place. The resulting excavation can be read up in Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society (Vol. 78) for 1959 as a turning point in approaches to dealing with the town’s archaeology at a time (apparently so distant now!) when the post-war development boom of the 1960s was just beginning to take shape. In this case the local council wanted to lay out a large public car park on open gardens at the rear of Dyer Street (it’s now the Forum car park) and Graham spotted the opportunity.

He used volunteers from Cirencester Archaeological & Historical Society (formed only a couple of years previously, and for whose members this was a real opportunity) and ran a short campaign which the report shows to have been full of frustration – shortage of labour, of funds and of the chance really to get to grips with the archaeology. Typically, Graham made no bones about this; “future opportunities should be grasped more firmly” was his concluding sentence in the report, a clarion call which made its mark for years after (supported by others with similar experiences elsewhere in the town). The Excavation Committee was formed the following year to tackle such things more comprehensively.

Although Graham didn’t lead any of these subsequent campaigns, he remained closely linked to work in Cirencester. Indeed his long-term work up the road at Barnsley Park led to a regular interchange of personnel and ideas, and Cirencester remained close to his many interests. It did after all lie on the Fosse Way, a cross-country route central to Graham’s thinking about the early Conquest period for so many years.

Nor should we forget what the Dyer Court work gave us: a sectioned Roman street, a series of glimpses into how the Roman town might have developed over four centuries (including important mosaic evidence), and the first stratified pottery sequences which characteristically he published in detail “for the benefit of future excavators”.

In January 1995 Graham gave the Friends of Cotswold Archaeological Trust’s inaugural lecture in Cirencester; on another occasion he conducted a delightful tour around the exhibits in the Corinium Museum which included an amusing, slightly scrupulous but always sympathetic discourse on the Jupiter Column and its wider significance. As a guide, a teacher and an inspiration, he was first class, and this will remain an abiding memory of a good friend and ally.