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Celebrating a century of excavation at Uruk

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What does the future hold? The past is always a safer bet – as it has already happened – and we have no oracles to advise us now

Having had my fortune told by a rabbit (in Turkey), a budgerigar (in Armenia), a dove (in Egypt) and a fish (in India), I feel that the art of divination has really gone downhill in recent centuries. At least, in Delphi, the Ancient Greeks could consult a real woman, even if she was hallucinating and spouting gibberish (see pages 26-29).

What the future holds for Iraq no one can predict, but its precious archaeological sites, such as Ur, are all under threat from neglect and looting. Ur was first excavated by German archaeologists 100 years ago, and an exhibition to mark the event is currently on show at the Pergamon Museum in Berlin. On pages 18 to 21, we go back 5,000 years to a time when Ur was a megacity, ruled by the legendary king Gilgamesh, hero of the ancient epic in which he and his companion, Enkidu, do battle with an ogre called Humbaba, who fiercely guards a great cedar forest.

Cedar wood was greatly prized, for all sorts of reasons, not only in Mesopotamia but throughout the ancient world; in Egypt it was used for making coffins. On pages 22-25 you can read about all sorts of valuable trees and their uses throughout history.

Still in Egypt, we hear about a forgotten pharaoh called Horemheb (see pages 8-11). Although not of royal blood, he was accepted as ruler and helped to restore stability to the country after the traumatic Amarna period, when Akhenaten moved the capital north and replaced the worship of Amun with Amarna period, when Akhenaten moved the capital north and replaced the worship of Amun with Amarna period, when Akhenaten moved the capital north and replaced the worship of Amun with Amarna period, when Akhenaten moved the capital north and replaced the worship of Amun with Amarna period, when Akhenaten moved the capital north and replaced the worship of Amun with Amarna period, when Akhenaten moved the capital north and replaced the worship of Amun with Amarna period, when Akhenaten moved the capital north and replaced the worship of Amun with Amarna period, when Akhenaten moved the capital north and replaced the worship of Amun with Amarna period, when Akhenaten moved the capital north and replaced the worship of Amun with Amarna period, when Akhenaten moved the capital north and replaced the worship of Amun with Amarna period, when Akhenaten moved the capital north and replaced the worship of Amun with Amarna period, when Akhenaten moved the capital north and replaced the worship of Amun with Amarna period, when Akhenaten moved the capital north and replaced the worship of Amun with.

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It was also in Egypt that the archaeologist Flinders Petrie accrued information to corroborate Francis Galton’s theory of racial types. Although this theory has long been discredited, it is interesting to hear how Petrie collected what he called ‘racial heads’ and made images of foreign captives brought back as prisoners-of-war, as pictured on Egyptian temples. He even donated his own head, which he considered to be a fine specimen, to science. You can read about all these heads on pages 46-49.

The Native American culture stretches back thousands of years, but it was not until the 19th century that it was extensively recorded by the artist George Catlin. His colourful Indian Portraits show dozens of strong, dignified, handsome men and women in their traditional feathered and beaded dress. He respected and trusted these people, and in this he was well ahead of most of his countrymen, who regarded them as ‘savages’. Catlin also portrayed hunting scenes, the rituals of medicine men and initiation ceremonies. His work is on show at the National Portrait Gallery in London (see pages 12-17).

The story of the confiscation of land from Native Americans and how they were made to live on reservations is well known. Today, attitudes are more enlightened towards indigenous cultures, and one of the champions of their preservation is Global Heritage Fund. This year GHF celebrates its first decade and, on pages 38 to 40, we look at 10 of the top sites around the world that it has helped to preserve.

Cooperation, tolerance and peaceful coexistence were the hallmarks of the inhabitants of the ruined Byzantine city of Kastron Mefaa, now Um ar-Rasas, in Jordan, as Stefan Smith discovers when he pays the site a visit – turn to pages 42-45.

You can read about another peaceful healing influence on pages 34-37, this time emanating from the church of Santa Maria Antiqua in the Roman Forum, whose beautiful wall-paintings have recently been restored. The kindly presence of the saints and angels in the paintings were thought to have a beneficial effect on any sick person who spent the night sleeping on the floor of this Early Christian church.

Divine love is one thing but it was a very different kind of love that had a strong influence on the art of the Classical world – as you can see in an exhibition called Sleeping Eros on show at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, or on pages 26-29.

CONTRIBUTORS


Charlotte Booth is a freelance Egyptologist with a BA and MA in Egyptian Archaeology from University College London. She is the author of a number of books, including Horemheb: The Forgotten Pharaoh and Tutankhamun: The Boy behind the Mask. You can follow Charlotte Booth on twitter @nefercharlie or at www.charlotteegypt.com.

Dirke Wicke has spent his academic life researching Near Eastern Archaeology and Cuneiform Studies. His main focus is on the Minor Arts in the Ancient Near East, with a special interest in ivory carving and Assyrian art. Since 2007 he has been engaged in fieldwork in Eastern Turkey, helping to uncover the Assyrian remains of the Assyrian provincial capital of Tushan.

Seán Hemingway is a curator in the Department of Greek and Roman Art at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. He is the author of numerous scholarly publications on ancient art and has now turned his hand to fiction. His first novel, an archaeological thriller entitled The Tomb of Alexander, was published by Arrow Books this year.

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Around 100 archaic Chinese bronzes that have never been exhibited in public before are currently on show at Musée Guimet in Paris.

These ritual bronze vessels are part of the prestigious Meiyintang Collection that was put together by two Manila-born brothers, Gilbert and Stephen Zuellig. Through their business activities they developed a keen interest in Chinese art and began to build up a systematic collection during the late 1950s. Gilbert specialised in early pottery, stoneware and ceramics; his brother, Stephen, collected later porcelains and archaic bronzes.

The artefacts displayed at Musée Guimet have already been published in a number of journals but have never been put on show before. They constitute the most remarkable ensemble of archaic Chinese bronzes from the second and first millennia BC ever seen.

Unlike other Bronze Age artefacts, Chinese archaic bronzes had no utilitarian purpose. Instead, they fulfilled a propitiatory and magical function, being used in rituals addressed to the manes of their ancestors (chthonic deities) in order to solicit their power, particularly on the battlefield.

Although metallurgical techniques were not fully mastered in the 19th century BC, the audacity and ornamentation of forms produced then made them close to perfection. The outstanding example displayed in this exhibition is an elegant jue, a tripod vessel with a beak and a tail, used to warm wine, dating from the Erlitou civilisation (early Bronze Age, 19th–16th century BC).

During the Shang dynasty (16th-11th century BC), bronze vessels were adorned with foliage patterns and taotie masks (zoomorphic masks with raised eyes and no lower jaw area) that formed fascinating abstract designs.

But although the use of iron was introduced in China during the Western Zhou Dynasty (11th-6th century BC), it was the making of bronzeware that reached its zenith then. Perfect mastery of the casting technique led to more complex models and decoration, with fantastical animal forms, spikes and horns.

The ritual function of bronze vessels receded during the Warring States period (5th-3rd century BC) and they became purely ostentatious – taking on exuberant forms inlaid with minerals, such as malachite and turquoise.

Nicole Benazeth
Treasures of Ancient China is on show at Musée Guimet in Paris (www.guimet.fr) until 23 June.
Viking invasion is under way

An exhibition with wonderful loans from Sweden, entitled Vikings!, is on show at the National Museum of Denmark in Copenhagen, will remain on show there until 17 November. Then, in spring 2014, VIKING will move to the British Museum, where it will inaugurate a new exhibition space.

The longship, now known as Roskilde 6, was found in 1996 rather aptly during the creation of the museum harbour for the Viking Ship Museum in Roskilde, on the island of Zealand. The remains of eight other boats, also dating from the late Viking period, were discovered at the same time, but Roskilde 6 was remarkable because of its size.

The almost intact keel is 32 metres long, with the whole vessel measuring 36 metres. This means it would probably have needed 78 oarsmen and could have carried around 100 warriors overall. Its sheer size means that construction techniques not seen on any other contemporary ship had to be used to build it.

The original timbers of the ship have been drying out in specially built tanks to allow them to stabilise before being mounted in a steel frame for display purposes.

Dendrochronology has ascertained that the ship was built circa AD 1025 near Oslo Fjord. This places it at the time of the Danish King Knud den Store, known in British history as, Canute or Cnut the Great, who conquered England in 1016. Furthermore, it is thought that the ship was likely to have been part of the king’s fleet, making it a vital part of our own history.

It was the capacity of ships like this that allowed Danish kings to transport numbers of warriors swiftly as far afield as Iceland and Greenland, which were both conquered, and to maintain their dominion over the North Sea Empire.

VIKING will explore themes such as war and expansion, power and aristocracy, and cultural contacts and trade, all tied together by the presence and history of Roskilde 6.

Among the other exhibits are loans from 12 European countries including a hoard of gold and silver found in Yorkshire, and other hoards from Russia and Norway, demonstrating the extraordinary trade routes the Vikings established, which ran from Scandinavia to the Middle East and on to China.

Idols, and a reliquary cross discovered only a few months ago, will help shed light on Viking religious beliefs, while some of the celebrated Lewis chessmen are also on loan to the exhibition. These include the fearsome berserker Viking warriors depicted biting their own shields.

The sea crossing to England will be for quite a different reason from the last time Roskilde 6 parted the waves and sailed towards our shores. In 2014 she will come purely in the spirit of international diplomacy, heralding an exciting collaboration between the National Museum of Denmark and the British Museum.

Geoff Lowsley

Early Bronze Age axes found in Wales

An Early Bronze Age hoard, thought to have been buried around 2000 BC, has been declared treasure by HM Deputy Coroner for Pembrokeshire. The two early bronze flat axes (shown right) were found in a field, less than three metres apart, by metal-detectors Tom Baxter and Luke Pearce.

One axe, of simple and slender form, is a very early bronze form of late Midgale metalworking tradition. The other, slightly shorter and more flared, has more developed features, including hammered face edges and ‘rain pattern’ decoration from the butt to the blade end. It is an early Developed Flat Axe, known as Aylesford type. With the assistance of the finders, archaeologists working for the Portable Antiquities Scheme in Wales and National Museum Wales confirmed the find-spot and its place within the wider landscape. Adam Gwilt, Curator of the Bronze Age Collections at National Museum Wales said: ‘This is an important discovery of early bronze axes for Wales, providing a picture of developing bronze-casting expertise around 4,000 years ago.

‘This find-spot, on the northern margins of Mynydd Preseli, sits within a rich and important prehistoric ritual landscape. The hoard adds to the wider picture of the lives of the early metalworking communities here at the beginning of the Bronze Age.’

The museum is keen to acquire this hoard following its independent valuation.

Lindsay Fulcher
Scanning all those hard-hearted mummies

New research published online by The Lancet and presented at the annual meeting of the American College of Cardiology, held in San Francisco in March, has shown that atherosclerosis (the deposition of fatty material on the inner walls of the arteries, causing hardening, or narrowing, leading to heart disease) was far more widespread in the ancient world than was previously thought.

A survey undertaken by an international team of researchers, including Professor Randall Thompson of Saint Luke’s Mid America Heart Institute in Kansas City, USA, looked at a total of 137 mummies – from different cultures, continents and millennia – and found surprising similarities in their cardiovascular health. As the mummies were from Ancient Egypt, Peru, Southwest America, and the Aleutian Islands in Alaska, they represented (it is presumed) an accurate cross-section of social classes – as those not from Egypt were all naturally preserved, not embalmed. This could change the prevalent view that the atherosclerosis found in Egyptian mummies is present because they were invariably from the higher classes, whose diets were rich in saturated fat (a prime cause of heart disease).

Professor Thompson commented: ‘the fact that we found similar levels of atherosclerosis in all the different cultures we studied, who had very different lifestyles and diets, suggests that atherosclerosis may have been far more common in the ancient world than previously thought. This may have major implications for modern medicine, as atherosclerosis has surpassed infectious diseases as the primary cause of premature death in the developed world over the last century; this is attributed, by some, to our post-industrialisation lifestyles. One school of thought is that if we could emulate an older, even a pre-agricultural, lifestyle then the instance of this type of heart disease might drop. This idea is called into question, however, by the detection of probable, or definite, atherosclerosis in 47 of the 137 mummies (34%). While the presence of atherosclerosis was detected with CT scans, bone analysis was used to determine the mummies’ ages where possible. A correlation was found between older age and a greater occurrence of heart disease.’

This led Professor Thompson to suggest that our understanding of the causes of atherosclerosis is incomplete, and it might be inherent to the process of human ageing.

So the study of our ancestors can help us to understand how we should live today.

Geoff Lowesly

Bon voyage for a Bronze Age boat

A unique project to recreate a 4,000-year-old boat recently reached its dramatic conclusion when she was launched into the waters of Falmouth Harbour in Cornwall to cheers from an enthusiastic crowd of onlookers.

A first for experimental archaeology and a first for the National Maritime Museum Cornwall, the 50ft-long, five-tonne prehistoric boat was reconstructed as part of a collaborative project with the University of Exeter. A team of volunteers, led by shipwright Brian Cumby, spent a year building the craft out of two massive oak logs using replica methods and tools such as bronze-headed axes.

Andy Wyke, Boat Collection Manager at the National Maritime Museum Cornwall, said: ‘It has been incredible to see this whole project take shape in the museum building over the past 11 months. Volunteers have poured everything into transforming three oak trees into what we have seen and achieved. It has been an incredible journey and one that will be remembered not only in our and Falmouth’s history. All the discoveries made have proven maritime history. Now, academic theory has come to life.’

This collaborative boat-building project was led by Professor Robert Van de Noort from the University of Exeter. One of the world’s leading experts in Bronze Age boats, as well as head of the Arts and Humanities Research Council-funded project, he also helped to paddle the boat along with supporting volunteers.

As he explained: ‘The launch really was a moment of truth for this project. The very nature of an experiment means that we couldn’t know for sure what would happen. The boat had already given us a few surprises along the way, so the launch really was a leap into the unknown. I’m so happy with the responsiveness of the boat. ‘We always said you had to build the whole boat to understand what Bronze Age people experienced. When I was steering the boat and it got up to speed, I could turn her easily and it was more seaworthy than I expected.

‘We have learnt so much through the whole process and this successful launch has revolutionised everything we knew. There have been doubters, professionally, who questioned the feasibility of this vessel crossing the seas. This project has proven that it was possible.’

Dr Linda Hurcombe, an archaeologist at University of Exeter, summed it up: ‘You think a lot as an academic, you prepare, you do the writing, you make a grant application and then you actually achieve a research project, and this was the culmination of a very large-scale project that has worked out brilliantly.

‘To sit inside something that has not been seen in British waters for 4,000 years and paddle it, and to see the carving of the wood, the tallow and the yew-stitching all working together is a sight to behold.’

Lindsay Fulcher
Oxford University’s Beazley Archive is currently raising funds in order to digitise and put online the extraordinary notebooks of the famous Greek vase expert Sir John Beazley (1885-1970).

Beazley spent his whole life in Oxford, where he dedicated himself single-mindedly to the study of ancient Athenian painted pottery, serving for 30 years as Lincoln Professor of Classical Archaeology and Art.

His work, that has dominated the field since the early 20th century, laid the foundation for modern Greek vase scholarship.

His research focused on the craftsmen who made and decorated Greek vases from the 6th to the 4th centuries BC. He sought to identify individual hands in the style of vase-paintings, isolating the artists, describing their oeuvres, and proposing relationships between them. Since most of the artists are anonymous, he invented names for them, often based on the location of important vases or distinctive subjects and styles. These include: the Berlin Painter (his personal favourite), the Straggly Painter, the Painter of the Woolly Satyrs, the ‘Elbows Out’ Painter and the Kleophrades Painter.

Beazley’s method of stylistic comparison is almost certainly indirectly derived from the work of the 19th-century art historian Giovanni Morelli. Morellian analysis relies on identifying the signature traits of particular artists by their brush-work – the shape of an ear or the manner of representing fingers, for example. The theory was that such unconsciously rendered details inevitably betray the identity of the artist. Beazley adopted the approach very early on in his career and eventually attributed more than 30,000 vases to 1,200 artists, or groups of artists. Although the method is not uncontroversial, it is a reflection of the magnitude of his legacy that even his critics often accept the attributions.

His publications mainly comprise lists of the painters that he identified. He rarely explained his reasoning and, until now the detailed evidence of his working practices has been virtually unknown. But a fascinating insight into his ways of thinking and looking at ancient art is preserved in around 160 notebooks and some 200,000 drawings and tracings in the Beazley Archive at Oxford. The archive is built on the collection of working notes and photographs that was sold by Beazley himself to the university in 1964.

After his death in 1970, the archive grew and became a pioneering force in humanities computing. It now reaches a global audience through an online pottery database and a website that attracts over five million page-views each year. The archive also gave rise to Oxford University’s Classical Art Research Centre, which is dedicated to supporting and stimulating world-leading research in all aspects of ancient Greek and Roman art.

The Beazley Notebooks Project aims to scan and study these unique documents, adding his individual sketches and notes to the archive’s online pottery database, which includes around 107,000 records at present.

Dr Peter Stewart, the Director of the Classical Art Research Centre and the Beazley Archive, explains that these illustrated notebooks give a direct insight into Beazley’s work:

‘Most people don’t know these documents exist. To look at them is to understand what Beazley never fully explained himself; to see Greek art through his eyes. They also demystify his attributions and show his connoisseurship for what it is: the work of astonishing skill and close observation.’

If the necessary funds can be raised, the new project will offer free, open access to the widest possible range of users – students, researchers, dealers, collectors and enthusiasts.

To find out more about the Classical Art Research Centre, the Beazley Archive, and how to support the Beazley Notebooks Project, visit: www.carc.ox.ac.uk (or email: carc@classics.ox.ac.uk).
Who on earth was Horemheb?

Charlotte Booth shines a spotlight on the forgotten pharaoh who ruled Egypt from 1321 BC to 1306 BC.

1. Coronation statue of Horemheb enthroned, supported by the god Amun, found at Karnak Temple. Egyptian Museum, Turin. H. 2.09m. Photograph by Brian Billington.
Everyone has heard of the boy-king Tutankhamun, but not many are familiar with the name of Horemheb. He is normally used to tie up loose ends at the close of the Amarna period, but he deserves much more attention and should be acknowledged as the founder of the 19th Dynasty, rather than simply the final king of the Amarna heresy.

To modern scholars it seems sensible to start the 19th Dynasty with Ramses I as the head of a new family of kings. The ancient Egyptians, however, did not make distinctions between royal families. They believed kings reigned in a continuous line traceable back to the time of the gods. Any rulers deviating from maat (‘divine law’) were erased from the official lists of the kings of Egypt, often by members of their own family. The rulers of the Amarna dynasty (Akhenaten, Smenkhkare, Tutankhamun and Ay) were all removed from these lists by their successors, but Horemheb was not – suggesting that, in the minds of the Egyptians, he was not connected with it.

Evidence suggests that the Ramessides saw him as their predecessor and carried out traditional rituals for him as they would for their own ancestors. His mortuary cult was maintained throughout the reigns of Ramses I, Seti I, Ramses II, and Merenptah. So Horemheb was considered to be a traditional king, ruling according to the sacred laws and revered by the Ramessides. The start of his reign was, however, anything but traditional and has been the subject of much debate, in particular regarding his relationship with Ay, whom he succeeded to the throne. To understand the succession we must return to the reign of Tutankhamun and to Horemheb’s role at the palace.

During this period he was initially the Commander of the Egyptian army, although he gained numerous other titles covering all aspects of palace and government administration, the most important being Deputy King. He clearly had a close personal relationship with the young king, since one inscription states he was called in when the boy ‘had fallen into a rage’. Horemheb then ‘opened his mouth and answered the king and appeased him with the utterance of his mouth’. So it seems that he had the power to calm Tutankhamun during a childhood tantrum.

Strangely, though, he did not succeed Tutankhamun to the throne upon his death. Instead, it passed to another powerful courtier, the elderly Ay, a relative and the true blood heir of Tutankhamun. Ay was powerful in the royal court and held the titles Royal Chancellor, Vizier and, most importantly, God’s Father, often interpreted as father-in-law or royal tutor. The traditional theory posits a conflict between the two men, resulting in Ay usurping the throne from Horemheb – but it is more likely that they collaborated. Both men were equal in power, but Ay’s claim as a royal relative would have outstripped that of Horemheb.

Horemheb had the support of the army and could have taken the throne by force had he wanted to do so but, as a traditionalist, this action would have made him a usurper. By biding his time and waiting until the death of Ay only four years later, he made a smooth transition to the throne,
upheld the law of *maat*, broke no protocols, and caused no upheaval. Ay was elderly and knew he would not live for long. With no surviving son, he named Horemheb as his heir. This was confirmed by the oracle of Amun at Karnak Temple.

On his ascension to the throne, Horemheb cemented the link further, by his royal (second) marriage. His first wife, Amenia, had died during the reign of Ay and was buried in her husband’s non-royal tomb at Memphis. So, once he became king, Horemheb married Mutnodjmet, who is believed to be Nefertiti’s sister and therefore related to both Tutankhamun and Ay. Although described as ‘advanced in years’, she was, in fact, only 34 – considered too old to bear children. But another inscription praised her: ‘Noble lady, great of praise… great in graciousness… beautiful of face at the side of her Horus’. Later, her tomb, which was also in Memphis, was ransacked by robbers, but luckily her body remained intact enough to show that she died in her 40s, and as she was buried with a baby that was stillborn, or unborn, it is assumed that she died in childbirth. Examination of her pelvis indicates she had given birth numerous times but, as no children survived Horemheb, they were also probably stillborn or died in infancy.

Although his own ascension to the throne was untraditional, Horemheb had no qualms about eradicating previous kings from history. He started his regnal years at the end of Amenhotep III’s reign, ignoring the Amarna kings and adding their years in power to his own, over 50 in total. The 19th-dynasty tomb of Amenmosi (TT19) includes a row of royal statues, with Horemheb seated between Amenhotep III and Ramses I, showing that this was generally accepted. Horemheb wanted to restore Egypt to the golden era of Amenhotep III before the heretical period, and he continued with this restoration begun under Tutankhamun. The capital was returned to Thebes and the priesthood of Amun was reintroduced. But Horemheb’s campaign was to extend much further than Thebes: ‘As long as my life on earth remains, it shall be spent making monuments for the gods’.

At the temple of Ptah at Karnak, he erected a stela celebrating the Feast of Ptah, and at Luxor Temple, he usurped Tutankhamun’s depictions of the Opet festivities, replacing the cartouches with his own. He made dedications at the temple of Ra at Heliopolis, and oversaw two Apis bull funerals at Saqqara. Although the capital city was now Thebes, the Aten Temple at Amarna also received fresh dedications.

Horemheb initiated a national building programme that included three pylons at Karnak Temple: the second, ninth and tenth, which proved to be particularly interesting. The *talatat* blocks removed from the temple of Akhenaten were placed inside these pylons, ironically preserving them for eternity.

A temple at Gebel el Silsila, an area considered important as the origin of the Nile and sacred to the gods Hapy, Sobek, Amun and Ptah, was built in a disused quarry. Seti I, Ramses II, and Merenptah each added a cenotaph to the temple, and the façade was decorated by Ramses II and III. In the Delta, at Khata’na-Qantir-Tell el Dab’a, Horemheb built a temple dedicated to Seth, and made additions to another temple 2.6km away, a similar distance to that between Karnak and Luxor temples. He was possibly trying to recreate a similar complex in the north. This city, Qantir, became Ramses II’s capital, Pi-Rameses.

Horemheb’s political campaign was recorded in the Edict on the tenth pylon at Karnak and at Abydos. This extremely damaged
text outlines the political situation in Egypt, commonplace abuses and intended punishments.

The king travelled throughout Egypt identifying problems and setting up law enforcement and grievance committees to address them. He wanted to eliminate corruption and held monthly feasts and presentations of golden shelyu collars to reward officials for loyalty and honesty. This system, introduced by Akhenaten to maintain the loyalty of his courtiers, was one that Horemheb retained, clearly believing it to be useful.

One specific problem concerned boats laden with offerings on their way to the temple. These were often intercepted by officials, who either demanded a bribe for safe passage, or confiscated their goods to be sold elsewhere. It was also common for soldiers to collect ‘taxes’ from farmers in grain or cattle, without recording it, and keep the payment for themselves. This caused major problems for the farmers, who needed to account for all their cattle, either as livestock or in hides.

So Horemheb took action, decreeing: ‘My Majesty has commanded that the peasant shall be left alone because of his honest intention. But as for any military man concerning whom one shall hear “He goes about and also takes hides away” starting from today, the law shall be applied against him by inflicting upon him 100 blows, causing five open wounds, and taking from him the hide which he has seized as something that has been unlawfully acquired.’

Falsification of tax measurements was another typical offence. Grain was collected in containers that were the wrong size, so the treasury got the correct amount of tax and the soldiers retained the excess grain. As a result, Horemheb decreed that the Overseer of the Cattle of Pharaoh was the only person entitled to collect taxes, and any others were punished for doing so illegally. Combining the role of priests and judges emphasised the fact that the divine law of Maat was once more in control. To further prevent corruption, judges were exempted from taxes of gold and silver, so bribes would be unnecessary.

Horemheb stated: ‘I have sought out people… discreet of good character, knowing how to judge thought, listening to the words of the palace and to the laws of the Throne Hall.’

This act of giving the priests more power mirrored how it had been in the reign of Amenhotep III when the priesthood of Amun became so powerful that they were in a position to threaten the king.

This led to the eventual downgrading of the Amun cult and its priesthood and the accelerated rever-.

Horemheb’s mortuary temple, on the west bank of the Nile, was usurped from Ay, who himself had usurped it from Tutankhamun. This temple is currently under the enclosure wall of Medinet Habu, the later mortuary temple of Ramses III, showing it had fallen into disuse by his reign. When complete, the temple was large, with mud-brick pylons stretching for 60 metres. Horemheb achieved a great deal during his 15 years on the throne, restoring Egypt to the glory it enjoyed in the reign of Amenhotep III, with a stable economy and sound politics. He laid the foundations for the 19th dynasty to build upon. But without an heir to the throne, all this effort could have counted for nothing if he had not had the foresight to appoint a suitable successor. He chose Pameses, a Delta man from his army with the same vision for Egypt as his own, who would go on to become Ramses I. Horemheb: The Forgotten Pharaoh by Charlotte Booth is published in paperback by Amberley at £9.95.
One day in 1805, a nine-year-old boy exploring the woods along the Susquehanna River came face-to-face with an Oneida Indian. The lad froze, terrified. Towering over him, the Indian lifted a hand in friendship. The boy never forgot the encounter or the man's kindness. This experience may have shaped George Catlin's lifework.

In George Catlin: American Indian Portraits, at the National Portrait Gallery in London, a selection of more than 50 of his stunning portrayals of native Americans are on show, the work of a lone white man – part showman, part artist – who devoted his life to preserving, in his words, 'the looks and customs of the vanishing races of native man in America'. The exhibition also includes Catlin's renderings of Indian rituals and landscapes of the prairie that he travelled by steamboat, horseback and canoe during the 1830s.

Though not the first artist to paint American Indians, Catlin was the first to picture them so extensively in their own territories and one of the few to portray them as fellow human beings rather than savages. His more realistic approach grew out of his appreciation for a people who, he wrote, 'had been invaded, their morals corrupted, their lands wrested from them, their customs changed, and therefore lost to the world'. Such empathy was uncommon in 1830, the year that the federal Indian Removal Act forced south-eastern tribes to move to what is now Oklahoma along the disastrous ‘Trail of Tears’.

George Catlin had little or no formal training as an artist, but he grew up hearing tales of Indians from settlers and from his own mother, who at the age of seven had been abducted, along with her mother, by Iroquois during a raid along the Susquehanna in 1778. They were soon released unharmed, and Polly Catlin often told her son about the experience. Despite a talent for drawing, George (the fifth of 14 children) followed his father and studied law. In 1820, he set up a practice near Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, where he had been born in 1796 (though the family moved to a farm 40 miles away in New York when he was an infant). But he found himself sketching judges, juries and ‘culprits’ in court,

Bruce Watson follows the long, colourful trail of 19th-century artist George Catlin, whose stunning depictions of American Indians are on show at London’s National Portrait Gallery.
and after a few years he sold his law books and moved to Philadelphia to try his hand as an artist.

Although he earned commissions to paint the leading figures of the day, he struggled to find a larger purpose to his work. ‘My mind was continually reaching for some branch or enterprise of the art, on which to devote a whole lifetime of enthusiasm,’ he wrote in his memoirs. He found it around 1828, when a delegation of Indians stopped in Philadelphia en route to Washington, DC. Captivated by ‘their classic beauty’, Catlin then began searching for Indian subjects.

He felt that ‘civilisation’ – particularly whiskey and smallpox – was wiping them out, and he vowed that ‘nothing, short of the loss of my life, shall prevent me from visiting their country, and of becoming their historian’. So, although recently married, he packed up his paints in 1830, left his new wife, Clara, and headed west.

St Louis was then at the edge of the Western frontier, and Catlin was not there for long before he arranged
a meeting with the city’s most illustrious citizen, General William Clark. Having already explored the Louisiana Purchase with Meriwether Lewis, Clark was then the government’s Superintendent of Indian Affairs for Western tribes.

Catlin presented his early portraits to the general and asked for his assistance in making contact with Indians in the West, and that summer, Clark took the artist some 400 miles up the Mississippi River to Fort Crawford, where several tribes, the Sauk, Fox and Sioux among them, were having a council. Surrounded by gruff soldiers and sombre Indians whose customs were largely a mystery, Catlin took out his brushes and went to work. He stayed in the West for six years, though he returned home to his family for most winters. During this time, he painted 300 portraits and nearly 175 landscapes and ritual scenes. Back in New York City in 1837, he displayed them salon-style, hung floor to ceiling, one above the other, row after row of faces, an arrangement replicated in one section of the National Portrait Gallery’s show.

More than a century and a half later, there remains something startling and immediate about these faces. Catlin called his gallery a ‘collection of Nature’s dignitaries’, and dignity indeed makes certain individuals stand out. His landscapes are equally evocative, depicting virgin rivers and rolling green hills as if from the air.

Throughout his career, journalists tended to praise his work even as some art critics dismissed him as an ‘American primitive’. More controversial, though, was his attitude towards people most Americans then regarded as savages. Catlin denounced the term, calling it ‘an abuse of the word, and the people to whom it is applied’. He praised Indians as ‘honest, hospitable, faithful...’ and criticised the government and fur-traders alike for their treatment of natives. Indian society, he wrote, ‘has become degraded and impoverished, and their character changed by civilized teaching, and their worst passions inflamed ... by the abuses practiced amongst them’.

But if Catlin once stirred controversy for his championing of Native Americans, today he is as likely to be seen as an exploiter of them. ‘A native person is challenged, I think, not to feel on some level a profound resentment toward Catlin,’ says W Richard West, director of the Smithsonian’s National Museum of the American Indian and himself a member of the Cheyenne and Arapaho tribes. ‘His obsession with depicting Indians has an extremely invasive undertone to it.’

Exhibition

As for Catlin’s relentless promotion of his paintings, West adds, ‘There’s no question ... he was exploiting Indians and the West as a commodity. On the other hand, he was far ahead of his time in his empathy for Indians. Catlin swam against the tide to bring to light information about the Indians that depicts them accurately as worthy human beings and worthy cultures.’

And what did the men and women of the West see in these portraits? Six of George Catlin’s fine Indian portraits:

4. Hee-oh’s-te-kin, Rabbit’s Skin Leggings, A Brave (this handsome young warrior, thought to be about 20 here, was killed in a battle with Blackfoot just a few months after meeting Catlin), oil on canvas, 1832, Nez Percé. 740mm x 610mm.

5. No-ho-mun-ya, One Who Gives No Attention (also known as Roman Nose, he was one of the Indians who accompanied Catlin to London, where this portrait was painted), oil on canvas, 1844, Iowa. 740mm x 610mm.

6. Muk-a-tah-mish-o-kah-kail, Black Hawk. Prominent Sac Chief (one of the most acclaimed American Indian leaders of the mid-19th century), oil on canvas, 1832, Sac and Fox. 737mm x 610mm.

7. Eeh-nis-kim, Crystal Stone, Wife of the Chief (the youngest of the six or eight wives of Buffalo Bull’s Back Fat – shown on the cover), oil on canvas, 1832, Blackfoot/Kainai. 740mm x 610mm.

8. Chin-cha-pee, Fire Bug That Creeps, Wife of the Light (holding a painted, carved curved stick used for digging up a root called Pomme Blanche or prairie turnip), oil on canvas, 1832, Assiniboine/Nakoda. 740mm x 610mm.

9. Shon-ka, The Dog, Chief of the Bad Arrow Points Band (described by Catlin as a disrespectful, angry warrior who insulted and derided his fellows), oil on canvas, 1832, Western Sioux/Lakota. 740mm x 610mm.
women who posed for Catlin think of their portraits? Reactions to his work varied from tribe to tribe. Sioux medicine men predicted dire consequences for those whose souls he captured on canvas, yet Blackfoot medicine men readily allowed themselves to be painted, while the Mandan, awed by Catlin’s ability to render likenesses, called him Medicine White Man.

During his six years on the prairie, Catlin survived debilitating fevers that killed his military escorts. Though most of his early work was undertaken within a few hundred miles of St Louis, one journey took him to a place few white men had gone before. In the spring of 1832, he secured a berth on the steamboat Yellowstone, about to embark from St Louis on a journey 2,000 miles up the Missouri River. Steaming into each Indian settlement, Catlin was mesmerised by what he called the ‘soul-melting scenery’ as he watched great herds of buffalo, antelope and elk roaming ‘a vast country of green fields, where the men are all red’. In three months on the Upper Missouri, working with great speed, he executed no fewer than 135 paintings, sketching figures and faces, leaving details to be finished later.

In 1836, despite the vehement protests of Sioux elders, Catlin insisted on visiting a sacred red-stone quarry in south-western Minnesota that provided the Sioux with the bowls for their ceremonial pipes. No Indian would escort him, and fur-traders, angered by his letters published in newspapers condemning them for corrupting the Indians, also refused. So Catlin and a companion travelled 360 miles round-trip on horseback. The unique red pipe-stone he found there now bears the name catlinite. ‘Man feels here the thrilling sensation, the force of illimitable freedom,’ Catlin wrote, ‘there is poetry in the very air of this place.’ Except for his run-in over the quarry, Catlin maintained excellent relations with his various hosts. They escorted him through hostile areas and invited him to feasts of dog meat, beaver tail and buffalo tongue. ‘No Indian ever betrayed me, struck me with a blow, or stole from me a shilling’s worth of my property…’ he later wrote. By 1836, his last year in the West, Catlin had visited 48 tribes. He would spend the rest of his life trying to market his work, which led him to the brink of ruin.

In New York, on 23 September 1837, the Commercial Advertiser announced the opening of an exhibition featuring lectures by Catlin, Indian portraits, ‘as well as Splendid Costumes – Paintings of their Villages – Dances – Buffalo Hunts – Religious Ceremonies, etc’. Admission at Clinton Hall in New York City was 50 cents, and crowds of people lined up to pay. When the show closed after three months, the artist took it to cities along the East Coast. But after a year, attendance began to dwindle, and Catlin fell on hard times. In 1837, he tried to sell his gallery to the federal government, but Congress dawdled. So in November 1839, with his wife expecting their second child and promising to join him the following year, he packed his gallery, including a buffalo-hide tepee and two live bears, and sailed for England.

In London, Brussels, and at the Louvre in Paris, he filled houses with his Wild West show. He hired local actors to whoop in feathers and war paint and pose in tableaux vivants. In time he was joined by several groups of Indians (21 Ojibwe and 14 Iowa) who were touring Europe with promoters.

Luminaries, such as George Sand, Victor Hugo and Charles Baudelaire, admired Catlin’s artistry. But general audiences preferred the live Indians, especially after he convinced the Ojibwe and the Iowa to re-enact hunts, dances, even scalpings. In 1843, Catlin was even presented to Queen Victoria when his troupe of Ojibwe danced before her at Windsor Castle. But renting halls, transporting eight tons of paintings and artefacts, and providing for his Indian entourage – as well as his family, which by 1844 included three daughters and a son – kept the painter perpetually in debt.

Then, in Paris in 1845, a series of tragedies befell Catlin: first, his devoted wife of 17 years contracted pneumonia and died; then the Ojibwe got smallpox; two died and the rest went back to the Plains. The next year his three-year-old son, George, succumbed to typhoid.

In 1848, Catlin and his daughters...
returned to London, where he tried to drum up interest in installing his gallery on a ship, a floating ‘Museum of Mankind’ that would visit seaports around the globe.

But his dream came to nothing. He lectured on California’s gold rush and sold copies of his paintings, using the originals as collateral for loans. But, in 1852, his funds exhausted, the 56-year-old Catlin was thrown into a London debtor’s prison and his brother-in-law came to take his young daughters back to America. The dejected artist would later write that he had ‘no other means on earth than my hands and my brush, and less than half a life, at best, before me’.

He again offered to sell his gallery (which Senator Daniel Webster had called ‘more important to us than the ascertaining of the South Pole, or anything that can be discovered in the Dead Sea…’) to the US government. But Congress thought that the price was too steep, even when Catlin lowered it from $65,000 to $25,000.

Finally, late that summer, Joseph Harrison, a wealthy Pennsylvania railroad tycoon, paid Catlin’s debts, acquired his gallery for $20,000 and shipped it back from London to Philadelphia. It sat there in Harrison’s boiler factory, while Catlin, who had returned to Paris in his mid-70s, white-bearded and walking with a cane, lived in the Smithsonian Castle.

In November 1872, Catlin left Washington to be with his daughters in New Jersey. He died there two months later at the age of 76. Among his final words were: ‘What will happen to my gallery?’ Seven years after his death, Harrison’s widow gave the works acquired by her husband (some 450 of Catlin’s original paintings and a large quantity of buckskin and fur, war-clubs, pipes, and other artefacts) to the Smithsonian.

The current National Portrait Gallery show is the first exhibition of his paintings in London since 1848. Its Director, Sandy Nairne, says: ‘George Catlin made powerful and sympathetic portraits of the American Indian at a time of traumatic historical change. They are wonderful images and I am delighted that the Smithsonian American Art Museum is collaborating with the National Portrait Gallery to allow them to be seen again in Britain.’

Catlin’s reputation as an artist remains as mixed today as ever. His greater contribution, undeniably, was his signal role in helping to change the perception of Native Americans. ‘Art may mourn when these people are swept from the earth,’ he wrote, ‘and the artists of future ages may look in vain for another race so picturesque in their costumes, their weapons, their colours, their manly games, and their chase.’
Uruk
the world’s first megacity

As a major exhibition in Berlin marks the centenary of the first excavation of Uruk in southern Babylonia, Dirk Wicke takes us on a tour of the fabled ‘City of Gilgamesh’

Praised in the Epic of Gilgamesh, Uruk is a city irrevocably linked with its heroic mythical king (1), Gilgamesh, and with Inanna, goddess of love and war (literally ‘Lady of Heaven’), its patron deity with whom he is in constant conflict. Besides extolling the city’s virtues, the text also contains a brief description of Uruk: One shar (circa 1.5 square miles) is city, one shar is date-grove, one shar is clay-pit, half a shar the temple of Ishtar (3). Three shar and a half is Uruk. Is this myth or historical truth?

What is certainly true is that the ruins of Warka (the modern name for Uruk) cover about 550 hectares, making it the largest archaeological site in southern Babylonia. Today it is located in an empty, arid region far away from the Euphrates river, but conditions 5,000 years ago were quite different. Then, Uruk was situated on a well-watered, marshy alluvial plain (perfect for irrigation purposes) with easy access to the Persian Gulf via the Euphrates, and the city was densely populated.

In the early 19th century, the distinctive remains of the mud-brick ziggurat, its central temple-tower, still stood about 30 metres above the plain and attracted the interest of British archaeologist William Kenneth Loftus. He was the first Westerner to report back, in 1839-40, on those ruins suggesting that modern Warka was the ancient city of Uruk, known in the Bible as Erech. He also identified Susa and carried out work at Nimrud.

In 1902 the German archaeologist Robert Koldewey, who excavated in Babylon, visited Uruk and recommended that further work should be carried out. Finds of glazed bricks

See its wall, which is like a strand of wool, view its parapets, which nobody can replicate! […] Go up on the wall of Uruk and walk around, survey the foundation platform, inspect the brickwork! See if its brickwork is not kiln-fired brick, and if the Seven Sages did not lay its foundations!

1. Colossal statue of a hero (like Gilgamesh), plaster cast of an original in Khorsabad, late 8th century BC. © Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Vorderasiatisches Museum/Olaf M Tessmer.
2. Mask of Humbaba, 2nd millennium BC. © The Trustees of the British Museum
3. The Uruk Trough with double reed-bundles, symbols of the goddess Inanna/Ishtar, late 4th millennium BC. © The Trustees of the British Museum.
and cuneiform tablets in a major site further south nourished the hope of uncovering another Babylonian capital. But at least the identification of ancient Uruk, known as the City of Gilgamesh, promised to yield more information about the archaeology of early Mesopotamia.

Between 1912 and 1913 Julius Jordan and Conrad Preusser set to work on behalf of the German Oriental Society (DOG) and started to investigate the central mound (6). This proved to be a monumental temple and administrative complex called Bit Reš, dedicated to Anu (the supreme god of heaven). Work was interrupted by the First World War, but resumed between 1928 and 1939 with the declared aim of investigating earlier remains found further east in the so-called Eanna district. Again interrupted by war the work did not commence again until 1954, this time under the auspices of the German Archaeological Institute (DAI). It included research on the whole city and its surroundings and now, after more than 40 seasons of excavation (5, 6, 7), many of its buildings have been uncovered and explored. This site eventually lent its name to a crucial period of human societal development – the ‘Uruk period’.

Although earliest levels in Uruk date back to the 6th millennium BC, true urban development starts in the early 4th millennium BC, the Early Uruk period, culminating in the monumental buildings of the Late Uruk period (circa 3200-3000 BC). By then, the city is dominated by two mighty complexes: Eanna or the ‘House of Heaven’, the sanctuary of the goddess Inanna, and the area of the ‘White Temple’. The Eanna complex consists of a conglomeration of spacious buildings. Some are even built of precious limestone instead of the usual mudbricks, inside a precinct. The use of the lofty tripartite building scheme is difficult to interpret, particularly considering the vast dimensions: one building, for example, covers 54 by 22.5 metres. Yet such plans certainly derive from earlier domestic architecture, expanded hugely to monumentality and used for ritual and communal functions.

The elaborate façades are decorated with deep niches and recesses, a clear indicator of sacred buildings in all later Mesopotamian architecture. In some cases the lower parts of the façades are embellished with colourful mosaics made of different stones or clay cones, painted black, white and red, and pushed into the mudbrick walls while still soft (15).

West of Eanna, partly covered by the Hellenistic Bit Reš, and Irigal, a
The settlement of Uruk grew to its largest extent in the early part of the 3rd millennium, when its population is estimated at between 20,000 and 50,000 people. The impressive mud-brick city wall erected during this time, more than nine kilometres long and pierced by towers at regular intervals and city gates, is still visible today. This wall is generally associated with the epic’s hero Gilgamesh, although solid historical proof for this is lacking. As for the city itself, not all of the walled area was occupied by houses: orchards and wasteland (both mentioned in the epic) were also included.

Whether Uruk ever had a king called Gilgamesh or not, it was soon to be conquered by other rulers. Sargon of Akkade razed its walls to the ground around 2340 BC and, in 2100 BC, Ur-namma, the first king of Ur, erected a ziggurat to the goddess Inanna in the Eanna district.

After the collapse of the Ur III state at the end of the 3rd millennium, the importance of Uruk dwindled. The city remained occupied to varying degrees and regained some importance under three Hellenistic-Babylonian kings, who founded and maintained the Bit Reš and other buildings. But it was the final shift of the Euphrates during the early 3rd millennium, in the 3rd–4th centuries AD, that was the death blow for this struggling settlement, and it was then abandoned.

The Uruk period was the city’s golden age, which saw the rise of the first urban centre with a distinctive social hierarchy, complex administration, through the development of writing and the use of seals, monumental architecture and elaborate art. The requirements to build and maintain an irrigation system, such as the Mesopotamian one, vulnerable to salinisation, desertification or silt-up, might have been a trigger moment in human history.

The pottery changed from the much later Bît Reš, the so-called White Temple is ascribed to the god Anu. In fact, the literary tradition for Uruk mentions that Inanna resides in Eanna and Anu in Kullab. To have two major sacral precincts within one city is highly unusual and might suggest that two independent settlements merged to form one city.

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He is mainly engaged in two activities: feeding animals or fighting humans or lions. Although it is not possible to identify the figure by name, he must represent the central authority in Uruk, probably the very same ‘EN’. On the seal (10) he is shown feeding two rams; standing between two ‘reed-bundles’, the symbol of Inanna (12 and 3). Far left, two tall vessels on a conical stand can be seen, which places the action in a sacral frame. The famous Uruk Vase (4), one of a pair, features a similar male figure, standing at the beginning of a long procession of offering-bearers, in front of Inanna.

Few ‘lexical lists’ after the turn of the millennium describe the first attempts to systematise the world, although the actual language of those texts is unknown. Organised in semantic groups, the early-3rd millennium lexical lists (9) give names of cities, designations for animals, wood, stones, and even for professions: from highest dignitary to peasant. This clearly indicates an established division of labour and diversified crafts. Among the craftsmen are carpenters, seal-cutters, masons, gold- and silversmiths, all highly skilled professions. The preserved objects of stone-working, in particular, are the products of those craftsmen and show a rich repertoire of techniques. The combination of various materials, such as a limestone seal with a bronze handle (11), colourful intaglio work using precious stones, or finely carved stone sculpture, display a variety of motifs and a naturalistic style that emerges here for the first time and was unsurpassed for the next 500 years.

By the end of the 4th millennium, the use of mnemonic administrative devices had spread all over southern Mesopotamia. Uruk pottery has devices had spread all over southern Mesopotamia. Uruk pottery has...
Trees are the natural deities of mankind: much older, many times taller, deep-rooted in the earth and branching out high into the heavens. They have witnessed our beginning and may well see our end. Fossil evidence shows that land plants appeared 410 million years ago, followed by woody structures 40-50 million years later; whereas the first hominids did not emerge till five to six million years ago. The oldest tree in Europe is the Fortingall Yew by Loch Tay in Scotland; it is 2,000 years old, but it is outclassed by the bristle-cone pines in the White Mountains of eastern California that are 5,000 years old.

The tree of life, linking the underworld with the highest empyrean, is a universal symbol that appears in many cultures: from the Tree of Knowledge of Goodness and Evil in the Garden of Eden (10) of Judaism to Yggdrasil, the World Ash, in Norse mythology. The cosmic tree that has taken root at the heart of cultures from Siberia to pre-Columbian Mesoamerica, is also represented by the cross on which Jesus

Lindsay Fulcher leafs through a book called The Tree: Meaning and Myth and digs up the vital part that it has played in every aspect of human history
was immortalised. The Buddha was born under the Sal tree (5) and achieved enlightenment sitting under the Bodhi, or Sacred Fig, tree.

In the ancient Mesopotamian Epic of Gilgamesh, the cedar forest was the realm of gods where the hero and his companion Enkidu encountered and fought and defeated its guardian the giant Humbaba (1).

As the place of exile of Rama and Sita, the forest also plays an important part in the great ancient Indian epic the Ramayana; and in Virgil’s Aeneid, 29-19 BC, the Roman hero uses a golden bough as his passport to the Underworld.

In his magnum opus, The Golden Bough, published in 1890, anthropologist Sir James Frazer summarises the relationship between trees and people: ‘Human beings have by no means exploited the forest only materially; they have also plundered its trees in order to forge their fundamental etymologies, symbols, analogies, structures of thought, emblems of identity, concepts of continuity, and notions of system. From the family tree to the tree of knowledge, from the tree of life to the tree of memory; forests have provided an indispensible resource of symbolisation in the cultural evolution of mankind’.

Particular species of trees are, of course, valued in different cultures. In Nimrud, Ashurnasirpal II (883-859 BC) built his palace using many different kinds of wood: cedar, cypress, juniper, boxwood, terebinth, meskannu-wood and tamarisk. In his throne room, on gypsum reliefs, the king is shown on both sides of a sacred tree from which a god on a winged sun-disc rises (2).

Cedarwood was greatly prized, as is evident in the Epic of Gilgamesh when the hero and his companion enter the forest guarded by the giant Humbaba: ‘They stood there marvelling at the forest, gazing at the lofty cedars... They saw the Mountain of Cedar, seat of gods’ and goddesses’ throne ... the cedar proffered its abundance, its shade was sweet and full of delight’.

The ancient Egyptians also greatly valued cedarwood, from which they made coffins (3), and using its aromatic and preservative resin in mummification and medicine as well as burning it as incense. The length of the timber obtained from cedar trees and its resistance to attack by termites made it a popular choice for the building of ships, palaces and temples, such as King Solomon’s Temple in Jerusalem.

From Afghanistan to southern Europe, many species of fig (9) flourish in the wild, and the cultivated variety of Ficus carica has been documented for over 4,000 years. Pliny lists 29 different varieties of fig tree in his Natural History and says that ‘The figs that are highly approved of are given the distinction of being dried and kept in boxes’ (8). In Genesis, the fig is the only tree mentioned by name in the Garden of Eden; Adam and Eve used its leaves when they sewed themselves ‘aprons’ to cover their nakedness. The sycomore fig was one of the most useful and sacred trees of ancient Egypt. Valued for its shade, fruit and timber, it often appears in the Book of the Dead. Associated with rebirth, the sky goddess Nut is depicted as the deity of the sycomore fig tree. The Bodhi tree under which the Buddha meditated was also a kind of fig tree, Ficus religiosa.

The wood of the ash (Fraxinus ornus), on the other hand, has a more martial quality in that it was especially suitable for making spear shafts. The most famous spear was the one used by Achilles to kill Hector in the Trojan War: ‘No other Achaean fighter could lift that shaft, only Achilles had the skill to wield it well; Pelian ash it was, a gift to his father Peleus presented by Chiron once, beewn on Pelion’s crest to be the death of heroes’.

The European, or common, ash (Fraxinus excelsior) is also connected to warlike activities and was made into an Iron Age wooden sword sheath (4), found at Stanwick St John in North Yorkshire, a stronghold of the Brigante tribe. A shield and buckets made of ash wood were also found in the 7th-century ship burial at Sutton Hoo in Suffolk.

In Metamorphoses, Ovid relates the tale of how pursued by the god Apollo, the nymph Daphne was changed into a bay laurel (Laurus nobilis), an aromatic evergreen tree with dark glossy leaves, native to the Mediterranean. It was used to
make the wreaths (6) given out to the winners at the Pythian Games in ancient Greece held at Delphi in honour of Apollo.

In Rome, too, the sweet bay took on a special significance after an eagle dropped a laurel branch into the lap of Livia Drusilla following her betrothal to the Emperor Augustus. Pliny tells the tale: ‘So, the augurs ordered that the bird and any chicks it produced should be reserved, and that the branch should be planted in the ground and guarded with religious care. This was done at the country mansion of the Caesars … the laurel grove, so begun, has thriven in a marvellous way. Afterwards the Emperor, when going in triumph, held a laurel branch from the original tree in his hand and wore a wreath of the same foliage on his head and subsequently everyone of the ruling Caesars did the same’ (7).

The olive was not introduced into Italy until around the 4th century BC although it had been grown and used in Jordan, Crete and Syria thousands of years earlier. Both Hesiod and Homer, writing in the 8th century BC, mention the cultivation of the olive tree in Greece and its islands. It was the first tree encountered by Odysseus when he finally got back to Ithaca; the olive was sacred to Athena, his protective deity. At the Panathenaic Games held in Athens in the goddess’s honour every four years, great quantities of olive oil (which was used for cooking, heating, lighting and cleansing and lubricating the body) were presented as prizes. The wreaths awarded to the victors at the Games were made from branches of the wild olive (Olea oleaster) – not the cultivated species (Olea europaea). Herakles carried a club made of wild olive wood and is said to have planted the sacred olive at Olympia behind the temple of Zeus. Pliny devoted a whole book to olive cultivation in all its aspects including harvesting (11):

‘Those who compromise on a
middle course … knock the fruit down with poles, so injuring the trees and causing loss in the following year; in fact there was a very old regulation for the olive: “Neither strip nor beat an olive tree”… The majesty of Rome has accorded the olive-tree great honour by crowning out cavalry squadrons with wreathes of olive on the ides of July and also when celebrating minor triumphs. Athens also crowns it victors at Olympia with wreaths of wild olive.

The history of the pine goes back around 300 million years. The pine is a symbol of longevity, steadfastness and survival in adversity because it can withstand the cold. There are 115 species of pine including the bristle cone pine (Pinus longaeva), the Italian stone or umbrella pine (Pinus pinea – the source of pine nuts for making pesto) and the Scots pine (Pinus sylvestris).

In Greek poetry the nymph Pitys (‘pine’), who was desired by Pan, fled from him and was turned into a pine tree by the gods. The humble pine-cone often appears as part of a ritual object. In Greek mythology it can be seen on the top of the thyrza, a staff carried by the worshippers of Dionysus, transferred in Roman times to those who followed Bacchus. The Romans also used it in the design of bronze water-jet finials (13), the most impressive being the massive Fontana della Pigna which originally stood next to the temple of Isis near the Pantheon and is now in the Cortile della Pigna within Vatican City.

Nearer to home we come to the genus Quercus. There are over 600 species of oak, both deciduous and evergreen, in Europe. The oak, which symbolises strength and endurance, was sacred to Zeus, king of the Greek gods, and Thor, Norse god of thunder. At the heart of the sanctuary of Zeus at Dodona in north-west Greece, the oldest of all the Hellenic oracles, is the ancient oak. Herodotus wrote that according to legend a black dove came from Thebes in Egypt and spoke in a human voice to say that an oracle to Zeus should be built on that spot. In the Odyssey, the hero goes to consult the oracle at Dodona, ‘to hear the will of Zeus that rustles forth from the god’s own tall leafy oak’.

Gold oak wreaths (12) are listed in inventories from Greek temples and sanctuaries and have been found in burials in Macedonia, southern Italy, Asia Minor and the northern Black Sea region; a fine 4th-century example of was found in the tomb of Philip II at Vergina. Pliny describes how oak wreaths were given to Roman soldiers as a ‘glorious emblem of military valour’. On a domestic level, acorns were dried and ground into flour and made into bread.

Trees have manifold uses in times of both war and peace. Wood can be used to construct buildings, furniture, ships and coffins, and to make fires for heat and cooking. It is also the raw material of artists and artisans. Their fruit has been eaten, preserved and even become part of sacred cults and religious ceremonies. Trees are with us, quite literally, from cradle to grave; they deserve our respect and care, for without them we will perish.

For more than 1,000 years, the peoples of ancient Greece consulted oracles for guidance. In political decisions or in the quandaries of daily life, they turned to the gods (usually Apollo) and asked for advice in words. The root meaning of 'oracle' is 'a thing spoken', and by extension it is applied to the shrine where the utterance is produced – a Greek oracle is not a person. The pilgrimages to Delphi or Didyma, where questions of...
political moment received responses in verse from an inspired prophetess, are the best-known cases; but there were hundreds of oracles across the Greek world to which private people turned for advice on merely personal questions. At Dodona in northern Greece, many of the questions have survived, inscribed on strips of lead, and they include such trivia (from our perspective) as ‘Did Thopion steal the silver?’ and ‘Would I do better... if I took a wife?’ Unfortunately, the answers have not survived, but the form of the questions shows that they must have received a yes-or-no answer; and that is not surprising, since we know that oracular pronouncements were obtained by a lot of people at this shrine (and at many others).

The simplicity of the expected answers is revealing about the nature of ancient oracles. The popular picture of a raving prophetess uttering mystical gibberish is very far from the norm. The mythology of Delphi told that the oracular function had been discovered by a goatherd who observed the strange behaviour of his goats when they neared subterranean gases escaping from a certain cleft in the rock. So, the story went, they tried the fumes on a local girl and found her hallucinatory utterances could be interpreted as messages from the gods. The practice became institutionalised, though the people soon returned to using an older woman as they found that younger, prettier

1. Consulting the Oracle by John William Waterhouse, 1884. The artist explained that The Oracle, or Teraph, was a mummified human head, cured with spices and fixed to the wall. Lamps were lit before it, and rites performed until the diviners thought they heard a low voice coming from the head predicting events.
ones attracted the wrong sort of clientele. The story has been dismissed as fantasy but, in recent years, geologists have identified a fault line in the rocks at Delphi that could, in the past, have allowed the emission of hallucinatory gases; so the Pythia (the prophetess of Apollo) may have been in a trance after all.

The story is puzzling, as all the stories we know about the historical interventions of the Delphic oracle depict a rational functionary who uttered riddling pronouncements in competent hexameter verses. It will not do to say that her ravings were composed into neat forms by assistant priests at the shrine, since all sources speak as if the Pythia spoke the verses directly; furthermore, she was sometimes susceptible to bribery (herself, not her colleagues), and when Alexander the Great was refused an oracle because he visited on a ‘closed’ day, his reaction was to fling the woman to the ground, whereupon she gasped, ‘Young man, no one can resist you!’ – which gave him the pronouncement he wanted.

We shall never know just what took place in the shrine at Delphi. A veil of religious silence was drawn over the precise operation of all such shrines. An inscription from the oracular shrine at Koropi in Thessaly gives very full details about the mode of consultation: you had to wear white clothes, form an orderly queue, behave in a seemly manner, and hand in your petition slip in turn to the officiant, who would place all the slips in an urn which he then sealed and put in the shrine overnight. ‘And in the morning, when the god has given his answer...’ the inscription continues, skipping over just what we should most like to know, the urn was unsealed and the petitions returned with accompanying answers.

But Delphi was the only oracle that relied on ecstatic trances. At Didyma, the shrine of Apollo associated with the Ionian city of Miletus, the priestess purified herself in an unspecified manner and then sought inspiration, which is not to be confused with ecstatic trance or hallucination, since she too was capable of immediately composing answers in verse. Something similar seems to have happened at Claros, north of Miletus, where the consultant was led, via a winding passage, into an underground chamber below the temple to hear the (male) priest pronounce his prophecy. Today the extensive remains of the oracular temple at Claros enable us to envisage this spooky progress into an ever-darker tunnel, ending up directly under the feet of the immense marble cult statue of the god (some portions remain, indicating that the entire statue was over 20 feet high) to hear the riddling response. Germanicus, heir apparent of the Emperor Augustus, visited the shrine in AD 19: as Tacitus describes it, ‘after descending into a cave and drinking a draught from a secret spring, the man, who is commonly ignorant of letters and of poetry, utters a response in verse answering to the thoughts conceived in the mind of any enquirer. It was said that he prophesied to Germanicus, in riddles as oracles usually do, an early doom’.

A century later, Claros was making a reputation for itself, not only among the Roman elite but also in the neighbouring cities of Asia Minor. A number of them consulted Claros about the epidemic that afflicted Asia Minor in the 140s, and usually received the advice to set up an expensive gold statue of Apollo in the town in question.

Such oracles, though orotund, were not obscure; but a sceptical writer a couple of decades earlier, Oenomaus of Gadara, recorded his indignation at being fobbed off with unhelpful verses such as, ‘In the land of Trachis lies the fair garden of Heracles, containing all things in bloom for all to pick on every day, and yet they are not diminished, but with rain continually their weight is replenished.’ Furthermore, he discovered that other consultants of the oracle were receiving exactly the same replies as he was!

In the 3rd century Claros changed tack again and began to issue solemn theological pronouncements in response to the rising threat of Christianity. Someone called
Theophilus asked Apollo whether he or another was really God, and received the tolerant reply, ‘There exists, far above the supra-celestial envelope, a limitless fire, always in movement, Eternity without limits... Self-born, self-taught, unmothered, unaffected, unnameable by any word, dwelling in fire, that is God.’ Remarkably, the last few lines of this long poem were inscribed as a kind of creed on the outer wall of the city of Oenoanda in Lycia, where they could inspire a worshipper every morning as he faced the rising sun. But such grand pronouncements were not the most common form of oracle in the Greek world. At Dodona, as has been mentioned before, lots were drawn from an urn. An anecdote related by the geographer Strabo tells how one consultation was ruined when the urns were upset by the King of Molossia’s pet monkey: so perhaps there were two urns, from which the priests took respectively the question slips and, say, black and white beans for the two different answers.

In the 2nd century AD dice oracles became extremely popular in southern Asia Minor. You can still visit a tomb at the coastal city of Olympos near Antalya, where one of the pillars is inscribed with 24 lines of verse, one beginning with each letter of the Greek alphabet. When I take visitors there I invite them to choose a letter (perhaps their own initial) and think of a question. The answers take the form ‘You will carry off everything successfully; the god says so’; ‘Violence is weak if it is not employed in accordance with the laws’; ‘It is hard to fight against waves; wait a while’; ‘If you work half-heartedly you will reproach the gods later’; ‘It is not beneficial to harvest unripe fruit’. It is surprising how often my companions say that the answer gives an excellent response to their secret question. These answers may seem to be no different from fortune cookies drawn from a bran tub. But most of the inscribed dice oracles were preceded over by a statue of Hermes, messenger of the gods, who explicitly is there to convey the words of the oracular god Apollo; and they were located in town centres, not tombs. They offered the chance of a quick answer to some pressing question without having to go through the elaborate rituals of purification and sacrifice demanded by the major shrines: a visit to the cashpoint machine rather than an interview with the bank manager.

A particularly popular form of oracular consultation was to seek a dream in the shrine of a healing god, Asclepius or Sarapis. The major shrines of Asclepius in Asia Minor, at Pergamon or at Aegaeae, became something between a sanatorium and a research institute; but scholars have counted over 900 shrines of Asclepius across the Classical world, and those of Serapis became nearly as common. In a dream, the god would appear to the consultant and enjoin some perhaps bizarre activity: the orator Aelius Aristides was once told to scrub his teeth with the ground-up tooth of a lion, and inscriptions from two recent cases when the god, in a dream, performed a surgical operation on the patient, who woke up miraculously cured.

The use of oracles came to an abrupt end when the Christian emperor Theodosius abolished all forms of pagan observance in AD 395. For a century before that, Christian philosophers had been debating whether oracles were the work of fraudulent priests or of genuine, but evil, ‘demons’. Eusebius, the biographer of the Emperor Constantine, marshalled all the resources of earlier writers to construct his argument that the power of the old gods had been destroyed and replaced by the new revelation of Christ; but he also exulted that the emperor’s torturers had forced the priests to reveal the ‘tricks’, such as speaking tubes by which they produced the god’s responses. Bishop Hippolytus claimed that there were even techniques that would induce a sheep to cut its own throat. The debate continued in the 17th century when Anton van Dale wrote his De oraculis veterum eth-nicorum, published in Amsterdam, in 1675 and 1700, and in Bernard de Fontenelle’s Histoire des oracles, published in Paris in 1687.

What is abundantly clear is that, even if the temples and the oracles were closed, the need for life advice did not come to an end. The anxious now took their questions to the shrines of saints (and, later, to Muslim holy men), and the tomb of a doctor in 18th-century Naples was a regular place of pilgrimage for the sick. Some of you will recall that, in 2010, a German octopus called Paul was found to be unusually successful at predicting the results of football. The gods may be dead (and so, alas, is the octopus), but many still find them indispensable. 

The Ancient Oracles: Making the Gods Speak by Richard Stoneman is published in hardback by Yale University Press at £25.
Eros, the Greek god of love, was capable of overpowering the minds of all gods and mortals. The early Greek poet Hesiod records an old myth about Eros, identifying him as a primordial deity born out of chaos. Together with Gaia, the Earth, Hesiod tells us, Eros created everything. Interestingly, ancient Greek art of the Classical period appears to represent the primordial Eros, since he is depicted both on vases and in terracotta statuettes as present at the birth of Aphrodite, when she appears fully formed out of the sea foam standing on a half shell as in Botticelli’s famous painting, *Birth of Venus*.

The Metropolitan Museum’s fine bronze Sleeping Eros (1) is the focus of its current exhibition. Scholars have long wondered whether it is an original Hellenistic work or a very fine Roman Imperial copy of a sculpture known in hundreds of replicas and adaptations from Roman Imperial times. This exhibition presents results of a recent study of the Met’s statue, utilizing scientific and technical analyses as well as art-historical research, which support its identification as a Hellenistic bronze, but one that was restored in antiquity, probably during the Roman Imperial period.

In Classical art, Eros is typically represented as a beautiful winged youth (2). He is often shown as the consort of Aphrodite, goddess of love. This is how he appears in a particularly fine white-ground Athenian terracotta *pyxis* (3) displayed in the exhibition. The scene is ‘The Judgment of Paris’, in which the goddesses Hera, Athena and Aphrodite wait as the Trojan shepherd Paris chooses whom among them is the most beautiful. He selects Aphrodite because she offers him the sweetest bribe, Helen, the most beautiful woman in the world. Helen, however, was already married to Menelaos, King of Sparta, and Paris’s abduction of Helen led to the start of the Trojan War.

Another Classical Athenian vase in the exhibition, an *oinochoe* or egg-shaped vessel (4), represents Paris and Helen on their way to Troy in a speeding chariot as Aphrodite and Eros look on. The shape is especially pertinent to the subject, since Helen was hatched from an egg.

Some of the most artistically accomplished objects to feature Eros in Classical Greek art are the caryatid mirrors (5) that were produced by a small number of bronze workshops in the Peloponnesse during the middle of the 5th century BC. The female figure that characteristically forms the handle typically holds out in her left hand a...
Love actually
dove, a bird sacred to the goddess Aphrodite. Other decorative features that embellish the mirror disc, such as hounds chasing hares, allude to amorous pursuits. Winged Erotes flank the female figure, creating a pleasing symmetrical composition.
They are among the earliest examples of the duplication of Eros in art, a phenomenon that becomes popular in Hellenistic and Roman times when Eros multiplies, as though yielding to the potent creative power he represents.
Eros is frequently depicted playing music in Classical and Hellenistic art. Although the sounds of ancient Greek music are largely lost to us today, it is clear that music played an essential role in the pattern and texture of Greek life. The god is shown strumming tortoise-shell lyres, playing flutes and shaking a tambourine (6) to accompany lost ballads that would have filled the human spirit with desire and, at times, the bitter-sweet torment of unrequited love.
An unusual terracotta red-figure vase in the exhibition is in the form of an astragal, or knucklebone, with Eros represented on one side playing a lyre (7). Astragals were popular toys in antiquity. Used like modern dice, they were thrown, and how the pieces fell determined the outcome of the game.
Such games of chance also acquired prophetic or erotic aspects. The Archaic lyric poet Anacreon wrote about the astragals of Eros, the dice of love. The ancients were all too aware of the significant element that chance could play in the game of love. Many Greek poets, from Sappho to Theocritus, comment on the power of Eros and his ability to stir the emotions, to wound as well as to delight.
The earliest and most important cult site of Eros in ancient Greece was at Thespiae in Boeotia, where a monolithic aniconic cult statue represented the god in a revered display of primordial phallic power. Dedications to Eros at Thespiae featured statues by major Classical and Hellenistic sculptors, among them Praxiteles and Lysippus. In Classical and Hellenistic Athens, Eros was worshipped, with Aphrodite, in a sanctuary on the north slope of the Acropolis and in a temple by the Ilissos River. Images of Eros are recorded in the Hellenistic period among the temple treasures of the Athenian Acropolis. In the coastal city-state of Megara near Athens,
a temple of Aphrodite housed the famous statue of the goddess and her three sons – Eros (Love), Pothos (Longing), and Himeros (Desire) – by the Late Classical sculptor Skopas. Eros was also worshipped at gymnasia, in domestic shrines and at diverse religious festivals. His cult had many different aspects.

Eros appears in ancient Greek art as an attendant at religious festivals. One such festival held in Classical Athens was the Adonia, which commemorated Adonis, a beautiful boy loved by Aphrodite who met an untimely death. This cult of the dying god was celebrated exclusively by women. A rare vase in the Met’s collection (11) depicts a distinctive ritual from the Athenian festival in which pots filled with quickly germinating seeds were placed on flat rooftops and then allowed to die in the sun. Eros is shown between seated figures who are probably Adonis and Aphrodite, handing a pot of earth to a woman on a ladder as she climbs to place it on the roof. After the plants died they were carried, along with a statuette of the god, and thrown into the sea amid loud lamentation.

As the god of love, Eros was a major figure in courtship and marriage rituals. He often appears in marriage scenes, tending to the bride or to the groom, on Greek vases. Such scenes were especially popular on a vase called the lebes gamikos, a lidded jar with foot and handles especially associated with weddings (16). Like his mother, Aphrodite, Eros received offerings of thanks in the form of precious vessels, jewellery and other objects in addition to sacrifices made in his honour.

For the ancient Greeks, Eros symbolised all attractions that provoke love. As a cosmic primordial deity tied to creation, he is frequently associated with plants and fecundity. The rose was his sacred flower. Many Greek philosophers – from Plato to Epikouros, – reflected on his power and its centrality to human existence.

Flying Eros was a clever subject for objects that hang freely in space, and by the late 4th century BC various manifestations of Eros became the most popular motif for women’s earrings (8). The popularity of the myth that Eros was born from the love affair between Aphrodite and Ares, god of war, contributed to new representations of Eros as a baby.

The most successful variant of this new imagery for the god of love was the Sleeping Eros. Images of Eros travelled far to the East along the trade routes opened by the conquests of Alexander the Great (r. 336-323 BC). Sleeping Eros was assimilated into Eastern cultures as far as the Gandharan region (12) in Pakistan, in jewellery of the Early Imperial period.

The Metropolitan Museum’s Sleeping Eros is the finest of its...
Sleeping Eros


16. Greek (South Italian, Apulian) red-figure lebes gamikos, jar associated with weddings, circa 340-320 BC (attributed to the Group of New York 28.57.10) H. 38.3cm. Rogers Fund, 1917 (17.46.2).

All images are of works in the collection of The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Images © The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

antique Greek sculpture and displayed in a private setting such as a Roman villa. The popularity of the Sleeping Eros can be compared with another famous ancient statue, the Aphrodite of Knidos by Praxiteles. This 4th-century BC marble cult statue spawned hundreds of replicas in Hellenistic and Roman times in all kinds of materials and on many scales, adapted to numerous public and private uses (10).

To judge from the hundreds of replicas, the Sleeping Eros and its many variations—as sleeping Cupids and even Somnus, the Roman personification of sleep—were especially popular during the Roman Imperial period. Particularly notable are the diverse contexts in which these sculptures were displayed. As in the Hellenistic period, statues of Sleeping Eros continued to be offered as dedications at sanctuaries, but they also decorated Roman public baths, fountains and private villas. Small-scale versions were made in many media— including terracotta, marble and bronze (13).

The type was well suited to funerary use, and Sleeping Eros-Cupid sculptures became popular tomb monuments, especially those made for children. The image was adapted to a wide variety of uses, from its appearance in relief on sarcophagi, marble urns and altars to mosaics, wall paintings, gold jewellery, terracotta lamps and an array of other objects such as the lid of an ornate silver box—another famous ancient statue, the Aphrodite of Knidos by Praxiteles. This 4th-century BC marble cult statue spawned hundreds of replicas in Hellenistic and Roman times in all kinds of materials and on many scales, adapted to numerous public and private uses (10).

During the Italian Renaissance the recovery of ancient sculptures, such as the Laocoön found in the Roman emperor Nero’s Golden House in the early 16th century, inspired artists to adapt classical styles to their own work. The Sleeping Eros was among the earliest types rediscovered, and it became the subject of numerous figural studies by Renaissance and Baroque artists who were looking to the Classical tradition for inspiration. These works were sometimes close likenesses, like a fine drawing by Giovanni Angelo Canini in the exhibition (14), or less literal interpretations.

A particularly interesting adaptation of Sleeping Eros appears in a 16th-century edition of Apuleius’s The Golden Ass where the ancient sculptural type is borrowed to represent the god in a crucial scene from the myth of Cupid and Psyche, a tale that would also have resonated strongly with ancient viewers of Sleeping Eros sculptures (15). The myth is an allegory for the divine union of love and the soul that reminds us of the enduring importance of love for humanity.

Sleeping Eros is on show at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York (www.metmuseum.org) until 23 June.
The healing saints of

Dalu Jones celebrates the imminent reopening of a 6th-century church in Rome whose beautiful wall paintings have at last been restored and conserved.

The 6th-century AD church of Santa Maria Antiqua is the oldest, most important Christian monument in the Roman Forum. The cycles of frescoes painted on its walls over a period of three centuries – about 250 square metres are still visible – are considered crucial to the understanding of medieval and Byzantine art in Rome where little early Christian painting has survived.

Santa Maria Antiqua was consecrated in the middle of the 6th century AD, probably during the reign of the Byzantine Emperor Justin II (AD 565-78) after the Byzantine general Belisarius (circa AD 500-565) had recaptured Rome from the invading Goths. The church was built by adapting a large brick structure that might have been the entryway to a palatial complex dating to the period of Emperor Domitian (AD 81-96) close to a new access road leading to the palaces on the Palatine Hill. The plan of the preexisting building was well suited to its new ecclesiastical function. The central part of the peristyle was sheltered to form the central nave. Two sides of the original porticus were transformed into side naves; the larger middle room became the presbytery leading to chapels, a prothesis on the left and a diaconicon on the right.

Following heavy damage sustained during an earthquake in AD 847, the church was abandoned and re-established near the Arch of Titus as Santa Maria Nova. A Madonna and Child encaustic, one of the oldest panel paintings in Rome, can still be seen on the main altar of this church, a proof of the transfer of devotional objects to the new site.

The original church remained sealed underground buried by rubble for more than 1,000 years until, in 1701, a chance discovery of the apse was made by people digging in the area to salvage valuable building material. A watercolour from the period shows the wall paintings of the presbytery, and an 18th-century diary describes how popular the site was until the owner decided to refill the excavation only three months after its discovery.

It was not until 1900 that the...
Santa Maria Antiqua

The healing saints of Santa Maria Antiqua church was rediscovered and was dug out during excavations, led by archaeologist Giacomo Boni, in this area of the Forum. A headline in The Times published in London on 9 January, 1901 announced the discovery of the ‘Sistine Chapel of the Eighth Century’, followed by an article written by an eye-witness to this sensational event, English Classicist Gordon Rushforth, who was the first Director of the British School at Rome.

The excavations were completed in less than four years. During this time the brick walls and vaults of the church were also reconstructed. The roof over the central nave was added only in 1910 to provide better protection for the paintings that decorate the whole church including the lateral chapels, the apse and the presbytery. By then they had severely deteriorated. They represent the Holy Virgin, saints, angels and scenes from the Bible, painted over a period spanning the 6th to the 8th centuries AD.

In 1916 the paintings were photographed and recorded in watercolour and published by the German archaeologist J Wilpert. Numerous studies and publications on the monument and its outstanding wall paintings followed. During restoration work carried out at the time of the excavation, fragments of the wall paintings were fixed in place by applying cement fillets along the edges, and the painted surfaces were coated with mineral wax to protect them from damp.

The paintings, however, continued to decay. Their increasingly alarming condition led to the decision to detach some panels and transfer them on to new supports in 1912, 1948, 1954, and in 1956-57. The paintings on the long wall of the left aisle were restored during the early 1980s. Yet the condition of this extraordinarily important church complex continued to worsen and little was done to save it. This is yet another instance of the Italian government’s suicidal
disregard for its artistic heritage which continues unabated today in far too many circumstances. This church has been closed to the public since 1980, except for brief periods in 2004 and 2012 when small groups of visitors were allowed in briefly to see its ongoing restoration. With the help of foreign institutions, this has been continuing since 2001.

About 60 percent of the wall plaster was coming loose and required urgent consolidation. A comparison with archive photographs indicates severe losses in paintings exposed to wall moisture and also alterations in drier areas. The plaster had an extremely high soluble salt content resulting mainly from the cement used extensively in 1900-03 to fix the fragments and fill spaces. The stability of the internal microclimate, despite its high relative humidity, minimises the damaging effects of soluble salts.

Now, at last, according to Giuseppe Morganti, the architect in charge of the current restoration, a solution to the humidity problems seems to have emerged. The main culprit appears to be the clay layer over the back wall of the church. The infiltrating water away.

The stability of the internal microclimate, despite its high relative humidity, minimises the damaging effects of soluble salts.

The church is scheduled to open this autumn, by appointment only and to a restricted number of visitors. A conference is planned, in cooperation with the British School at Rome, to pay homage to its first director, Gordon Rushforth, the author of one of the earliest major papers on the complex. Appropriately, 2013 marks the 75th anniversary of his death.

It is indeed as thrilling today as it was in Rushforth’s time to enter – as I did by special permission of the Superintendence last January – the unexpectedly large space of Santa Maria Antiqua, tucked away unnoticed among the ruins of the Forum, and to see its ancient brick walls still covered with rows and rows of wide-eyed saints painted in the Late Antique and Byzantine style. Restorers were at work, perched high up on scaffolding, painstakingly cleaning these unique murals, inch by inch, utterly absorbed by the task in hand. Some of the 6th-century AD murals that have survived belong to the famous palimpsest on the right-hand wall of the apse, where different strata – six altogether – of painting surfaces belonging to different periods overlap. Among the fragments there is a representation of Mary enthroned and adored by an angel, the so-called ‘beautiful angel’. The Virgin wears the garb of a Byzantine empress.

Santa Maria Antiqua is closely connected with Pope John VII (AD 705-707), who ordered the repainting of the presbytery and the paintings in the diakonikon featuring Eastern saints, the Anargyroi or ‘unpaid healers’. It appears on stylistic and technical grounds that Byzantine artists executed these paintings. During the 6th and 7th centuries a Byzantine quarter inhabited by Greek immigrants, especially those coming from Egypt after the Arab conquest of Alexandria in AD 641, spread out below the Palatine. The Pope himself was of Greek origin. His father, Plato (circa AD 620-686), was imperial cura palatii urbis Romae (‘curator of the Palatine Hill’), where traces of the Episcopium, or ‘episcopal palace’, associated with Pope John VII, have been located and identified.

The diakonikon, usually a vestry or repository of scriptures, was labelled ‘The Chapel of Physicians’ by J Wilpert, who claimed that it had no surviving counterparts in the Byzantine world. It is still the subject of much academic debate as to its use as a place where the Eastern healing practices of incubation were performed. Patients would lie on the mosaic floor overnight praying for recovery until they fell asleep. The saintly presences evoked in the paintings would then appear in their dreams and tell them of a cure for their ailment. A niche found containing a lamp at ground level would seem to fit in with this theory. Incubation was a well-documented practice in...
ancient Greece in shrines such as the *iamata* of Epidauros. Sick people came to the shrine of Asclepius in order to spend a night in the *abaoton*, where the god would reveal to them in a dream what means were needed to cure them. Christianity took over the practice in the cult of St Kosmas and St Damianos as well as St Abbakyros and St John in Asia Minor and Egypt – but, so far, apparently not in Italy.

What makes Santa Maria Antiqua unique and even more intriguing is the fact that there are other representations of medical saints elsewhere in the church and immediately outside it. These include St Dometios, who carries a surgeon’s box held by a strap, and St Euthymios, who was reputed to perform healing miracles and who also appears in a fragmentary medallion on the façade of the Oratory of the Forty Martyrs.

There is an interesting link between the church and pagan monuments in its immediate vicinity: the *fons Iuturnae*, a spring of fresh water of the greatest antiquity and sanctity, and the Temple of Castor and Pollux – which are both sites of healing cults – and the most sacred temple of Vesta, attended by the Vestal Virgins. Some scholars explain the prominence of medical saints in Santa Maria Antiqua as evidence of the replacement of the cult of Iuturna by a Christian healing cult. Another link between Santa Maria Antiqua and the care of the sick in its locality is evident from the 7th century on. The apse wall of the church borders an area of mostly brick masonry, the *horrea* Agrippiana, excavated between 1903 and 1912. The original late-Republican buildings of the *horrea* would have been used in the 8th century by the *diaconiae* of Santa Maria Antiqua and St Teodoro as part of their welfare institutions: hospitals, asylums, and hospices for pilgrims.

A letter from the 7th or early 8th century advises the administrator of a Roman *diaconia* to ‘… zealously prepare the beds with bedclothes, to receive the sick and needy, and provide them with care and all necessities; an annual ration of oil for the sick and poor, and anything else their sickness requires. Provide also doctors and nursing.’ Other murals inside Santa Maria Antiqua provide important documentary evidence for papal history. One painting shows St John and St George flanking an 8th-century Madonna. In the middle there is a representation of one of the theses of the Lateran Council of AD 649 that concerns the controversial debate on the human and divine nature of Christ.

A sad coda to the long-awaited rescue of this church is the fact that there are still wall paintings unprotected on the ruined walls outside it. The adjacent Oratory of the Forty Martyrs, decorated with wall paintings contemporary with those in Santa Maria Antiqua, also still remains closed to the public. ■

The restoration project of Santa Maria Antiqua is funded by the Italian Ministry of Cultural Heritage and the World Monuments Fund/Samuel H Kress Foundation (New York) and also receives support from the Sigval Bergesen d.y. og Hustru Nanki’s almennytigte Stiftelse Foundation (Oslo). Other contributors include ENEA (Ente per le Nuove Tecnologie, Energia e l’Ambiente), the University of the Tuscia were restored by a team led by Werner Matthias Schmid.
As Global Heritage Fund celebrates its 10th anniversary, Lindsay Fulcher looks at its top 10 sites and hears what its new director Dr Vince Michael thinks about cultural heritage.

Global Heritage Fund (GHF) is the world’s only NGO focused on helping the world’s poorest communities by investing in their local heritage. It involves some of the most important and endangered heritage sites across the developing world. The co-funded conservation and community development programmes offer locals the opportunity to work with international experts, and through planned partnership, they are able to acquire skills as stakeholders of their heritage in site management, tourism, detailed mapping and scanning parts of the site during the preservation phase. Since 2002, GHF has invested over $30 million and secured $25 million in co-funding for 20 Global Heritage Sites to ensure their sustainable preservation and responsible development. Here are GHF’s top 10 current and completed projects from around the world:

### Banteay Chhmar, Cambodia
Built by King Jayavarman VII in the 12th century AD, Banteay Chhmar is the birthplace of the famous Khmer ‘face-towers’ and remains one of South-East Asia’s architectural masterpieces. The site’s kilometre-long arcaded enclosure represents one of the most significant historical complexes in Cambodia, with hand-carved bas-reliefs telling the story of Ancient Khmer and its people. It includes an image of a multi-armed Avalokiteshvara (above left).

### Chavín de Huántar, Peru
Home to one of the oldest major cultures in Peru, Chavín was a ritual and pilgrimage centre from 1500 BC to 300 BC, pre-dating Inca culture by nearly 2,000 years. The architecture embodies a complex of terraces and plazas surrounded by major platforms of dressed stone. Carved stones portray exotic human-animal hybrid figures (left), referred to as the ‘Chavín Horizon’ temple system. This 3,000-year-old ceremonial centre contains many subterranean galleries.

### Ciudad Perdida, Colombia
Accidentally discovered in 1975 by looters, Ciudad Perdida (‘The Lost City’) is home to the indigenous Kogi (left), descendants of the Tayrona civilisation who inhabited the region from AD 200-1650, pre-dating Machu Picchu by 650 years. Among the 250 Tayrona towns, Ciudad Perdida is the largest and most impressive, suggesting that it may have been the social, political, and economic centre. More than 200 structures were uncovered across 30 hectares including a terrace made mostly of quartz, sandstone, carnelian, and andesite. The stone slab pictured here may have been a map of the city.
Cyrene, Libya
Cyrene, the most important classical Greek site outside Greece, was known as the Athens of Africa when Libya was a foreign arm of the Hellenic Empire. Founded in 631 BC by the Greeks of Thera, Cyrene’s temples, tombs, agora, gymnasium and amphitheatre were originally modelled on those at Delphi, home of the famous oracle in the ancient world. The amphitheatre, erected in the Sanctuary of Apollo (above), is one of the five main archaeological areas of Cyrene.

Göbekli Tepe, Turkey
Ongoing excavations at this mysterious 11,000-year-old sanctuary have led historians to recognise structures at Göbekli Tepe as the world’s oldest temples, places of ritual where iconography is used to communicate ideas prior to the use of written language. Each temple consists of a series of monolithic T-shaped pillars, some with anthropomorphic features, and also carved reliefs (above) depicting bulls, foxes, birds, scorpions and snakes.

Mirador, Guatemala
This is the cradle of Mayan civilisation and Guatemala’s leading candidate to become a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Majestically set in the heights of the Mayan Biosphere, La Danta is the world’s largest pyramid by volume, a site predating Tikal by 800-1,200 years. Mirador Basin contains four of the largest and oldest Mayan cities, including El Mirador. All have massive pyramids, priceless ancient temples, and other traces of a highly evolved and complex society. Meticulous excavation has revealed marvellous stucco decorations (above).

My Son, Vietnam
Home to Vietnam’s first major civilisation, My Son is the longest inhabited archaeological site in Indochina, marking the royal burial and temple grounds for the Champa Kingdom (AD 400-1500). The 20 monuments still standing represent the longest religious occupation in South-East Asia; skilled carvers, sent to learn their craft in Java between the 8th and 10th centuries, created the most detailed brick and stonework (above) to be seen anywhere.

Hampi, India
Founded in 1336 as the capital of the Vijayanagara Kingdom, Hampi remains one of the world’s most stunning archaeological sites, with a collection of more than 500 monuments spread over 26 square kilometres of spectacular natural scenery. The temples of this area, particularly Chandramauleshwar and Viththala, are known for the grandeur and wealth of the sculptures depicting subjects from the Indian epics the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. Unforgettable are the outer Musical Pillars of Viththala Temple that reverberate when they are tapped.
Pingyao Ancient City, China

Pingyao was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1997. It is an exceptionally well-preserved, intact classic Chinese city from the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing dynasties (1644-1912), containing around 4,000 courtyard buildings, and is China’s first banking capital. The Pingyao Cultural Heritage Development Program was developed to preserve its architecture and to provide support for its skilled craftspeople, so that they can pass on their unique arts, crafts, and traditional cuisine to the next generation.

Wat Phu, Laos

Dating from the 5th-7th centuries AD, this temple complex (above) is located within the well-preserved Champasak cultural landscape, which is more than 1,000 years old. Dedicated to the Hindu god Shiva, Wat Phu is one of the most important examples of Khmer architecture in terms of planning, religious significance and the value of its sculptures. Designed to express the Hindu vision of the relationship between nature and humanity, it features temples, shrines and waterworks extending over 10 kilometres.

A NEW DIRECTOR FOR GHF

Prior to joining Global Heritage Fund, Dr Vincent Michael was the John H Bryan Chair in Historic Preservation at The School of the Art Institute of Chicago, where he also served as Director of the Historic Preservation Program from 1996 to 2010.

A professional preservationist since 1983, Dr Michael is a Trustee of the National Trust for Historic Preservation as well as Chair Emeritus of the National Council for Preservation Education. He also serves on the Board of Landmarks Illinois and has served on the Illinois Historic Sites Advisory Council and the Oak Park Historic Preservation Commission. His most recent projects have included a decade-long preservation undertaking at the Weishan Heritage Valley in Yunnan, China, together with the Center for US-China Arts Exchange at Columbia University.

Dr Michael is a frequent lecturer on historic preservation, architecture, geography, art, and history throughout the United States, Europe and Asia. He has written articles for Design Issues, Future Anterior, Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians, Traditional Building, forum journal and The Encyclopedia of Chicago, a book on architect Barry Byrne, and media programmes on architecture in Chicago.

The new Director has set out his own mission statements:

‘My job at Global Heritage Fund includes maintaining contact with international experts in architecture, archaeology, community development, conservation, training, cultural resource management, finance, planning and all sorts, from geology to botany.’

‘The goal is more than saving an historic site: it is to develop that site in a way that brings economic benefit to those who live there. It is never that simple to do, but the goal is simple, albeit a little counter-intuitive to those who think of heritage as a luxury, or preservation as an elite activity.’

‘The mission of the Global Heritage Fund is to help protect heritage sites in the developing world through community development.’

‘In a real sense, the challenge is to fine-tune our approaches so that we can find new markets, new functions, new value in both elements of a cultural landscape: the tangible and the intangible.’

‘Our partners are public and private, local, regional, national and international.’

‘The process of historic preservation/heritage conservation is actually quite consistent: Identification, Evaluation, Registration, and Treatment.’

‘Preservation is a process, not a set of rules …’

‘History is dynamic and its preservation must also be dynamic. A process of conserving heritage insures that dynamism, whereas a rulebook can only stifle it.’

‘3,000 years old is not three times as good as 1,000 years old, and for that matter, 100 years old is not twice as good as 50 years old. Of course “age” figures into it, but so does “significance”.’

‘Museums are not a great business model, so at GHF we are always looking for more economic variety and vitality in our projects.’

(Visit Time Tells, Dr Michael’s personal blog at vincemichael.wordpress.com and www.globalheritagefund.org)
When Stefan Smith explores the little-visited site of Umm ar-Rasas in Jordan, he finds evidence of tolerance and peaceful co-existence between different faiths and cultures that we could learn from today

A lesson from the past

On the stony, flat, desert plains of Jordan, 30 kilometres south-east of the popular tourist destination town of Madaba, lie the extensive ruins of Umm ar-Rasas. Visible from afar, partial rests of arches rise out of the flat desert plain like sea serpents lifting their heads above calm waters. Off the beaten track, it is the last point of touristic interest southwards along the King’s Highway road before the mighty gorge of Wadi Mujib, across which no public transport exists. So the site sees relatively few visitors when compared with the major attractions of this ancient country such as Petra, Jerash and Wadi Rum. However, since its inscription into the register of UNESCO Cultural World Heritage Sites in 2004, the third site in Jordan to achieve this status, Umm ar-Rasas has been slowly gaining recognition among non-specialists, bolstered by a new visitor centre and extensive on-site descriptions. In a part of the world with such a large wealth of archaeological remains, it is easy to overlook more understated sites, but this ancient settlement does not deserve that fate – most importantly because it holds an enduring lesson of peace and tolerance.

The origin of the bulk of the archaeological remains at Umm ar-Rasas, the ancient city of Kastron Mefa’a, can be traced back to the Byzantine Empire, the successor to the Eastern Roman Empire, which was created when Emperor Diocletian (r 284-305) divided the Roman Empire into eastern and western halves. Following the rule of Emperor Constantine I (r 306-337), this became a Christian empire with its capital in Constantinople, modern-day Istanbul. Under this rulership, church and monastic art and architecture flourished, producing some of the most famous works of the Middle Ages, such as the earliest sacred icons (gilded depictions of the Holy Family, the prophets and the saints), and buildings such as the vast domed church of Hagia Sophia in Istanbul. Yet even before archaeological investigations began, the first settlement at Umm ar-Rasas was known to have been established much earlier than this period, as it is mentioned twice in the Old Testament.

Excavations carried out in the late 1980s by the Studium Biblicum Franciscanum, a Franciscan archaeological institute based at Mount Nebo near Madaba, showed that the first human occupation of Umm ar-Rasas predated the founding of the Byzantine town in the 5th
century AD by at least a millennium, placing it in the Iron Age. Scant remains exist from earlier periods, until the establishment of a Roman fort in the late 3rd century AD, mainly with the re-use of older building materials in its construction. This impressive military structure, measuring 155 by 135 metres, would go on to form the boundary of the walled section of the 5th-9th century town of Kastron Mefa’a, which extended north by another 200 metres. It is this occupation period that is of greatest historical interest, and the best sources of documentation for it are the town’s elaborate mosaics, which cover the floors of at least seven of its 16 excavated churches.

Its beautiful church-floor mosaics are, if anything is, the remains for which Umm ar-Rasas is best known, and for good reason. Standing out from the rest are those from the nave of the 8th-century Church of St Stephen, which most interestingly depict stylised versions, part real-world images, part maps, of several towns of the Byzantine Empire. Since it became designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, this structure has been covered by a protective structure, from which hanging walkways enable viewing access. Though the light that filters through the yellow plastic and corrugated iron roof throws a somewhat ethereal light upon the mosaics, the images remain as clear as the day they were created.

Greek inscriptions spell out the names of each of the cities depicted, which, apart from Kastron Mefa’a itself, include nearby Philadelphia (now the Jordanian capital Amman), Kharakh Mouba (now Kerak, known for its impressive Crusader castle), and Madaba. Also shown are important settlements further afield, including Gaza, Askelon in modern-day Israel, and Jerusalem, identified by the toponym AGIA POLIS (‘holy city’).

The latter is so detailed that its image of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre has been identified by visual reference alone. Between these depictions, which form borders on either side of the nave centre like those of a Persian carpet, are intricate images of fish, waterfowl, flowers, and boys hunting from an abstract representation of the Nile’s river delta, along with further towns including Alexandria (in modern-day Egypt).

Notwithstanding the praise that can be deservedly bestowed upon the craftsmanship and artistic skill to which this 20-metre by 10-metre mosaic bears testament, its physical...
appearance is not its most remarkable attribute. That honour goes to the circumstances of its creation.

Thanks to an inscription on the side of the church’s altar, stating that the mosaic was completed by the craftsmen Staurachios Ezbotinos and Euremios in March AD 756, archaeologists are in the rare position of being able to date it exactly. The inscription also mentions that this was during the time of Bishop Sergius II, and excavated evidence from two locations under the mosaic floor level additionally confirms this date as plausible.

The date is interesting for two reasons: first, because by this time the Byzantine Empire had not existed in the Near East for a century, ever since the invasion of the Levant by noted Muslim commander Khalid ibn al-Walid, culminating in the crushing defeat of the Byzantines at the Battle of Yarmouk, on the Syrian-Jordanian border, in 636. It shows that the local Christian population continued to flourish, with a continuing line of bishops, and to identify with the Byzantine Empire several generations after its retreat from the region. Perhaps they felt a cultural connection to the remaining empire (which at the time still occupied most of modern-day Turkey, eastern Greece, and the North African coast), or perhaps they looked back on the Byzantine presence in their own area as a ‘golden age’, when Christianity was an increasingly successful state religion.

A second point of interest about the date of the mosaic’s creation is its very existence under the Muslim Umayyad and Abbasid caliphates that ruled a vast empire stretching from Portugal to Pakistan. During their conquest of the Levant, the Muslim invaders had ignited the Arab-Byzantine Wars, which means that the Byzantines had been their main enemies on the battlefield for over a century.

These wars continued, albeit not in the Levant, during the entire occupation history of Umm ar-Rasas, until the 10th century. A major factor in this conflict was the religious difference between the two groups, so it would have been easy for the invaders to equate local Christians in former Byzantine lands with the recently vanquished empire. Yet the Muslims adopted a policy of tolerance towards other religions, and the multiple churches at Umm ar-Rasas are a prime example of this.

The mosaic in St Stephen’s Church is evidence beyond a simple tolerance of other religions, however, for it depicted the former extent of the Byzantine Empire in a stylised, yet clear, way. So, the Muslim rulers of over a century tolerated an artwork celebrating an empire they had not only fought and conquered in this region, but were still fighting in modern-day Turkey.

Imagine how an artwork celebrating the German Empire would have been received by authorities in Britain during the Second World...
War and you will see just how incredibly tolerant this policy was.

Although St Stephen’s Church is the most completely preserved example, it is not by far the only church or mosaic floor at Umm ar-Rasas. Another notable example is the Church of the Lions, which, although not as high-profile at the site as the former church, is actually larger and features earlier mosaics of no lesser artistic skill.

Thanks once again to an inscription within the structure, an accurate date for its creation can be ascertained as 588-589. This places it nearly two centuries earlier than the St Stephen’s mosaic, during the time of Bishop Sergius I, widely considered to have overseen a golden age of Christian Byzantine art in the area. This judgment is clearly justified at this church by the detailed and accurate depictions of two eponymous lions on either side of a pomegranate tree, with further images of gazelles and sheep flanking them. It also features a mosaic representation of Kastron Mefa’a that is more detailed than the later one in St Stephen’s, further emphasising the quality of artistic endeavour at this time.

One further example of the flourishing of Christian life at Umm ar-Rasas deserves a mention, if only for its sheer strangeness. Around a kilometre north of the main set of remains stands a 13-metre narrow stone tower, the only standing remains of a former building complex with courtyards and cisterns. Clearly a defining feature of Kastron Mefa’a, it is centrally depicted in the representation of the town on the St Stephen’s Church mosaic. This tower has a decidedly peculiar quirk, however: it has no entrance, no staircase inside, and yet a room obviously designed for habitation right at the top.

This architectural oddity is an example of one of the stylite towers – structures used by Christian ascetics who, in an attempt to devote their lives to prayer, lived at the tops of these stylites, or pillars. The most famous example of these is the movement’s founder, St Simeon (circa 390-359), the stunted remains of whose pillar (his home for 37 years) is found among the ruins of his monastery in north-west Syria. The example at Umm ar-Rasas, however, shows that this practice had become so mainstream by the time of Kastron Mefa’a that purpose-built towers were being constructed. The remains at Umm ar-Rasas speak far beyond their (albeit impressive) appearance when the geopolitical landscape of the time is taken into account. The creation of a masterwork of medieval mosaic art celebrating a Christian empire’s bygone era paints a picture of a tolerant multicultural Islamic Caliphate that allowed the veneration of past enemies by current subjects. Moreover, the fact that this occurred while conflict with the remnants of the Byzantine Empire was still ongoing emphasises the separation of Christian individuals from Christian empires by the caliphate. In a part of the world with so much of its history dictated by religious conflict, this ancient settlement bears testament to the possibility of peaceful co-existence, tolerant of both the past and the present. Such a progressive attitude towards a diverse society is a powerful lesson that speaks to us through the ages to the present day.

The Muslims adopted a policy of tolerance towards other religions, and the multiple churches at Umm ar-Rasas are a prime example of this.

The Muslims adopted a policy of tolerance towards other religions, and the multiple churches at Umm ar-Rasas are a prime example of this. The Muslims adopted a policy of tolerance towards other religions, and the multiple churches at Umm ar-Rasas are a prime example of this.
Among the numerous trays of terracotta antiquities in the collection of the Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology (part of University College London) is a drawer marked ‘Memphis “Race” Heads’. It contains 57 small heads, probably from terracotta figurines, dating from the Ptolemaic or Roman period (300 BC-AD 400). Occasionally one of Petrie’s original labels on yellowing paper demarcates a ‘race type’ for a particular head. These are just a small fraction of about 300 heads preserved in the Petrie Museum collection, but no other drawer is labelled in this way, and it was probably done for teaching purposes by the archaeologist William Matthew Flinders Petrie (1853-1942). Like so many other anthropologists and archaeologists of this period, Petrie believed in a fixed racial hierarchy defined by the then assumed norms of Western civilisation, as well as that the size and shape of crania, indicated brain size. He also held that a person’s facial features portrayed his, or her, moral characteristics imprinted by generations of genetic inheritance.

Petrie thought the heads that he collected ‘were the figures of more than a dozen races’, made by Graeco-Egyptian artists who were carefully recording ‘foreigners’ in Memphis. He used examples from his own period to ascribe identities to these heads; arguing, for example, that one head (UC48515) was ‘Hebrew’ due to its facial resemblance to ‘a modern Jewish Type coming from Germany’. Another head (UC84527) Petrie designated as Persian, commenting that it showed the ‘high-bred Aryan type’ typical of the ‘magnificent creation’ of the Persian Empire. Yet similar heads and figurines were produced across the Hellenistic world; there is, for example, a vast collection of them from Smyrna (now Izmir in Turkey) displayed in the Louvre.

It is extremely difficult to discover the function of these terracotta heads. They could have been used for

**Debbie Challis**

examines the curious 19th-century eugenic theories that inspired Flinders Petrie to travel to Egypt to collect archaeological data illustrating what he thought were the different racial types

1. William Matthew Flinders Petrie circa 1897.
2. Front and side view of unlabelled terracotta head. UC48550.
3. Front and side view of woman’s head. UC48514.
5. ‘Hebrew’ head, UC48515.
used for satirical, votive, decorative or medical purposes or for a combination of these. What we do know, both from inscriptions on stone and papyri, is that Memphis was an international city in which groups of Egyptian, Jewish, Greek, Macedonian, Roman, Persian and other peoples lived side by side. So, while these figures fit into a wider pattern of production, with similar terracottas across the Hellenistic world, their heads give us a glimpse of the ethnic diversity in Memphis.

Whether these ancient figures were religious offerings or racial stereotypes depends on who is looking at them. Petrie’s emphasis on racial types in reading these heads, and the lack of archaeological information about their discovery, makes any contemporary interpretation of them problematic.

The discovery of the heads featured in *The Times* on 15 May 1908. Petrie probably fed the story to the newspaper, knowing of the interest in defining race at that time. He later emphasised their importance in his excavation report: “The absence of any collection of ancient portraiture of races, beyond that which I made in Egypt twenty-two years ago, leaves the identification of these very varied types to...
depend entirely upon chance observation... Unfortunately archaeology, like literary scholarship, too often leaves the weightier matters of the world's history neglected. There is not even any series of composite portrait heads from coins, which are greatly needed for the character study of celebrated kings. (Petrie, Memphis II, 1909)

Here, Petrie refers back to his 1886-87 expedition to collect casts and photographs of 'racial types' from monuments and sculpture in Egypt, as well as underlining his belief that character could be discerned in the features of the face.

This project had been commissioned by the British Association for the Advancement of Science (BAAS), who set up a committee at their 1886 annual meeting 'for the purpose of procuring with the help of Mr Flinders Petrie, Racial Photographs from the Ancient Egyptian Pictures and Sculptures'.

The polymath scientist Francis Galton (a half cousin of Charles Darwin) chaired the committee, which was composed of eminent men from across the scientific world. They included the collector and archaeologist General Pitt-Rivers, the zoologist Professor William H Flower, the surgeon and anatomist Professor Alexander Macalister, the geologist and geographer Frederick W Rudler, and the British Museum Keeper and founding member of the Egypt Exploration Fund Reginald Stuart-Poole. When it was discovered that the grant was insufficient, Galton personally gave Petrie further funds of around £300.

Stuart-Poole listed the most important subjects for Petrie to capture, mainly monuments from the time of the 19th Dynasty (1292-1186 BC), when Seti I and Ramses II were defending the large Egyptian empire from growing powers in the region. The main site for Petrie's BAAS commission was in and around Luxor; namely Luxor Temple, the temple complex at Karnak, temples around Thebes, and tombs in the Valley of the Kings. Before the trip Petrie outlined to Galton his preferred option of making a 'squeeze' – a moulding or cast of an object, or an impression or copy of a design, obtained by pressing a pliable substance round or over it. He squeezed soft, thin paper moistened with paste into a relief so that an impression was made which was then turned into a mould for a cast.

The scale of Petrie's task was immense and often perilous, for he made squeezes of heads by reaching out while perched high up on rickety ladders. On the West Bank of the Nile in the Temple of Ramses III (1186-1155 BC) at Medinet Habu, he took casts of captives dedicated to Amen from the First Pylon, which is 27 metres high and 65 metres long. Inside is a procession showing vanquished people being led into captivity.

Both the casts and photographs that Petrie took at Thebes were put on display at the BAAS annual meeting at Manchester in 1887, and a report was published later the same year as Racial Photographs. There are few original copies, and the photographs in it are very small, for example, the image of a member of the Northern Race from the Tomb of Merenptah KV8 (Racial Photographs No. 774), or the photograph of a cast from the West Pylon at the Ramesseum showing Amorites (Racial Photographs Nos. 174-178).

Before the casts entered the collections of the British Museum, they were exhibited at the South Kensington Museum as 'Syrian portraits', under the auspices of the Palestine Exploration Fund (PEF), from October 1887 until early 1888. These Racial Photographs became intertwined with biblical
archaeology and the faces were seen as Old Testament types by a 19th-century audience.

Francis Galton chaired and almost single-handedly supported Petrie’s BAAS expedition, and his thinking influenced the drive to create a visual typography of race in ancient Egypt. Galton had been observing genetic inheritance since the 1860s and, in 1883, he published *Inquiries into Human Faculty*, in which the term ‘eugenics’, from the Greek ‘eu’ = ‘good’ or ‘well’, and ‘genes’ = ‘born’, was coined. (Here, I should stress ‘good’ or ‘well’, and ‘’...’was coined. (Here, I should stress

By 1886, Petrie and Galton had established a friendly working relationship and their mutual interest in race and genetic inheritance was shared with a wider number of individuals working in archaeology, anthropology, geography, biblical studies and philology. It is that interest and those connections that inspired Petrie’s journey to Egypt to collect ‘racial types’ from its ancient monuments, and these examples informed his later work.

Galton and his ideas about eugenics had a profound influence on Petrie; from New Race theory in his 1896 Naqada excavations, to skull-collecting for the National Eugenics Laboratory at UCL until the 1930s, to his advocacy of sterilisation of the ‘unfit’ along eugenic principles in his polemical *Janus in Modern Life*, published in 1907.

There are numerous examples from across Petrie’s work that could be used to illustrate his attitude to race, but it is most vividly seen in a three-dimensional chart that he published as guidance in creating compound diagrams. In 1902, in the anthropological journal *Man*, Petrie mapped out the mean of five variable dimensions of skulls belonging to different ethnic groups and plotted them on a ‘...’was coined. (Here, I should stress

Petrie applied his eugenic ideas about family inheritance and reading the head for positive and negative characteristics to himself. He took pride in his family lineage and in the first chapter of his autobiography, published in 1931, he detailed his genealogy; he thought he had inherited characteristics from his forebears, such as the ‘handling of men and materials’ from his paternal grandfather. He wholly attributed his skills to his genetic inheritance, echoing Galton’s premise that it is nature, not nurture, that shapes not only our noses but our intellect, our morality and our other personality traits. Even during his final illness he was making plans for the future of his own head, which he believed to be important to science.

Some 30 years after excavating and collecting the terracotta heads at Memphis, Petrie died in Jerusalem in July 1942 and was buried in the Protestant cemetery on the summit of Mount Zion — but his head was not.

Then, 35 years later, in 1977, it was found by Barbara Adams, the then assistant curator at the Petrie Museum, in the Royal College of Surgeons in London. Petrie’s head had been sent there in confused circumstances in the midst of the Second World War.

According to a letter in the Petrie Museum Archives from Dr WE Thompson, the chief bacteriologist of the hospital in which Petrie died, the archaeologist had asked for his skull to be sent back to London as a ‘specimen of a typical British skull’. Petrie clearly believed himself to be a perfect specimen of a ‘British type’, with a head and skull worth future study. This final donation to an institution is testament to his lifelong belief in and study of eugenics and in the power of reading the head to understand the identity and personality of a person.

The Archaeology of Race: The Eugenic Ideas of Francis Galton and Flinders Petrie by Debbie Challis is published in hardback by Bloomsbury at £65.
The New Year celebrations were barely over, it was time once again for that coin auction bonanza that was the 41st Annual New York International Numismatic Convention, held at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel from 5 to 14 January.

With six coin sales and one numismatic literature auction held before, during and after the trade fair, it was an overwhelming experience where more than 10,000 lots were hammered down for a total, including buyer’s premium, of in excess of $33 million.

The rooms were generally very well attended although internet live bidding played a significant role with some important pieces being fiercely contested and occasionally won by cyberspace customers.

The market is still very solid, with the usual predilection for quality and pedigrees. Some areas appeared to be a bit patchy, in particular the very expensive Greek coins seemed a bit slow, and notable was the absence of high-value ancient coins on offer this year.

The 10th auction of Gemini, a partnership formed by Harlan J Berk Ltd and H & B Kreindler, consisted of 831 lots of ancient coins selling for over $2.7 million (including buyer’s premium). Among the many interesting lots we picked two that, for different reasons, performed very well. Both coins were struck in the aftermath of Julius Caesar’s assassination by famous members of the two opposing factions.

Lot 315 was issued by Mark Antony (C Vibius Varus moneyer) in 42 BC, one year into his alliance with Lepidus and Octavian who all formed the Second Triumvirate. This coin presents a beautiful and exceptionally preserved portrait of Mark Antony. Thanks to the extraordinary quality, this otherwise not-so-rare piece more than trebled its estimate, ultimately selling for $32,500.

Lot 284: Kingdom of Macedon, Alexander III (the Great), silver dekadrachm, struck in Babylon circa 325-323 BC. Obv. Alexander attacking an elephant. Rev. Alexander, standing facing, holding thunderbolt and spear. (Est. $75,000; sold for $75,000)

Lot 466: Ionia, Phokaia, electrum hekte, circa 625-522 BC. Obv. Head of eagle left, below small seal. Rev. Incuse square punch. (Est. $5,000; sold for $10,000)

Max Tursi reports on half a dozen exciting coin sales held at the beginning of the year at the 41st Annual New York Numismatic Convention

CLASSICAL NUMISMATIC GROUP’s Triton sale featured 1,723 lots of ancient and world...
Minerva May/June 2013

coins that fetched a staggering $7.6 million, with a remarkable 99% of lots sold.

One of the collections presented in the auction was the Alex Shubs collection of the North-western Black Sea. It included many rarities, often in exceptional condition. One example was lot 24, a massive 293g bronze coin from Olbia. One of two known, it did not go unnoticed as a furious bidding battle brought the estimate of $15,000 up to $75,000.

In 326 BC Alexander the Great defeated King Porus at the battle of Hydaspes. Lot 284 is one of the extremely rare coins that are part of a series issued by Alexander to celebrate the victory. The obverse type shows the king, himself, on his horse Boukephalos while spearing an elephant on which sits a helmeted mahout. This is a series that presents a number of unresolved and hotly debated questions regarding the circumstances and whereabouts of its issue. This tremendously fascinating coin remained, mainly due to the poor condition (that is usual for the series) at the estimate level, selling for $75,000.

On lot 809 the obverse shows a beautiful portrait of a Gallic captive traditionally considered the portrait of Vercingetorix. Rev. Two warriors on biga right. (Est. $2,000; sold for $8,500)

Lot 1129: Probus, gold aureus, AD 276-282. Obv. Helmeted and cuirassed bust of Probus left. Rev. Victory in quadriga left. (Est. $50,000; sold for $90,000)

Lot 902: Julius Caesar, silver denarius, February-March 44 BC. Obv. Head of Julius Caesar right. Rev. Personification of Venus Victrix left. (Est. $10,000; sold for $35,000)


Gemini X

Lot 315: Mark Antony, silver denarius, 42 BC. Obv. Head of M. Antony. Rev. Fortuna, standing left, holding Victory and Cornucopiae (Est. $10,000; sold for $32,500)

Lot 356: M. Junius Brutus, silver denarius, 42 BC. Obv. Head of Brutus right. Rev. The cap of Liberty (pileus) flanked by two daggers, below EID MAR. (Est. $60,000; sold for $90,000)

Lot 561: Phoenicia, Sidon, Mazaios, silver dishekel, circa 353-333 BC. Obv. Phoenicia pentekonter left. Rev. Persian king on a chariot, behind, king of Sidon advancing left. (Est. $3,000; sold for $20,000)

Lot 902: Julius Caesar, silver denarius, February-March 44 BC. Obv. Head of Julius Caesar right. Rev. Personification of Venus Victrix left. (Est. $10,000; sold for $35,000)


Lot 809: Roman Republic, L. Hostilius Saserna, silver denarius, 48 BC. Obv. Head of Gallic captive traditionally considered the portrait of Vercingetorix. Rev. Two warriors on biga right. (Est. $2,000; sold for $8,500)

Lot 1158: Urbs Roma, bronze medallion, AD 330-354. Obv. Bust of Rome left. Rev. She-wolf left, suckling Romulus and Remus. (Est. $30,000; sold for $26,000)


Lot 315: Mark Antony, silver denarius, 42 BC. Obv. Head of M. Antony. Rev. Fortuna, standing left, holding Victory and Cornucopiae (Est. $10,000; sold for $32,500)

Lot 356: M. Junius Brutus, silver denarius, 42 BC. Obv. Head of Brutus right. Rev. The cap of Liberty (pileus) flanked by two daggers, below EID MAR. (Est. $60,000; sold for $90,000)
New York Sale XXX

Lot 30: Sicily, Syracuse, silver tetradrachm, 510-490 BC. Obv. Charioteer driving quadriga right. Rev. Head of Arethusa left, within a quadripartite square incuse. (Est. $17,500; sold for $42,500)

Lot 46: Sicily, Syracuse, silver tetradrachm, 466-405 BC. Obv. Charioteer driving quadriga right. Rev. Head of Arethusa left. (Est. $30,000; sold for $85,000)

Lot 55: Sicily, Syracuse, Dionysios I, silver tetradrachm, 405-367 BC. Obv. Head of Arethusa three quarter facing left. Rev. Charioteer driving quadriga right. Both sides signed by Kimon. (Est. $100,000 sold for $180,000)

Lot 5052: Hadrian, gold aureus, AD 136. Obv. Head of Hadrian left. Rev. Personification of Africa reclining left. (Est. $15,000 sold for $85,000)

Lot 5384: Sabina, gold aureus, AD 138-139. Obv. Veiled bust of Sabina right. Rev. Sabina borne aloft by an eagle carrying a sceptre. (Est. $10,000 sold for $50,000)


Lot 266: Judaea, Bar Kochba Revolt, silver sela, year 1, AD 132-133. Obv. façade of the Temple of Jerusalem, Ark of the Covenant seen within. Rev. bundle of lulav. (Est. $2,000; sold for $15,000)

Lot 85: Kingdom of Macedon, Philip II, silver tetradrachm, 359-336 BC. Obv. Head of Zeus right. Rev. Young rider on a horse right. (Est. $1,600 sold for $6,500)

Lot 55: Sicily, Syracuse, Dionysios I, silver tetradrachm, 405-367 BC. Obv. Head of Arethusa three quarter facing left. Rev. Charioteer driving quadriga right. Both sides signed by Kimon. (Est. $100,000 sold for $180,000)

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Roman Britain through its Objects
Iain Ferris
Amberley, 2012
256 pages, 91 illustrations
£20

Artefacts are the backbone of archaeology. Or so you might think. In fact, among archaeologists, objects have not always been in fashion. Exactly 20 years ago, as I write this, on a Sunday morning in March 1993 I received a telephone call. Would I like to see a hoard of bronze axes that had just been ploughed up and found by a lady while walking her dog? I drove off through the wintry countryside to a fine moated manor-house. There, on the kitchen table, lay the axes, some mint sharp, others unfin-ished but fresh from the mould.

The landowner and the lady with the dog described where she had found them. ‘Have you told the County Archaeologist at the Sites and Monuments Record?’ I asked. ‘Oh yes,’ replied the landowner, ‘but he said that nowadays archaeologists are interested in landscapes, not objects, and left it at that.’

So, as I thought that such objects ought to be part of a landscape, we went to take a look at the findspot. Within a few hours, assisted by a metal detector, we had located lots more axes buried, it subsequently proved, about 800 BC, in a pit by the door-way of a roundhouse, within a large previ-ously unknown settlement.

That afternoon I turned up three hours late for Sunday lunch with two distinguished prehistorians: Richard Bradley and George Eogan. Ironically, no one has done more than these two to reveal the context and meaning of prehistoric artefacts (see the recent book to celebrate Richard’s work Image, Memory and Monumentality: archaeological engage-ments with the material world, edited by A Meirion Jones, Joshua Pollard, MJ Allen and J Gardiner, The Prehistoric Society/ Oxbow Books, 2012).

Since then, I am glad to say, the study of artefacts – their manufacture, distribution, symbolism and life-histories – has developed considerably. Objects and materiality have, again, become fit subjects for anthropolo-gists and archaeologists.

Now that scientific dating is more precise archaeologists have moved away from mere typologies and allowed themselves to specu-late and theorise more imaginatively about the meaning of artefacts. Books on artefacts have even hit the best-seller charts with Neil MacGregor’s A History of the World in 100 Objects (Allen Lane, 2010) and Edmund du Waal’s biography of a group of Japanese netsuke, The Hare with the Amber Eyes (Chatto & Windus, 2010). With Roman Britain through its Objects, Iain Ferris con-tinues the good work.

Anyone who has excavated on prehis-toric or Romano-British sites, especially in southern England, cannot help being aware that, after the Roman Conquest, we are in a new world of goods and commodities. So much stuff turns up on excavations that it is now proving a problem for museum stores and archives.

Dr Ferris’s book is not a catalogue or encyclopaedia of prolific finds. The treasure hunter seeking the J-Spy Book of Romano-British Objects will be disappointed and, to some extent I was disappointed myself, in that he has little to say about ceram-ics, coins, and grave-goods. Nor does he synthesise and compare find assemblages from some of the most thoroughly investi-gated areas of rural settlement, such as East Anglia and the Thames Valley.

However, enough of the negatives, what we do get from Dr Ferris are eight engag-ing chapters or essays that examine current approaches to artefacts. He is particularly strong on the meaning of artefacts such as brooches, ex-votos and curse tablets from ritual sites, and things associated with men, women and children. He discusses the role of towns particularly in promoting art, med-i-cine, attitudes to the body and sex, the self, ancestors and age, and the presence of ethnic groups, such as black Africans, in Britain.

I found particularly fascinating the chap-ter entitled ‘Discovered Under Other Skies’ which analyses caches of prehistoric stone and metal tools deposited in Gaulish and Romano-British ritual sites such as Ivy Chimneys in Essex. Where on earth did they find them?

Clearly I was not the first to uncover and curate a prehistoric hoard. Dr Ferris takes us far beyond typologies. He shows us that objects are fascinating – for what they tell us about their own lives and the lives of their owners.

David Miles

The Story of Roman Bath
Patricia Southern
Amberley, 2012
240 pages, 35 colour photographs, 45 drawings
Hardback £20/$34.95

Patricia Southern is a prolific writer and populariser of things Roman – from histo-ries of the Republic and Empire to biogra-phies of the big beasts: Julius Caesar, Mark Antony, Augustus et al. Here she delivers a workman-like history of Roman Bath, Aquae Sulis, Britain’s most spectacular cult and healing centre.

It is not easy to produce an engaging book based purely on archaeological evidence. Written sources often illuminate people, their motivations, relationships and idiosyn-cracies. For example, from the scandal-mong-ger Suetonius, we hear that Julius Caesar was sexually ambiguous and wore red shoes – traditions that continue in Rome to this day. Roman Britain has few such anecdotes.

In the south of France, where I live much of the time, I can pop into my local city, Nîmes, and walk around the Roman temple, the Maison Carré, where kids skateboard around the podium.

Roman Britain just isn’t like that. When I was a student my Austrian professor used to growl dismissively: ‘Pah! British archae-ology – two stones in a muddy field’.

Bath, with its hot springs generates plenty of mud, though there are certainly more than two stones awkwardly buried beneath England’s finest Georgian city. However, thanks to generations of dogged archaeol-ogists, and particularly Barry Cunliffe and the Bath Archaeological Trust, we have a more detailed knowledge of Bath’s temple of Sulis Minerva than any other religious building in Roman Britain.

Patricia Southern does her best to describe what we currently know. She is not helped much by her publishers. Amberley have a
proud track record of archaeological publishing. However the design of their books is prosaic. Here, 55 wishy-washy colour plates are sandwiched into the centre of the book, rather than being integrated into the text, with old-fashioned looking plans, and no maps to explain Bath’s regional location. Good design and illustrations do a lot to inform and engage the reader. Historic Scotland, the National Museum of Wales, and the Museum of London have been producing these kind of books admirably for some years.

But, if the section on architecture is somewhat dry, the book livenes considerably when it tackles the written evidence for people. These messages from the past are terse, yet they pierce through the silence of the mute majority. Epigraphic material, inscriptions on tombstones, altars and dedicatory slabs, is most frequently found on military sites in Roman Britain.

After these come London and Bath. Judging from the inscriptions, old and not-so-old soldiers came to Bath for R&R, to retire and to die. Such a one was Marcus Aupfius Maximus, centurion of the Sixth Legion Victrix, whose altar to Sulis was erected by his two freedmen. Another was Julius Vitalis, an armourer and a member of the tribe of the Belgae. But not all were soldiers – Priscus, for example, was a stonemason from near modern Chartres.

Most fascinating are the many curse tablets (deixiones), contracts with the gods inscribed on sheets of lead. These are like tweets from trolls in Latin, where people slag off those whom they believe have done them harm – stolen their wives, their pigs, their sandals or their best cloak – and pray for very nasty things indeed to befall them. Human nature has not changed. You will not find the milk of human kindness here in the murky depths of Aquae Sulis.

David Miles

The Archaeology of the Dykes: From the Romans to Offa’s Dyke
Mark Bell
Amberley Publishing
160pp, 10 b&c illustrations, 14 b&w photographs, 33 maps
Paperback, £18.99

Often, when I am out walking in the British countryside, the footpath runs beside long ditches bordered by raised banks, known variously as Devil’s Dyke or Grim’s Ditch, but I have never managed to get a definitive answer as to when, or why, these enigmatic earthworks were made. So I was glad to discover Mark Bell’s The Archaeology of Dykes in which he tries to unravel the dates and purposes of these curious constructions.

These are the only substantial monuments built during the so-called Dark Ages, some possibly earlier, and each dyke seems to have been made for its own particular reason. These include: acting as embankment to prevent flooding; as a ditch or artificial watercourse; as a low wall; as a causeway; as a defensive barrier. Some are short, only a few hundred feet in length; others run for miles. Some are straight; others meander.

Various antiquarians have had their pet theories about the uses and dating of dykes – there has been talk of their connection with sacred ritual but Mark Bell can find no evidence for this. General Pitt Rivers was the first to actually excavate these structures, starting with Bokerley Dyke in Dorset, in the late 19th century. He laid the foundations for 20th-century archaeologists, such as OGS Crawford and Sir Cyril Fox, but as the assumptions both these men made about the landscape being thickly wooded later proved to have been exaggerated, many of their conclusions about dykes and rideways were not accurate. The real question for Bell is: where do dykes fit in when it comes to the transformation of Roman Britain into Anglo-Saxon England? Were they, like Offa’s Dyke, used as frontiers to draw a line between different peoples?

The book goes on to provide a regional survey of dykes, with maps to show their extent and location, with illustrations and photographs, before addressing the question of their origin. Are they Roman, British or Germanic? This is crucial to pinpointing the date of their construction. Then it is time to look at their function. Since ritual use has been discounted, that leaves them as defensive borders or frontiers. But as the author says ‘much work still needs to be done’.

Before closing, Mark Bell adds three interesting appendices entitled: ‘Strange ideas and Non-existent Dykes’, ‘The Chiltern Grims Ditch’ and ‘The Belgic Invasion’, and a very useful Gazetteer showing exactly where to find dykes county by county.

Lindsay Fulcher

The Archaeology of the Dykes: From the Romans to Offa’s Dyke
Mark Bell

Guy Halsall has been Professor of History at York University for the last decade where much of his recent research has been based around early medieval funerary archaeology. He is also much respected as one of the foremost lecturers on Merovingian history and migration.

His latest book, Worlds of Arthur, is an academic, but readable, account of the Dark Ages and the emergence of Britain after the Roman Empire. From the outset it is clear that one of Halsall’s main points is that there is really not enough evidence to back up any clear assertions about the historical Arthur. So the book is a discussion of changing social and economic trends in Britain, awkwardly inclined to mentioning Arthur every so often in a slightly forced way. For instance, one chapter, an engaging study of Pictish archaeology, is given therather gratuitous title of ‘Digging for Arthur’.

One of the more engaging sections of the book, ‘Red Herrings and Old Chestnuts’, takes an analytical look at the written sources commonly cited by excitable pseudo-historians and used to spin their outlandish theories. Halsall goes on to present an amusing critique of some of these fallacious conclusions, such as ‘Arthur the German’. Here his dry sense of humour comes across best.

The author soon moves away from ‘Arthur’s Britain’, however, leaving us with a dispassionate account of the rise and fall of a multitude of kingdoms across ancient Britain, which focuses on economic and political, rather than religious and social, changes. This is definitely a study of politics and power in the Dark Ages rather than an excursion into Arthurian legend.

Geoff Lowsley
**UNITED KINGDOM.**

**EDINBURGH**

*Amazing Amber*
This exhibition brings together a collection which blurs the borders of archaeology, art, biology and geology. With pieces from around the globe the focus is on the various uses of amber – in magic, religion and jewellery.

The National Museum of Scotland
+44 (0) 300 123 6789 (www.nms.ac.uk).
From 10 May until 8 September.

**GLASGOW**

*This Unrivalled Collection*: The Hunterian’s first catalogue
To mark the 200th anniversary of the creation of the Hunterian Museum’s first catalogue, created by collector, dealer and author Captain James Laskey, the museum is reuniting key items in its collection that were once displayed together. Its highlights include a cast of the Rosetta Stone, a Renaissance shield and insect cabinets.

Hunterian Art Gallery
+44 (0) 141 330 4221 (www.gla.ac.uk/hunterian).
Until 11 August.

**LONDON**

*Of Exceptional and Outstanding Merit*
In honour of Lady Barber referring to the Wallace Collection as the benchmark of quality, this exhibition borrows from the Barber Collection a selection of key items that relate to major pieces in the Wallace Collection. These will include an Ancient Greek helmet and a 14th-century French ivory casket.

The Wallace Collection
+44 (0) 20 7563 9500 (www.wallacecollection.org).
From 22 May until 1 September.

**NEW YORK, New York**

*Search for the Unicorn*
Known collectively as the ‘Unicorn Tapestries’, these seven hangings are considered among the finest existing works from the late Middle Ages. Probably French in origin, they were an inaugural gift for the Cloisters, from John D Rockefeller when they opened in 1938. This exhibition draws together related works to explore the elusive symbolism of the unicorn and how it relates to Christian metaphors.

Metropolitan Museum of Art
+001 (0) 21 25 35 77 10 (www.metmuseum.org).
From 15 May until 18 August.

**UNITED STATES.**

**MALIBU, California**

*Sicily: Art and Invention between Greece and Rome*
Sicily’s reputation as a crossroads of the Mediterranean is well earned. In this exhibition 150 objects, from 5th-century BC Greek occupation through to the later Roman presence, are displayed to give an insight into the athletic, military, religious and daily life in this culturally rich colony.

The Getty Villa
+1 (0) 31 04 40 73 00 (www.getty.edu).
Until 19 August.

**BOSTON, Massachusetts**

*Samurai Armor from the Ann and Gabriel Barbier-Mueller Collection*
This is a rare chance to see an exhibition dedicated to the evolution and artistry of highly decorated Samurai armour (right) and weaponry. With over 140 exhibits dating from the 12th to 19th centuries AD, the life and culture of these legendary warriors, a military elite led by shoguns, or warlords, of Japan. Highlights include impressive helmets made of lacquered metal and a wide range of other artefacts in the exhibition made of gold, silver, wood, fur and bronze.

Museum of Fine Arts Boston
+1 (0) 61 72 67 93 00 (www.mfa.org).
Until 4 August.

**UNITED KINGDOM.**

**NEWCASTLE**

*Laskey Revisited*

Houghton Hall, the Norfolk home of Britain’s first Prime Minister, Sir Robert Walpole, will, for a short time, once again be hung with its original fine collection of Old Master paintings, for which the house was designed. These were sold to Catherine the Great in 1799 but are now back, on loan from the Hermitage. Among the 60 paintings are masterpieces by Van Dyck, Poussin, Albani, Rubens, Rembrandt, Velazquez, and Murillo.

Houghton Hall
+44 (0) 1603 598 640 (www.houghtonrevisited.com).
From 11 May until 29 September.

**SUTTON HOO, AD 300–1100**

Highlights from the world of Sutton Hoo, AD 300–1100

In preparation for the opening of a new gallery, artefacts dating from the end of the Roman Empire to the Norman Conquest are on show in Rooms 1 and 2. Among these are some of the wonderful finds from the Sutton Hoo burial in Suffolk, along with other contemporary objects from across Europe and beyond.

The British Museum
+44 (0) 20 7323 8181 (www.britishmuseum.org).
Until late 2013.

Piranesi’s Paestum: Master Drawings Uncovered
One of the most celebrated etchers and painters of Classical scenes, both mythical and inspired by the Grand Tour, Piranesi created around 21 drawings of the temples at Paestum, of which 18 are extant (one is shown below). With loans from Paris and Amsterdam, this exhibition puts all these drawings together for the first time. Their artistic value as well as their influence on architects’ and artists’ understanding of the Classical world is examined here.

Sir John Soane’s Museum
+44 (0) 207 405 2107 (www.soane.org).
Until 18 May.

**UNITED KINGDOM.**

**EDINBURGH**

*Minerva*
May/June 2013
**AUSTRALIA**

**MELBOURNE**

*Afghanistan: Hidden Treasures*

The near-miraculous story of how more than 230 priceless artefacts from the National Museum, Kabul, were hidden and saved by members of staff during the infamous looting of the museum makes the chance to see these treasures even more valuable. With finely wrought gold jewellery and other fine artefacts dating back thousands of years, this show should not be missed.

Melbourne Museum

Until 28 July.

**WASHINGTON, DC**

*Diaghilev and the Ballets Russes, 1909–1929: When Art Danced with Music*

The Ballets Russes was one of the most innovative dance companies of the 20th century. Its collaborators included artists, composers and designers, such as Picasso, Stravinsky and Coco Chanel. This multimedia installation brings together 135 original costumes, set designs, paintings, sculptures, prints and drawings, photographs, posters, and film clips in a show which has originated at the V&A, London. Some of its most famous ballets – the costumes (above), sets and even the choreography – were inspired by scenes found on ancient Greek vases.

**The National Gallery of Art**

+1 (0) 20 27 37 42 15 (www.nga.gov).

From 12 May until 2 September.

**ALBION, Bouches-du-Rhône**

*Rodin: The Light of the Antique*

In this exhibition over 30 private loans as well as those from the Rodin Museum in Paris help to highlight the connection between the French sculptor and the Classical world. More than 250 works reflect Rodin’s dialogue with the past and the strong impression that it made on him.

**The Musée Départemental Arles Antique**

+33 (0) 4 13 31 51 03 (www.arles-antique.cg13.fr).

Until 1 September.

**FRANCE**

**BRUSSELS**

*Ferdinand Hodler: Sacred and Profane*

This exhibition brings together over 100 works in a comprehensive study of Hodler’s entire oeuvre.

**Institut Royal des Beaux-Arts**

+32 (0) 2 503 33 16 (www.iba-arts.be).

Until 19 June.

**BRUSSELS**

*Prussian, Kurland and Livonia Collections in the Russian Museum*

During the 18th and 19th centuries, Russia was the most powerful European country and played an important role in the development of European art and culture.

**The Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium**

+32 (0) 2 503 33 16 (www.iba-arts.be).

Until 15 October.

**GERMANY**

**BERLIN**

*50 Years of Archaeological Research on the Tigris*

To mark a century of excavation at Samarra, an ancient city on the River Tigris, 120km north of Baghdad, the Pergamon Museum in Berlin presents a range of artefacts from German museums from these early digs. With wall-paintings, stucco panelling, cut glass and lustreware this is a fascinating glimpse into life in this royal city, but also a study of changing techniques used in archaeology over the past 100 years.

**The Pergamon Museum**

+49 (0) 30 266 42 42 42 (www.smb.museum).

Until 26 May.

**HILDESHEIM**

*Back to the Beginnings: Treasures from Early Civilizations in the Aegean at the Collection of Classical Antiquities*

The last chance to see this small display of choice objects from the Aegean Bronze Age. Among well-documented examples are lesser known and unusual artefacts including Cycladic idols, bronze statuettes and anthropomorphic terracotta figures. Dating from all periods of the Aegean Bronze Age, this is an interesting and diverse introduction to the culture.

**The Altes Museum**

+49 (0) 30 266 42 42 42 (www.smb.museum).

Until 7 June.

**MUNICH, Bavaria**

*Travel to the Underworld: Egyptian Afterlife*

The subject of the Ancient Egyptian Underworld never ceases to be an attraction and the centrepiece of this show is the reconstruction of a grave chamber excavated on the West Bank at Thebes. This exhibition also includes *Book of the Dead* papyri, *shabtis* and statues representing 3,000 years of funerary history.

**Museum of Egyptian Art Munich**

+49 (0) 89 289 27 630 (www.aegyptisches-museum-muenchen.de).

Until 9 June.

**HANNOVER**

*Fascinating Nefertiti: Bernhard Hoetger and Egypt*

A little over 100 years since the discovery of the bust of Nefertiti, this exhibition reflects on the impact on art and design from the discoveries in Amarna. With a particular focus on the expressionist artist Bernhard Hoetger, a 3-D simulation model shows the developments as a result of finds at this royal city.

**Landesmuseum Hannover**

+49 (0) 51 19 80 76 86 (www.landesmuseum-hannover.niedersachsen.de).

Until 25 August.

**BERLIN**

*Samarra – Centre of the World. 101 Years of Archaeological Research on the Tigris*

**The National Gallery of Art**

+1 (0) 20 27 37 42 15 (www.nga.gov).

From 12 May until 2 September.

**ARGENTINA**

*Albrecht Dürer Watercolors and Drawings from the Albertina*

With a loan of almost all of the watercolours and drawings by Dürer from the Albertina in Vienna, this is a rare chance in the USA to see 118 works by one of the finest German artists. The exhibition is divided into 14 themes highlighting Dürer’s skill as a draftsman. Many of his subjects are historical and mythical events found on ancient Greek vases.

**The National Gallery of Art**

+1 (0) 20 27 37 42 15 (www.nga.gov).

Until 9 June.

**HONG KONG**

*Radiant Legacy: Ancient Chinese Gold from the Mengdiexuan Collection*

One of the first major presentations of ancient Chinese gold to be held in Hong Kong, this show assesses the development of the role of our most precious metal over 5,000 years. With 300 Eurasian and Chinese gold artefacts, the interaction with other cultures and development of technology and art are examined.

**Art Museum at the Chinese University of Hong Kong**

+852 394 374 16 (www.ccuuk.eduhk).

From 5 May until October.

**BONN**

*Dangerous place - crime in the Roman Empire*

This show gives visitors a fascinating glimpse into crime in the Roman world, with a grisly look at human remains where deliberate injury, torture or murder are evident, along with cult practices, talismans and charms that show superstitions of these practices. Punishment and the law are also investigated in what promises to be a rather unusual exhibition.

**LVR Landesmuseum Bonn**

+49 (0) 228 20700 (www.rbm.lrv.de).

Until 18 August.

**ONTARIO**

*Mesopotamia*

In collaboration with the British Museum, 3,000 years of history from one of the world’s oldest civilisations is documented in more than 170 objects on loan to ROM. Social and technological change, as well as the rise and fall of city states, such as Sumer and Babylon, is seen in a range of artefacts including wall reliefs, sculpture (Ashurnasirpal II, 883–859 BC, above) and jewellery.

**Royal Ontario Museum**

+1 (0) 416 (0) 586 6000 (www.rom.on.ca).

From 22 June.

**CANADA**

**HONG KONG**

*Radiant Legacy: Ancient Chinese Gold from the Mengdiexuan Collection*

One of the first major presentations of ancient Chinese gold to be held in Hong Kong, this show assesses the development of the role of our most precious metal over 5,000 years. With 300 Eurasian and Chinese gold artefacts, the interaction with other cultures and development of technology and art are examined.

**Art Museum at the Chinese University of Hong Kong**

+852 394 374 16 (www.ccuuk.eduhk).

From 5 May until October.
KOREA
SEOUL
Xiongnu, the Great Empire of the Steppes -Mongolian Archaeological Excavation Result Exhibition
Brand new finds from the 2006 excavation season at Duurlig Nars and Khenti Aimag in Mongolia will be on display here, including a jade disc from Tomb No. 1. This exhibition is an introduction to the Hun tomb complex and the excavation results.
National Museum of Korea
+82 (0) 2 2077 92 93
(www.museum.go.kr).
Until 19 June 2013.

SWITZERLAND
ZURICH
Animals and Mythical Creatures from Antiquity to the Modern Age
With loans from leading institutions, this exhibition examines the symbolism of real and mythical creatures across time and cultures. Taking in biblical stories, Ancient Greek and Roman myths and the fantastical tales of medieval Europe, it includes sirens, griffins, centaurs, dragons and unicorns (above is a 12th-century lion reliquary) made from a wide range of materials.
Landes Museum Zurich
+41 (0) 44 218 65 11
(www.animal.landesmuseum.ch).
Until 14 July.

Netherlands
AMSTERDAM
Coffins of the Aman Priests
In 1891 Bab el-Gasus, the hidden burial-place for the priests of the Temple of Aman at Thebes, was discovered. This exhibition focuses on the richly decorated sarcophagi of the priests and priestesses (detail below). With loans from the Louvre and Vatican alongside 19th-century watercolours, this will be an intriguing display. There is also a chance to see conservators at work on the 3,000-year-old coffins.
Dutch National Museum of Antiquities
+31 (0) 71 51 63 163
(www.rmo.nl). Until 15 September.

SPAIN
BARCELONA
Gods and myths of antiquity. The evidence of the currency of Hispania
A close look at divinities, myths and cults of the inhabited Iberian Peninsula through numismatic artefacts. This exhibition is organised into three parts: Greek and Oriental Cults, Indigenous Gods, and Roman Gods up to the arrival of Visigoths.
National Museum of Catalan Art
+34 93 622 03 76 (www.mnac.cat).
Until 29 September.

SWITZERLAND
ZURICH
Workshop with the Institute of Making
23 June, 10am-6pm
Slade School of Fine Art
(www.artofmaking.ac.uk).
Contact will.wootton@kcl.ac.uk

Croatia Archaeological Conference
Croatia at the Crossroads
This conference will examine routes and channels of communication (or lack of them) manifest through trade, technological transfer, artistic influence and conflict. Presentations from 24 archaeologists, some based in Britain, but the majority from Croatia, will feature a wide range of archaeological projects which have been conducted in Croatia over the past 20 years.
24-25 June
Admission is free but pre-registration is required.
Europe House, 32 Smith Square, London SW1P 3EU
(www.croatiatatcrossroads.net).

UNITED KINGDOM, Oxford
Classical Art Research Centre at the Beazley Archive
In Art, More Alive than in Reality: Imagining and Imaging Objects in Ancient Greece
CARC Special Lecture: Professor Tonio Hölscher (University of Heidelberg).
All are welcome.
21 May, 5pm
Danson Room, Trinity College, Broad Street, Oxford, OX1 3BH
(http://www.beazley.ox.ac.uk/events)

SPAIN, Mérida
XVIIIth International Congress of Classical Archaeology
Centre and periphery in the ancient world
13 to 17 May
National Museum of Roman Art in Mérida
News relating to this event can be found on the webpage (www.aiac2013.merida.mnar.icac.net)

TURKEY, Izmir
Theoretical Archaeology Group – Turkey Meeting
9-10 May
Presentation of papers on a range of Turkish archaeological issues.
(NB. Papers in Turkish and English)
Ege University, Izmir
(www.biaa.ac.uk/home/images/stories/tag_turkey_cfp.pdf)

ART FAIRS
UNITED KINGDOM, London
Art Antiques London
Now in its third year, this addition to the international art market world returns to the prestigious grounds of the Albert Memorial and Kensington Gardens, with more than 70 of the world’s leading dealers. One highlight of the fair is its accompanying lecture series in which international curators and experts give talks on a range of topics.
Albert Memorial West Lawn, Kensington Gardens, London (opposite the Royal Albert Hall)
+44 (0)20 7389 6555
(www.haughton.com).
From 13 to 19 June.

Masterpiece
Having rapidly established itself on the art market scene, this young fair, now in its fourth year, will no doubt prove a great success as in previous years. One highlight will be the Tomasso Brothers’ stand which will pay homage to the Antique, a term used between the 15th and 18th centuries when referring to artefacts made in ancient Greece and Rome, then regarded as the ultimate aspiration and inspiration for any artists or sculptor. One such was the German sculptor Joseph Claus (1718-1788) who produced this remarkable white marble bust of the Emperor Caracalla (above), which will be on the Tomasso Brothers’ stand (C2).
South Grounds, The Royal Hospital Chelsea, London, SW3 4SR
+44 (0) 20 7499 7470
(www.masterpiecefair.com).
From 27 June until 3 July.

BELGIUM, Brussels
Brussels Ancient Art Fair (BAAF)
To celebrate the 10th year of this highly successful specialist fair, an exhibition entitled Ancient Egypt: Masterpieces from Collectors and Collections will be staged, with a full catalogue to accompany it. In addition to BAAF, two other fairs will take place at the Sablon at the same time: BOAFair (Oriental Art) and BRUNEAF (Tribal Art).
Grand Sablon, Place du Grand Sablon + 32 (0) 475 48 36 82 (www.biaf.be).
From 6 to 10 June.

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