



# A Passion for the Past: The Odyssey of a Transatlantic Archaeologist

*Ivor Noël Hume*

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Ivor Noël Hume has devoted his life to uncovering countless lives that came before him. In *A Passion for the Past* the world-renowned archaeologist turns to his own life, sharing with the reader a story that begins amid the bombed-out rubble of post–World War II London and ends on North Carolina’s Roanoke Island, where the history of British America began. Weaving the personal with the professional, this is the chronicle of an extraordinary life steered by coincidence scarcely believable even as fiction.

Born into the good life of pre-Depression England, Noël Hume was a child of the 1930s who had his silver spoon abruptly snatched away when the war began. By its end he was enduring a period of Dickensian poverty and clinging to aspirations of becoming a playwright. Instead, he found himself collecting antiquities from the shore of the river Thames and, stumbling upon this new passion, becoming an "accidental" archaeologist.

From those beginnings emerged a career that led Noël Hume into the depths of Roman London and, later, to Virginia’s Colonial Williamsburg, where for thirty-five years he directed its department of archaeology. His discovery of nearby Martin’s Hundred and its massacred inhabitants is perhaps Noël Hume’s best-known achievement, but as these chapters relate, it was hardly his last, his pursuit of the past taking him to such exotic destinations as Egypt, Jamaica, Haiti, and to shipwrecks in Bermuda.

When the author began his career, historical archaeology did not exist as an academic discipline. It fell to Noël Hume’s books, lectures, and television presentations to help bring it to the forefront of his profession, where it stands today. This story of a life, and a career, unlike any other reveals to us how the previously unimagined can come to seem beautifully inevitable.

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