AN ASSESSMENT of R. A. S. Macalister’s work at Tel Gezer, his most ambitious project undertaken in the country, can be viewed on many different levels. For example, one can compare his results to those of the Hebrew Union College excavations that took place from 1965 through 1973. This topic is dealt with in W. G. Dever’s and J. D. Seger’s articles in this volume. Likewise, one can compliment him for conducting the first survey of the hinterland of a major biblical-period site. This topic, however, is dealt with by E. Mitchell in this volume. One can discuss the value of the finds that his excavation yielded and which were published in his Gezer reports; for this see B. Brandl and R. Reich in this volume. In this chapter, we, representatives of the Tandy Institute of Archaeology expedition, the third in line of major excavations at the site (after Macalister and the Hebrew Union College teams), wish to discuss the influence of Macalister’s reportage in The Excavations of Gezer (1912) on our understanding of the ruins excavated (and re-excavated) in our field of excavation; that is, in the area bounded by the six-chambered gate (HUC’s Field III) to the east, the edge of the tell to the south, HUC’s Field VII to the west and the modern path laid out by the Israel Parks Authority to the north (Ortiz and Wolff 2012).

Macalister did not give us very much to go on in The Excavations of Gezer (1912). The six-chambered gate, identified by Macalister as the ‘Maccabean Castle’, is described in Macalister 1912, 1, 209–223. The area to the west of this area is mentioned only in passing. On page 220, for example, a photograph of a ‘supposed potter’s oven’ appears in figure 107. We re-excavated this very same kiln (Fig. 1). Unfortunately, the upper part of the kiln was removed in the 100 years between the time the Macalister’s photograph was taken and when we arrived in 2006. On the following page a photograph of a ‘structure of stones’ appears in figure 108. We re-excavated this ‘structure’ and believe that the stones were not in situ and do not represent a structure. Outside of these references, a plan of the walls from this area appears in Gezer III, pl. VI, the plan of his Hellenistic phase. That the excavations in this area do not appear on plans of the architectural remains from earlier periods reflects Macalister’s (mis)understanding of the dating of the architecture he revealed; that is, he dated everything to the Hellenistic period. We now know, thanks to our current knowledge of Iron Age architecture, that the ‘Maccabean Castle’ and the casemate wall attached to it belong in their initial stage to the Iron Age, either the tenth century BCE, according to traditional chronology, or to the ninth century, according to I. Finkelstein’s revised chronology. The complex of buildings to the north-west of the gate, in Macalister’s Trenches 18 and 19, for the most part, however, coincide with architectural remains revealed both by the HUC excavations in Field VII and at the western end of our excavation. We learned by re-excavating these remains that: (1) Macalister left the walls but dug out all of the debris layers and surfaces that relate to these walls, making it difficult for us to date them with certainty; and (2) Macalister’s plans were drawn quite accurately. In retrospect, then, when analysing the architecture from this field one needs to sort out the Hellenistic architecture from the Iron II, which is the main task of our excavation.

Luckily for us, Macalister did not penetrate much below the Hellenistic stratum to the north of the casemate wall system. In the far north-west corner of our excavations, for example, Macalister revealed the
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Hellenistic architecture and dug out all debris layers related to it (Fig. 2), but did not reach the large four-room house excavated by our team; in fact, our north section shows that he probably stopped when he came down on the top of one of the upright pillars. Between this area and the fortification line to the south, Macalister’s excavation revealed Hellenistic architecture (Fig. 3) and penetrated into earlier strata. It has been our task to try and understand these disturbed strata. To the north of the fortification line, where Dever identified ‘Palace 8000’ and ‘Palace 10000’, which he dated respectively to the eighth and tenth centuries BCE (Dever 1986, 25–28), we have been able to not only identify these two phases of architecture, but an additional one between them. If we were to continue using Dever’s nomenclature, we would call this the ‘Palace 9000’ phase, since we would date it to the ninth century. Needless to say, we do not believe that the extant architectural remains represent palaces but rather administrative structures (in the eighth-century phase) or domestic structures (in the ninth-century phase). Future excavations will enable us to characterize the lowest Iron Age phase, which we are currently dating to the tenth century.

Looking at an overlay of the Tandy and HUC excavations on top of Macalister’s Hellenistic plan (Fig. 4), one is immediately struck by two things. The first of these is that, for individual architectural units, Macalister was reasonably accurate. Macalister’s precision on the small scale is quite good. Especially close to the gate, in his Trench 15, Macalister’s drawings show what would be expected from a surveyor. The main city wall line is true, correctly following the curve of the inner wall and the overall width of the casemate system is accurately plotted.

Tandy’s Iron Age administrative complex in Squares A–E (Dever’s ‘Palaces’) generally lines up well with Macalister’s plans, although the northern walls, including the two kilns (‘ovens’), have been shifted a couple of metres to the north. The silo at the north-west corner of Building A (in C6) and the semi-circular wall at the north edge of Building B in A6 (excavated uncertainly as a ‘bin’ by Tandy) are almost precisely where Macalister plotted them. The excavated east wall of Building A (in squares E) is significantly narrower than Macalister drew it and seems to continue northward where a corner is expected. Both of these features may be accounted for, seeing that Macalister’s plan does have a northern extension of the western half of the wall and materials have been excavated east of the wall (E6) which might indicate there was a later (Hellenistic?) wider phase to the wall. The excavation of the Hellenistic wall section in E5 indicates that the wall extending from the north-east corner of Building A has been ‘bent’ to the east, but the plan is still generally correct in its depiction of the relationship between the elements (more below). Thus the surprising accuracy of Macalister’s drafting shown in
this overlay — and its implications for other walls no longer extant — may require some rethinking of the structure of these two buildings by the Tandy team.

Similarly, Tandy’s Hellenistic buildings (W7–A4) also illustrate Macalister’s precision regarding individual architectural units. The northern and eastern sides of this stratum were removed prior to the Tandy excavations, making further comparative analysis impossible. In Figure 4, the HUC and Tandy Hellenistic remains in the western areas have been moved (but not resized) to help illustrate the accuracy of Macalister’s plan in terms of architectural units.

The second thing one notes is that in the west there is a significant large-scale discontinuity between the Tandy and HUC excavations and Macalister’s Hellenistic plan. Regarding the western extent of Macalister as excavations in this area, it is clear from the HUC excavation that Macalister’s Trench 20 actually extended at least 5 m farther west and appears to be almost a full-width trench, although the non-uniform angle of this western edge seems to be accurately portrayed on the plan. The large square building with the bent southwest wall extension at the eastern side of Field VII illustrates this well. (This building was reconstructed from sketched plans in the unpublished report from HUC’s Field VII East.)

The city wall line is correctly traced by Macalister, although the westernmost casemate divider wall has been shifted about 3 m to the east. The early plan

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**Figure 2.** Section illustrating Macalister’s excavation technique. The large white stone near the top of the section represents the bottom course of a Hellenistic period wall. It sits on whitish soil which was not excavated by Macalister (i.e. under the wall). On both sides of the wall, however, the brown fill represents Macalister fill, down to the Iron Age II fill layer, to the south. (Photo: S. Wolff)
shows what current excavations have borne out, that the casemate system does not extend west of the line of Tandy’s B squares. Outside of the city wall, west of the casemates, current excavations have shown that Macalister found a series of small walls appearing to protrude from the main wall line. While he correctly drew the size, shape and even declination of some of these, he plotted them inaccurately, while leaving others off the plan entirely. Thus, what appears as a small square ‘bastion’ on Macalister’s plan (actually part of the Iron I city wall system, re-used and modified into a sub-surface crib and retaining wall system in Iron II) has been shifted either 10 m to the east or 3 m to the west, depending on which set of retaining and crib walls he was intending to depict. Finally, the small section of city wall line excavated in HUC’s Field X, at the south-west corner of Macalister’s plan — that does not meet up with the rest of the wall line — has been shifted about 5 m to the north, making the gap in the wall incorrectly appear to be part of a casemate system. Current excavations have now ruled out this possibility.

More noticeably, architectural features to the north of the city wall line — in Trenches 18–20 — are off by at least 10 m. It appears that Macalister drew these features separately, perhaps owing to the significant elevation difference (ca. 1 m) between these walls and the features in the eastern trenches. When he then combined the two plans, he incorrectly shifted his western plan north by about 10 m, yet leaving the main city wall line in place. Immediately inside the wall line this created a large gap in the drawing.
It then appears that Macalister, confused and likely unable to check the walls in the field, simply created a plan that made sense to him; walls were shifted and invented and a non-existent space about 6 m wide was created just inside and along the city wall. In this process, the Hellenistic ‘Tower’ in W7 (Fig. 2, right) was moved south again about 4 m to help fill in the space. Because the Hellenistic walls in Tandy Squares 2 and 3 were previously removed, the north end of Macalister’s ‘shifted’ plan cannot be checked, but it is certain that the 10 m shift has caused significant inaccuracy. It is most likely, given the wall fragment uncovered by Tandy at the northern extent of their excavations (A2), that the east–west street in Trench 18 was significantly wider than depicted on the plan. This may be partially confirmed by comparison of a photo (fig. 108, p. 221) in Macalister’s Gezer I and its explanatory text with materials found in Tandy B4. The photo shows a vat and pillar — the same ones found by Tandy — which Macalister’s explanation indicates were part of an oval structure plotted on his plan just above the ‘P’ in Trench 18. If Tandy found these roughly in situ, then that indicates the precision of Macalister’s Hellenistic building plan in Trench 18 likely continued to the north wall of the building. Additionally, the walls of the large
square building in HUC’s Field VII East show the same northern shift, yet interestingly the northwestern section of the HUC building does not comport well with Macalister’s plan. It seems that materials were removed in this area as well prior to HUC’s excavation.

Perhaps the oddest shift in Macalister’s plan in Trenches 18–20, is that of a small corner of a wall system at the western edge of the Tandy excavations (V5, W5). This corner, clearly excavated by Macalister, appears to have been shifted not only 12 m north and 5 m west on the plan, but set at a significantly different angle from what is actually there. It seems that Macalister simply lost track of this architectural feature and set it ‘close enough’. Interestingly, this corner represents a stratum that is between the Iron Age II destruction and the large scale Hellenistic intrusive building program. Smaller wall sections (in V4, W6, V7, Y7, Z6, Z7 and Z8), obviously uncovered by Macalister are also not accounted for on the plan.

Thus Macalister’s ‘Hellenistic Plan’ illustrates his drafting competency over the small scale and a level of imprecision at the larger scale. Of course, it must also be said, although it is patently obvious, that his ‘Hellenistic’ remains incorporate walls from the
Iron Age I, Iron Age IIA, Iron Age IIB, an ephemeral intermediate stage (late Iron II or Persian), and finally Hellenistic remains themselves. While Macalister may well be excused for misunderstanding the tight stratigraphy, he did not even attempt to account for walls that were a metre different in elevation. What should be noted is that the ‘blank’ area of Macalister’s plan at the east side of Trench 18 is precisely where the shift from Iron Age to Hellenistic extant remains takes place and the tell slopes eastward toward the gate complex (which was re-used into the Hellenistic period). In the west the Hellenistic foundations were dug into the thick Iron II destruction debris, yet as they moved east, the Hellenistic builders needed to utilize increasingly shallower foundations in order to maintain a smooth slope toward the gate (note the shallow foundations of the Hellenistic wall in E5 related to the extant Iron II walls and the difficulty determining stratigraphically whether the kilns are Iron Age or Hellenistic). Thus the monumental Iron II architecture in Tandy’s Administrative Building A (and possibly B; cf. Ortiz and Wolff 2012) appears to have been left in place near the Hellenistic surface level and may have even been partially re-used by the Hellenists (since Macalister uncovered no additional later remains atop them).

Macalister’s team did a good job of combing the area for finds from the Hellenistic period; presumably the majority of the dozens of Rhodian amphora handles (Macalister 1912, II, 351–364) and the lead weights (Macalister 1912, II, 286–287) came from this area. His workers left behind in his backfill only three stamped Rhodian amphora handles, one lead weight (Wolff and Finkielszjetn 2009), one silver didrachm minted during the reign of Ptolemy VI, one pyramidal loomweight, a cache (which it is likely he collected) of glass vessels, and one ceramic figurine fragment. Interestingly, he left behind all of the broken pottery vessels, sometimes redeposited by him according to type (piles of handles, for example); only one partially restorable vessel from the Hellenistic period was excavated by us. In one respect, it was a blessing that Macalister was not interested in broken potsherds, because he left them behind for us to discover and analyse, devoid from their original contexts as they are. After having been analysed, D. Sandhaus will presumably enable us to date the architecture in the area despite the lack of a direct connection between the architecture and the finds. Likewise, it will be interesting to see what comes of Liora Horwitz’s analysis of the animal bones derived from the backfill of Hellenistic debris.

To summarize, then, we have much respect and admiration for what Macalister accomplished in our area at Gezer. He drew for the most part detailed and often accurate architectural plans and collected and published all of the important material from the area; it is unfortunate that even an approximate location for these finds cannot be ascertained from the publication. It remains for the Tandy expedition to analyse and separate out the various architectural phases from his ‘Hellenistic period’ plan.

Our final comment: thank goodness that Macalister did not dig down to bedrock in our area! Had he done so, he would most probably not have been able to distinguish and date the important Iron II phases that our excavation is encountering.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


