

Preface

The essays presented in this volume are the outcome of a symposium in memory of Mary Aiken Littauer, *la grande dame de l'hippologie ancienne*. The symposium was held in June 1–3, 2010 at the International Museum of the Horse (IMH) in Lexington, Kentucky, in the heart of American horse country. It was Sandra Olsen (KU Biodiversity Institute, The University of Kansas), who was the driving force, organising the symposium, as well as doing initial editing of the papers for publication. She deserves the fullest credit for her efforts.

The symposium coincided with an exhibition at the IMH called *A Gift from the Desert: the Art, Culture and History of the Arabian Horse*, organised by the museum's director, Bill Cooke, with Cynthia Culbertson and Sandra Olsen acting as the exhibition curators. The IMH is the largest and most comprehensive museum in the world dedicated to exploring the history of horses and their impact on human civilisation. It is no coincidence that Mary Littauer's extensive library on the subject of horses, harnessing, chariots and other wheeled vehicles was donated by her family to this museum, where it is open to all. We thank Bill Cooke and his staff for their hospitality when we were in Lexington and also for helping to make the symposium a success.

The wide range of topics, which includes discussions of horses and wheeled vehicles from Near East, Egypt and Nubia, Arabia, and China, allows for comparisons that have not previously been possible in a single volume. The volume also introduces the reader to a broad range of approaches, grounded in disciplines such as philology, archaeology, archaeozoology and art history, DNA research and experimental archaeology.

Summarising past research as well as presenting much new information, together the essays are of interest to specialists and laypersons alike. The breadth and diversity of topics and areas represented honours the formative role that Mary Littauer has played for the research of the contributors.

One essay on the well-known tablets from Uruk showing ideograms of (wheeled) sledges has been added to the set of papers from the symposium (see Krispijn, Burmeister and Raulwing) to shed light on a topic of special interest to Mary Littauer.

We owe a great debt of gratitude to Adriana Maguiña-Ugarte for masterfully creating the print-ready version of the chapters in this volume, the peer-reviewers for their constructive feedback, the editors of the BAR series

for accepting the articles for publication, Birgit Thaller, Dr Jane Burkowski and Chris Myers for their thoughtful guidance through the final stages of this edition, and the BAR production team for the excellent final layout.

Last but not least, we would like to thank Anya and Andrew Littauer (Princeton) for kindly making the picture of Mary Littauer available to us for this edition.

Peter Raulwing, Katheryn M. Linduff and
Joost H. Crouwel

Mary Aiken Littauer and Our Study of Ancient Horse–Drawn Vehicles

Joost H. Crouwel

Mary Aiken was born in 1912 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA, to a wealthy family. They later moved to New York. An only child, she had a sheltered upbringing. Her only formal schooling was four years of high school, but she received private tutoring in French and German and later also learned Russian, Latin and ancient Greek. From early on Mary loved reading but also enjoyed horse riding and the outdoor life. As a young woman she joined the Frontier Nursing Service, providing care in rural Kentucky—on horseback.

Mary was 23 years old when she married Vladimir Littauer whom she had met while taking lessons at the prestigious *Boots and Saddles Riding School* in Manhattan. After fighting in the First World War and the Russian Civil War, he came to the United States, eventually founding this riding school together with two other emigré cavalry officers. When I later met him, he was still being addressed as Captain Littauer.

After renting several properties in New Jersey horse country and Jericho, Long Island, they eventually bought and settled down at “Hillside Farm” where they lived long lives. He died in 1996, aged 97, she in 2005, aged 93.

Horses and books were important to both of them. Both rode, he taught riding and wrote books and articles on riding techniques. Mary became fascinated by horse-drawn vehicles of antiquity and became a self-educated expert in this field.

In 1968, at the mature age of 56, Mary published her first scholarly paper “The function of the yoke saddle in ancient harnessing”, which appeared in the widely read British journal *Antiquity*. I read this article and was struck by its unusual, common–sense approach and her ideas on “how things actually worked”. At that time I was in Oxford, where I was writing my doctoral dissertation on early chariots in Greece. I had gone there after finishing my university studies in Classical Archaeology at the University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands. It was in Oxford in the spring of 1969 that she and I were introduced to each other. This meeting marked the beginning of our close collaboration on ancient chariots, other vehicles, riding and horse equipment, which lasted for over 30 years. Together we wrote two books: *Wheeled Vehicles and Ridden Animals in the*

Ancient Near East (1979) and *Chariots and Related Equipment from the Tomb of Tut‘ankhamūn* (1985). We also published many articles, a selection of which was prepared by Peter Raulwing for another book: *Selected Writings on Chariots and Other Early Vehicles, Riding and Harness* (2002). Our last joint paper was published in 2001—Mary was then 89.

How did two people of such different ages and backgrounds, and living so widely apart, collaborate in the days before the computer? By means of phone calls, airmail letters, texts composed on typewriters, and with copies made with the help of carbon paper. I also stayed each year for some weeks at Hillside Farm, where we walked the lovely grounds and made the utmost of limited time. As to the writing, one of us usually submitted an idea for a subject and drafted a text which was then exposed to the critical eyes of the other. We would send the text back and forth until we were both sufficiently satisfied. Mary always insisted on accurate, clear English, having *Roget’s Thesaurus* and other tools at the ready.

Let me now quote from one of Mary’s numerous letters to me, dated April 4 1992, after I sent her a draft paper. The text speaks for itself:

“I feel we must be absolutely frank with each other, hence I shall tell you the reasons why I am reluctant to go into this paper. I am a slow worker, we have other work to finish, there are the Tut‘ankhamūn chariots to get into, and there are three or four other subjects (one of them being the evolution of the wheel) that I am eager to tackle. It probably sounds like a lazy man’s excuse, but my best work is not done when I am hard pressed. The ideas and phrases do not come unless I can brood on things, and have a little feeling of space around me. This being the case, I feel I have to be selective and work on those subjects that seem most worthwhile to me. These fall primarily in two categories: correctives to misconceptions, and breaking new ground. I am not young, I have just so much energy, I am not a professional scholar, and I see my function as interpretive—that of a person with some practical experience of the objects discussed. I would like to concentrate on subjects that have either been misinterpreted or the significance of which has been overlooked.”

Joost H. Crouwel

Mary was always generous in sharing information, and she encouraged not just me but other aspiring young scholars. Several of them—not so young anymore—attended the Kentucky Horse Park symposium: Gail Brownrigg, Trudy Kawami, Katheryn Linduff, Sandra Olsen and Peter Raulwing. Each of us, in our various ways, have continued to work in Mary's field.

During her life, Mary steadfastly refused all honours. I wonder what she would have thought of this symposium dedicated to her memory.

Acknowledgements

With many thanks to Andrew Littauer, Mary's son.