

**James Leslie Starkey
Archaeologist
PART 4 (iii)**

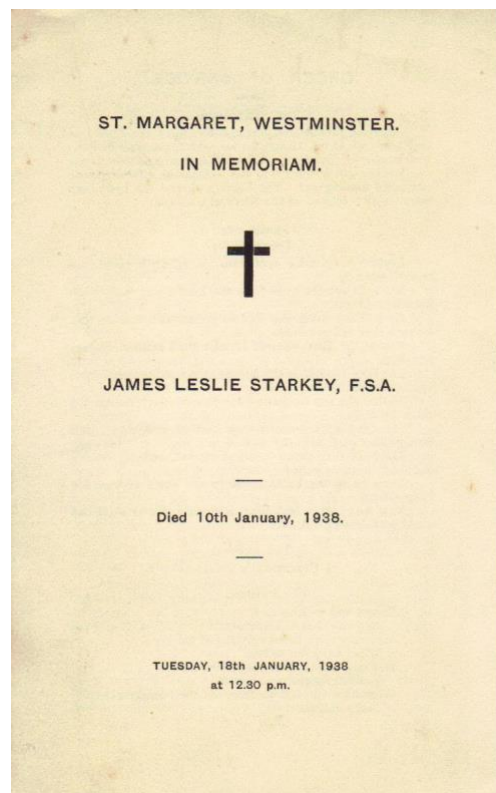
**Memorial Service Westminster
18th January 1938
and aftermath for the family**

By Wendy Slaninka (Granddaughter of James & Marjorie Starkey by their daughter Mary)

This is my fourteenth article for *Filming Antiquity* directly following on from previous articles Part 4 (i)(a) and (b) 'Tragedy in Palestine 10th January 1938' and Part 4 (ii) 'Funeral and Burial, Mount Zion, Jerusalem' and links in with earlier articles Part 3 'Bethlehem Geology Project', Part 2 'Lachish (i)-(v)', Part 1 'Background and Early Career', 'Living at Lachish – Life in Camp', 'First Lady of Lachish – Marjorie Starkey and her family' and 'Olive Starkey – Lady of Lachish' (Leslie's sister), where there is other information and photos of Leslie and Lachish.

'The Science of Archaeology has lost in him an investigator of high achievement and brilliant promise, and the Expedition a beloved and trusted Leader'

The Wellcome Trust



Eight days later at 12.30 pm on 18th January a memorial service was held at St. Margaret's Church, Westminster, in the grounds of Westminster Abbey, the 12th century church of the Houses of Parliament.¹ That the service was held here is in itself a marvelous acknowledgement and recognition of Starkey and his achievements. The service was conducted by Canon Vernon Faithfull Storr, with an address by the Bishop of Portsmouth – Dr. F. Partridge (a

¹ Oliver Cromwell worshipped there, Catharine of Aragon, Samuel Pepys and Sir Winston Churchill were married there and Sir Walter Raleigh, John Milton and William Caxton are buried there.

personal friend of Starkey, who had also visited Lachish). Dr. Partridge read the Lesson from Corinthians XV 44-58 and gave an address adding that Starkey *'had lived a life of complete surrender to the search for truth'*. He was, said the Bishop. *'loved by his Arabs; he was virile and courageous and gave his life for an ideal ... who fell in the path of duty'*. (Daily Telegraph/Manchester Guardian, 18th January)



St. Margaret's Church = completely dwarfed by the Cathedral built in 1903 – though actually quite sizeable itself, as can be seen by the London Buses

Photo: Wikipedia

The Service had been announced in the papers beforehand and was published the next day together with the Attendance list. I rather like the headline *'Called to a Higher Service'* (Life of Faith, 19th January). The Manchester Guardian (19th January) added *'an assassin's bullet was seldom more improvident, more completely stupid - the pathos of a needless death was about this service'*. I feel too that it such a shame that his plans were so cruelly shattered, and at a time when he was beginning to receive that wider recognition and renown he deserved.

Russell White, the Vicar of St. Stephen's Church in Twickenham, the Starkeys' local church, sent a newsletter to his congregation including the announcement of Starkey's death *'so foully murdered in Palestine – by his death archaeology is bereaved by one of her most able servants'*. Starkey's Masonic Lodges also circulated the details to their members, as well as writing personally to Madge.

Sir Charles completely organised and funded the whole service, sending out invitations, and providing cars to collect Madge, little John and Starkey's sister Olive. Her sister Dorothy, and brother in law Edward Saville-Smithin accompanied her². They sat in the front pew and Sir Charles and Lady Marston and their daughters sat immediately behind with representatives from the Wellcome Trust.

² Edward helped Madge with the administrative matters and liaised closely with Sir Charles Marston on her behalf. He also helped in gathering the newspaper cuttings for the scrapbooks for the children.

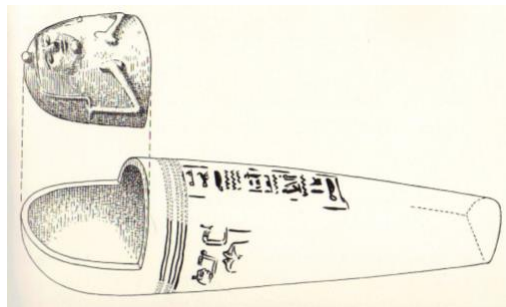
Representatives were present from the Palestine Exploration Fund, Wellcome Museum of Medical Science, Wellcome Research Institution, Wellcome Historical Medical Museum, Horniman Museum, Ashmolean Museum Oxford, and Education Department Jerusalem, were in attendance as well as The Bishop of Rochester, The Honourable W. Ormsby-Gore, M.P. (Secretary of State for the Colonies), General Sir Reginald and Lady Wingate, Captain Charles Richmond Brown (on behalf of Ralph Richmond Brown), Sir Frederic Kenyon (The British School of Archaeology in Jerusalem), Sir Henry Dale (The Wellcome Trust), Sir Edgar and Lady Bonham Carter (The British School of Archaeology in Iraq), Sir Leonard and Lady Woolley (The Royal Asiatic Society), Mr. H.J. Braunholtz (The Royal Anthropological Institute), Sir John Forsdyke (The British Museum), Mr. G. Pearson (Governing Director, Wellcome Foundation), Dr. Margaret Murray (his former tutor), Commander Risdon, Mrs. Pummell (Mr. Pummell was at Lachish), Mrs. Harding (Harding's mother), Mrs. B. Beauchamp Tufnell (Olga's mother), and Miss Benar representing Sir Flinders Petrie and the British School in Egypt.

Many other representatives, noted persons, acquaintances, family and friends were also in attendance. At least 220 names were published in the newspaper reports, although Lady Marston later wrote to Madge *'the service was perfectly beautiful – I wonder if you knew there were 500 friends of your husband present to pay their tribute, and to share with you his loss'*. The Daily Telegraph and Morning Post printed that the Verger had apparently underestimated the turnout and was consequently 150 service papers short!

Tennyson's 'Crossing the Bar' was sung at the service – *Sunset and Evening Star, and one clear call for me! And may there be no moaning of the bar, when I put out to sea ..* Sir Charles Marston commented that it was very prophetic because it was not unlike the ancient wording in pseudo-Egyptian hieroglyphics, 1500 BC, inscribed on a slipper coffin unearthed by Starkey in Tomb 570 shortly before his death. The main body of this anthropoid coffin, made at the time of Ramesis III, was very fragmented and unable to be preserved, but the partially incomplete inscription was salvaged and is reproduced below. It is in the Rockefeller Museum in Jerusalem.. However the lid, which is intact, is in the British Museum.



The wording was roughly translated by Alan Rowe in Cairo as *'May it be granted to thee to alight upon the water of the beautiful West to sail to thy place'* (see References below). The Evening Standard (and Palestine Post), 2nd February, reported the story with the headline *'He Found the Words of Death'*.



Slipper Coffin

(see my article [Lachish Part 2 \(iii\)](#) for photo of Slipper Coffin lid)

Image: reconstructed drawing, Book Lachish IV – The Bronze Age, plate 46
Wellcome-Marston Expedition Archive, Dept of Middle East, British Museum, copyright UCL Institute of Archaeology, courtesy of the Wellcome Trust and the British Museum

Requiescat in pace



James Leslie Starkey, FSA
3rd January 1895 – 10th January 1938

I never knew my grandfather, but over the course of my research into his life and career, and reading what others have said, I feel I have a good sense of him – enough to have a go at a summarising tribute of my own and I genuinely mourned his loss too and felt proud to be his granddaughter. It was obvious he was a man with a big heart, a benefactor and kind person, and an unstinting enthusiast in his work.

It is impossible on this platform to include the plethora of wonderful tributes paid to Starkey but by using some of the words and terms of endearment expressed in the obituaries and condolence letters, a pick-and-mix picture is painted of a confident, bold, virile, gifted, clever, brilliant, keen, talented, capable, wise, skilled, knowledgeable and extraordinary man, even a 'savant', with an aptitude for administration and organisation in the work he undertook, which was careful, precise, thorough and meticulous, with a fund of experience and untiring, vigorous, energetic enthusiasm, power and genius, as well as courage and promotional flair. He was described as a great, splendid, dear and beloved gentleman, a fine, courteous, sincere, honest, genuine, straightforward, noble, loyal, sympathetic, loving, kind, patient, and helpful man, and a good, unfailing and generous friend, always willing to oblige. He was at ease with his fellow man from whatever walk of life they came and was adept at man management in the field, described as an able, insightful leader of men with masterly and kindly guidance. He was also said to have been charming, cheery, cordial, humorous and genial, with a peace-loving nature, a modest and unassuming manner, radiating friendliness and bonhomie, and so alive with a brilliant spirit, a wonderful character – but without pride in spite of success. Yes, he could also be difficult to work for, and no doubt to live with, but colleagues viewed him with reverence, respect, esteem, admiration, affection and cordial friendship, and were proud to have known him.

One writer said to Madge *'he was quite different from anyone else – he was so entirely himself'*.

That he was universally loved comes over loud and clear in the condolence letters - *'we felt it a great privilege to know him because to do so was to love him'*, *'he must have been loved wherever he went'*, and so on, and on.

Sadly his children were very young when he died: Jane too young to remember. But John and Mary recollect him as a loving and attentive father, not afraid to get down on the floor to play with them with their toys, and taking them to London Zoo, and the cinema. Mary's memories are fewer but particularly remembers her father carrying her around on his shoulders. John has many fascinating memories of Lachish too. Now aged 91, he looks incredibly like his father and takes after him in many ways, so I also get a sense of Starkey's persona from him. One visitor to Lachish commented in a later letter to Madge that John was just like a mini-me of Starkey. Some of Harding's footage of Lachish included a few moving shots of Starkey, Madge and family, and John and Mary were thrilled to watch it, as was I.

It is rumoured that when Starkey died he had been in line for an impending knighthood

Aftermath for the family

Poor Madge was left at home holding the babies.

She had already lost her mother (1934, shortly after Jane's birth), but her father (who was ill with cancer) died within 12 days of Leslie, four days after the Memorial Service – it was all too much and she fell very ill with double-pneumonia and had to be nursed at home by a live-in nurse who also cared for the children during her confinement. Her daughter Mary recalls that when she recovered she took them for a week by the seaside in Bexhill on Sea. I don't think Olive, Starkey's sister, ever really recovered from the shock. Starkey's parents had previously passed on (his Mother in 1919 through illness and his Father in 1925) so they were spared the tragic news.

Madge was also financially in dire straits. It seems Starkey had not made any provision nor had insurance cover, unless the nature of his work precluded him from this. However Sir Charles Marston was a tower of strength in helping to get things back on an even keel, and he and Lady Marston were very supportive. Without Starkey's wages Madge could not pay the mortgage or the school fees and the house had to be sold. Sir Charles himself took on the sale of the house and helped procure another smaller house for Madge in Redway Drive, Whitton (which Madge named 'Lachish'), near her sister, financed by the Wellcome Trust. He took it on himself to get Madge some compensation from the Palestine Government too (a one-off payment of £250 which went towards paying off the mortgage) and was also active in getting the King, in recognition of Starkey's services to archaeology, to sanction the Prime Minister, Mr. Chamberlain, to award a yearly pension of £210 to his widow for their children whilst minors. Madge received a letter from 10 Downing Street in March 1938 and details were printed in the Civil List the same month. Sir Charles had campaigned tirelessly and there are many letters between him and the Wellcome Trust, 10 Downing Street, the Colonial Office, other officials, and the Palestine authorities, in the family archive. Back at Lachish, Olga sold off some of Starkey's books and possessions to interested parties who wanted mementos to raise a bit more cash for Madge. Once Olga returned to England in the Spring she also took away all of Starkey's books from their home, many of which were rare and valuable, and arranged for their sale. Those that were left over she donated to the Institute of Archaeology.

As Starkey was a Mason the children's education was also taken care of by the Royal Masonic Society, and they were sent to the Boys and Girls Masonic Boarding Schools at Bushey and Rickmansworth – John later that year, and the girls when they reached 10. Again this was all organised by Sir Charles. Unfortunately though, for both Madge and the children this meant they could only see each other in the holidays, or on Visiting Days, which Madge never missed. The girls particularly looked forward to these times, though John was horrified when she visited him at Bushey wearing her Palestinian sandals! I have a letter from the Headmistress at Rickmansworth to Mary on the death of Madge saying she also looked forward to Madge's visits and they spent many a pleasant hour chatting in her living room and had come to regard her as

a friend. So it was all very sad really – and especially so for Mary who dreadfully missed her mother.

A short while later, Madge's brother Sidney, who had lived at home with their Father, moved in to be with her. Harding wrote to Madge from Jordan later in the year finishing off with '*Keep brave my dear, I know you can never forget*'.



Madge with Mary, John and Jane a couple of years later

TO BE CONTINUED

Part 5 Lachish remaining 1938 season – and beyond, Family Epilogue and Conclusion

Sources/Further Reading/Research:

Flyer from the Wellcome Trust inserted loose into 'Lachish Letters'
Prof. William Foxwell Albright, obituary, JSTOR, Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research, No.69, page 6, February 1938
Prof. William Foxwell Albright, 'Archaeology of Palestine' 1949
Lachish IV, The Bronze Age (Text and Plates), OUP, 1958, Olga Tufnell et al – see page 131-132, 249 on slipper coffin, and corresponding plates 45 and 46
Dothan, Trude, 'The Philistines and their Material Culture', Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1967.
NATURE, 141. 'Mr. J.L. Starkey, Obituary' p.359-360, 26th February, 1938
Ernst Weidner, Obituary 'James Llewellyn Starkey' (in German), JSTOR
The Bible Testimony Fellowship, London, Quarterly Paper 1938
Correspondence between Sir Charles Marston and the Palestine Authorities, The Wellcome Trust, Mr. Saville Smithin, the British Government and Madge
Extracts from some of the hundreds of condolence letters in the family archive
Plus numerous newspaper articles of the day (mostly from originals in family archive)

Permission has been obtained from the various journals, newspapers and publishers where relevant – many of the original publications of the above are also in the family archive.