

Annie Dunman Hunt Ure

1893–1976





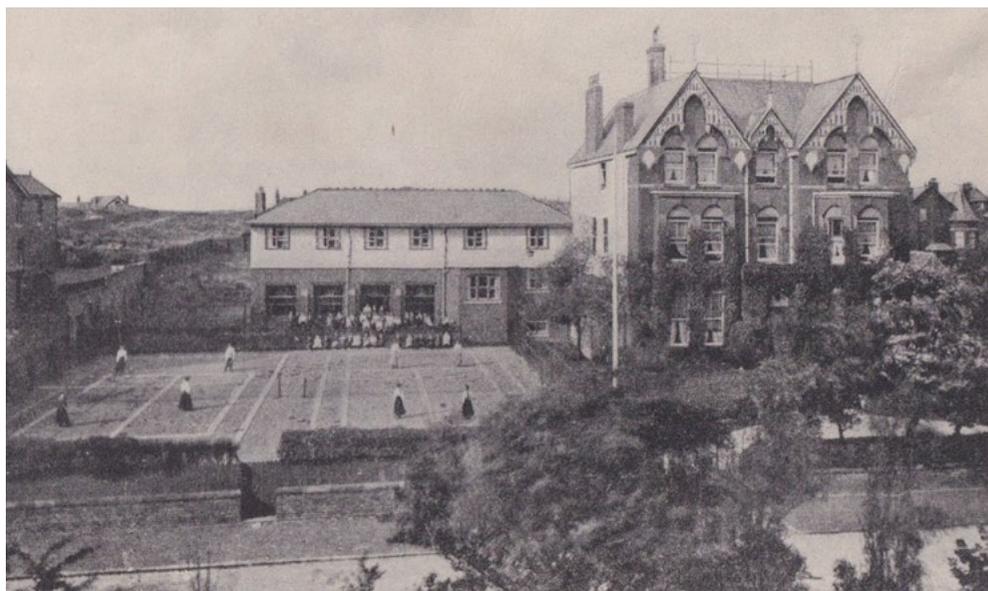
**Portrait of Annie Dunman Hunt
as a young student.**



A Short Biography of Annie Dunman Hunt Ure

Boeotian Archaeologist, Honorary Doctor of
Letters at the University of Reading, co-founder and
Curator of the Ure Museum of Greek Archaeology.

Ruth C Lloyd, first edition 2020



Front view of Stonycroft School,
where Annie Dunman Hunt was
schooled before she came to
Reading.

Annie Dunman Hunt was born in Worcester on 31st January 1893, the youngest of seven children of George Henry Hunt, a watchmaker and jeweller, and Elizabeth Ann Dunman. Her family were Wesleyan Methodists and pillars of the community in Worcester, so religion was a highly important part of her childhood. When their mother died of stomach cancer, Annie's older sister May gave up her career as a music teacher to help raise Annie, who was only eight years old at the time. Throughout their lives, Annie and May were extremely close and kept in contact until May's death in 1958.



Annie Dunman Hunt (front centre) among other student representatives on the SCR at University College, Reading.

Annie was educated at Stoneycroft School in Southport, a modest girls boarding school. There she became friends with Nora Kershaw (later Chadwick), who became a historian of early medieval Britain. In 1911 Annie was accepted to read Classics on a minor scholarship at the University College, Reading. She was among the first batch of Classics graduates under the first professor of the department, Percy Ure, who would later become her colleague and husband. While studying at Reading she resided at St. Andrew's Hall, the college's first female-only accommodation.



During her time at university, Annie was an active member of the student body. She became involved in several different associations, such as the sculling, debate and Christian societies. She took on leadership roles, as Vice-chairman of the Student Representative Council and President of the Women's Student Union. Annie took an interest in woman's suffrage, which was a burning issue at the time. Professor Edith Morley, the first female professor in Britain, helped to lead the way for many female students at University College, Reading, but Annie affirmed that she 'decided to make sure of a degree first and demonstrate later, if at all'.

Reading was not yet a university and unable to award degrees when Annie took her final exams. Instead, her second-class honours degree in Classics, awarded in 1914, was from the University of London. After this, she returned to her former school Stoneycroft, as a teacher. During this period she taught herself Russian, which would prove useful in 1917, when she returned to the University College on a postgraduate scholarship to study the finds of Greek vases on the coasts of the Black Sea, which had been part of the Russian Empire. Professor Ure had strongly encouraged Annie to pursue this scholarship.

Lacking private means to support herself, she also took on a role as Assistant Librarian at the university library, to pay her way. A year into her postgraduate studies, however, Professor Ure had become burdened with teaching alone. The Classics Department's male lecturers had enlisted or been called to serve in the First World War and so Percy Ure asked Annie, who was both responsible and talented, to give up her studies up to assist him in lecturing.

After assisting Percy Ure in teaching for little under a year, Annie married him in Monmouth, on 30th August 1918. Annie wrote anxiously to her sister May, however, about marriage and worries about her career. "To put it bluntly, Percy has asked me to marry him and I have promised. At first, I hesitated because I know I am not in the least the sort of girl to make a good wife for any man, still less a man in his position. I thought of all our plan for the future and our home together and my career but May, I simply couldn't resist." Annie's time as a student had ended and her working and married life had begun. Annie later said "there's nothing to recall for some time except hard work; my husband was teaching practically every hour of every day and writing *The Origin of Tyranny* in the night".

In 1921 the Ures travelled together to Greece to excavate at Rhitsona, in Boeotia. Percy had previously excavated this site, from 1908, with Professor Ronald Burrows, then Professor of Greek at University College, Cardiff (and later Principal of Kings College, London, from 1913 until his death in 1920). Annie's letters to her sister May and her meticulous diaries provide highly descriptive and technical day-to-day accounts of the excavation.

In March 1921, Annie wrote to May of their accommodation: "P & I live in a place that is a cross between a stable and a barn... Thanks to the liberal use of Keatings and Izal we are not unduly annoyed by insects. The rats are not so easily disposed of & keep us awake at night... It has a door that will shut but no windows, but it is well ventilated by holes in the walls and roof... Our staple food is shark and sheep's milk".



Interior of the hut at Rhitsona
in which the Ures resided and
worked while on excavation.



Annie Dunman Hunt Ure
(**holding the box**) on excavation
at Rhitsona, among excavators
and other local workers, with
archaeologist Semni Papaspyridi
seated on the ground in front
of her.



The Ures excavated a necropolis at Rhitsona that they thought was the ancient Boeotian town of Mykalessos mentioned by Homer. According to Thucydides it was the site of a disastrous massacre by Thracians in 413 BC. When the Ures were in Greece, this ancient massacre site was well-known to the natives of neighbouring towns for its potential for ancient Greek artefacts. It attracted tomb robbers who may have disrupted the graves previously, but this also ensured the Ures that they would have plenty of highly enthusiastic workmen.

Speaking to the 'Atrebrates' or Classics Society in 1968, Annie recalled the richness of the graves that they excavated: "The number of objects put into a single internment grave was often very large. In two graves we found over 400 each. Others had 300 or 200 and a grave with a mere 100 we didn't regard as a rich grave... The bulk of the finds consisted of pottery vases and terracotta figurines. Only a few of them were works of art. It would be unreasonable to expect them to be. When

several hundred vases were buried in a single funeral they obviously would be, in the main, the ordinary pottery in everyday use." The Ures were unusual for their time, seeing the value of simple vases that weren't considered 'works of art' but told the stories of the ordinary people of ancient Greece.

In the same speech Annie continued: "The vases came from all over the place, in especially large quantities from Athens and Corinth. One rare one from Chios and several others presumably from East Greek cities. Those obviously produced locally were at first thought to be Boeotian as Mykalessos was in Boeotia. But it is very near the Euripos which is the frontier and recently I have come to the conclusion that, in the sixth century at any rate, when anyone of importance died in Mykalessos, people would tend to go into Chalkis to buy their funeral gifts, if they didn't content themselves with giving something second-hand - a vase that happened to be hanging on the wall for instance - which I think they generally did."

Between them, Percy and Annie served the University for nearly 100 years and produced 6 books (three of them on the Rhitsona finds) and over 80 articles.



The Ures left the material that they excavated at Rhitsona to the emerging Greek state and some of it was later displayed in the Thebes Museum. When they returned to Reading, the Ures combined the knowledge they had acquired at Rhitsona and a small collection of vases Percy had acquired early in his career with Egyptian antiquities and other gifts already at the college to form the Museum of Greek Archaeology in 1922.

Annie served as its Curator until her death. Four years later University College, Reading gained its charter and became the University of Reading, which helped bring more visitors and donors to the museum. Throughout her life Annie added to it with more purchases and donations. Currently the museum houses ca. 4000 objects, including the fourth largest collection of Greek ceramics in the UK.



Interior of the Museum of Greek Archaeology
(later named for the Ures)
on the occasion of its installation in 1960.

After they established the Museum of Greek Archaeology at the university, Annie and Percy filled their years with visits to other museums to critique their displays and gather ideas for their own museum. Annie travelled extensively around Europe in this time, often alone while Percy was working. In 1924 Annie gave birth to a girl, Jean, and after another two years a boy, Bill. Despite her growing family, Annie never lost her passion for Boeotian pottery and never stopped working, unlike many other women at this time. Many of her academic friends never married or had children and Annie expressed her desire to continue working despite getting married and having children.

In raising her two children, Annie took on all the house management in order to make Percy's life as worry free as possible: she meticulously managed finances, house and servants. Despite their frequent travels, Annie and Percy always kept in contact with their children; they sent daily postcards to Bill and Jean telling them where they were and what they were doing. Having been raised in an environment filled with enthusiasm for knowledge it is unsurprising that both became teachers: Jean as a Professor of Linguistics at Edinburgh University and Bill as a Headteacher of Harris Primary School in Peckham Park. After having her children, Annie spent her time promoting the Museum of Greek Archaeology and travelled extensively around Europe and the Mediterranean, visiting numerous museums to gather information. During this time Annie wrote several articles and book reviews including "Red figure Cups with incised and stamped decoration part I" and "Boeotian Orientalizing Lekanoi".



The Ure family ca. 1927.

Name A. S. Ure

Mistress of Form.....

Date 1959-60

THE ABBEY SCHOOL, READING.

Form.....

	MONDAY.	TUESDAY.	WEDNESDAY.	THURSDAY.	FRIDAY.
			MORNING.		
1		Up I Sk without Latin O time C.R. LA	L VI Sk beginner G.S. LA		
2		L VI Sk beginner G.S. C.R.	L VI Sk EB LA		
	—	—	—	L VI Sk EB. LA	
3		II + L VI Sk. M.C. EB LA	—	—	
4		L VI Latin LA	VI Latin S	L V Sk beginner LA	
5		L V Sk beginner LA	Up Sk O level. LA	L VI Sk beginner G.S. C.R.	
6	L VI Sk M.C. S	Up V Sk O level LA	L VI Sk beginner G.S. C.R.	L VI Latin LA	
7	L VI Sk S. B. B. LA	L V Sk EB LA	L V Sk beginners LA	VI Latin S	
8	L V Sk beginner LA	L VI Sk. EB (exceptionally) LA		L VI Sk EB. LA.	
					23

**Annie Dunman Hunt Ure's
1959-1960 teaching timetable**
for her role as a 'Visiting Mistress'
at The Abbey School.

She encouraged her fellow scholars to come to the Museum of Greek Archaeology, which was slowly becoming a major centre for Greek artefacts, especially ceramics. In the late 1930s, Annie began teaching Latin and Greek at The Abbey School - a local independent girls' school - for extra money, which was especially useful following Percy's retirement in 1946. The honorary payment she received for being the museum's Curator would not fund their trips to Greece and travels around Europe.

Annie Ure continued curating, and writing, for a quarter of a century after Percy's death. Scholars from around the world came to visit, and she used their expertise to get attributions.

In 1950, Percy succumbed to heart disease and passed away. Annie continued to earn her own living teaching at The Abbey School, while continuing to curate the Museum and remaining heavily involved in scholarship. Eventually she wrote over 40 published articles. From 1951 Annie was made Honorary Research Fellow in Classical Archaeology at the University of Reading, where she delivered lectures instead of working at The Abbey School. As the pre-eminent expert in the field of Boeotian archaeology, she was asked to publish material from the American-led excavation in the Athenian Agora. So she returned to Athens in 1959, aged 66. Here she made a lifetime friend of Brian Sparkes, who became Professor at the University of Southampton. Brian and Annie continued assisting each other with research until her death, after which he assisted Professor Jane Gardner in organising the Museum.

Annie passed away on 13th July 1976 in Reading. This was 10 days after the 50th anniversary of the University of Reading's charter, when the University awarded Annie Dunman Hunt Ure an honorary doctorate in recognition of her contributions spanning 65 years, including 54 as the Curator of the Museum of Greek Archaeology.

Postscript: A year after the death of Annie Dunman Hunt Ure, the University of Reading recognised the Ures' contribution to the Classics Department in renaming its museum the Ure Museum of Greek Archaeology.



Bust of a female figure holding a thymiaterion (incense burner) decorating the inside of a cup decorated in the Sam Wide style (Ure Museum inv. no. 65.7.1), which Annie Ure first identified as a Corinthian style.





Ure Museum of Greek Archaeology



Established in 1922
*'...to give life and variety
to the study of Greek history'*
Percy Ure



 For more information,
please contact:

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