Martin Green, the Dorset farmer who excavated so many finds on his land that he set up his own museum
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From poetry to rock art

In a world ruled by men for men, Roman women lived their lives largely in the shadows, which was probably the safest place for them. For, even if they were intelligent, educated and rich in their own right, they were quite likely to be attacked by men when they tried to act independently, or stepped out of line by voicing their own opinions. Their names were blackened by male writers and orators, usually by casting aspersions on their sexual morality. You can find out how this was done and to whom on pages 10 to 13.

A Roman woman poet called Sulpicia, who wrote erotic verse during the 1st century BC, seems to have gone against this general rule. But then, some academics are not even sure that she actually existed and say that her poems may have been written by a man pretending to be a woman. See what you think on pages 8 to 9; and, for more Classical love poetry, see one of our book reviews on page 54.

Despite the popular perception of Roman decadence – including murder, incest, poisonings and drunken orgies – patriarchal Roman society, with all its rules and regulations, was somewhat staid and stodgy, until, that is, the exotic influence of the East came slithering into the Forum. Cleopatra’s presence in Rome, from 46 to 44 BC, was the beginning of the fashion for all things Egyptian. The Serpent of the Nile infiltrated practically every aspect of Roman society – religion, fashion, even interior design – although an all-powerful deified female ruler such as Cleopatra could only be tolerated as an entirely foreign concept.

An exhibition called Cleopatra: Rome and the Magic of Egypt examines this cultural interchange. It is on show in Rome until 2 February, and we have a feature about it on pages 14 to 19.

The Druids, on the other hand, were a foreign cultural influence that was not at all popular with the Romans. Their link with Stonehenge is not as strong as it used to be either. I am not talking about the modern pagans in long white robes who gather there for the solstices, but the association of those famous stones with the bards of old. There are many new theories about who built Stonehenge and why, so it will be interesting to see what is said on this subject in the new Visitor Centre that has just opened at the site. The busy roads around this ancient monument have always bedevilled planners concerned about its preservation, and the logistics of providing access to it remain problematical, as David Miles explains on pages 22 to 25.

David also brings us news from a museum that anyone planning a trip to Stonehenge should visit, that is the Wiltshire Museum in nearby Devizes. The galleries of this county museum have been redesigned so that its collection of gleaming Bronze Age gold objects, excavated from Bush Barrow in 1808, can be suitably displayed in the context of other no-less-precious items; see pages 30 to 33.

Sandwiched in between these two features is an interview with Martin Green, a Dorset farmer whose passion for archaeology led him to excavate his own land with remarkable results, including a Bronze Age settlement with three burials. Over the years groups of student archaeologists have come to work on the Training Dig here, and Martin’s collection of finds has increased so much that he set up his own museum. Down Farm now attracts a whole range of visitors – from schoolchildren to PhD students. Turn to pages 26 to 29 to read more about one man and his museum.

Travelling far away from Wessex, we go to see the amazing Roman sites of Algeria with the renowned war photographer Don McCullin. Barnaby Rogerson accompanied Don (who was taking time off from covering the war zones of the world) while they worked together on a book called Southern Frontiers: A Journey Across the Roman Empire. Barnaby’s account of part of their journey and Don’s atmospheric black and white images are on pages 34 to 39.

The neighbouring Byzantine and early Islamic empires were rivals in both trade and religion, as can be seen on their coins in an exhibition called Faith & Fortune at the Barber Institute in Birmingham. Find out more on pages 40 to 43.

Finally, look at the fascinating rock art of Egypt’s Eastern Desert, where there are many depictions of boats. Could these be prototypes of the Solar Boat that is so prevalent in Pharaonic art and religion? Have a look at pages 44 to 47 and see what you think.

CONTRIBUTORS

Rebecca Darley
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recent stories from the world of ancient art and archaeology

Archaeological tourism conference

Founded in the 6th century BC, the Greek city of Paestum, a UNESCO World Heritage Site and one of the most impressive in Italy, was the venue for the meeting of the Mediterranean Exchange of Archaeological Tourism, or Borsa Mediterraneo del Turismo Archeologico (BMTA), which was held between 14 and 17 November 2013. The events took place in marquees adjacent to Paestum’s renowned Temple of Ceres, as well as inside its National Archaeological Museum and in the Byzantine basilica.

BMTA is an international convention and the only one in the world entirely devoted to archaeological heritage, a meeting place for all kinds of professional businesses related to archaeology. This annual event provides an opportunity for experts in the field to debate cultural heritage issues, such as protection and promotion, and to catch up on what’s going on in the world of interactive and virtual technologies.

The event attracted 8,000 visitors and 150 exhibitors, as well as representatives of the World Trade Organisation, UNESCO, ICCROM (the UN body that was set up to conserve cultural heritage) and international governmental organisations, professional associations, archaeologists and museum directors.

Around 130 journalists from across the media also attended, and an impressive number of distinguished academics gave lectures. The 2013 programme included events with titles such as ArcheoWorking, ArcheoFilm, Experimental Laboratories of Archaeology, and Meetings with the Protagonists, a multimedia exhibition entitled ArcheoVirtual showing how new scientific research relates to the ancient world.

The importance of cultural heritage as a factor of intercultural dialogue, social integration and economic development was underlined. Local and foreign specialised institutions, regions, municipalities, chambers of commerce, tourism promotion companies, archaeological parks, professional and cultural associations, tourist operators, trade associations, service companies and publishing houses promoted their territory and their products in the exhibition hall. ArcheoMeeting allowed new projects and press conferences to be presented.

This event promotes co-operation among people involved in archaeological heritage through an exchange of ideas.

The BMTA Official Guest in 2013 was Venezuela – following in the footsteps of Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia, Syria, France, Algeria, Greece, Libya, Peru, Portugal, Cambodia, Turkey and Armenia.

The International Research Institute for Archaeology and Ethnology (IRIAE) made its debut with a presentation entitled IRIAE Revolution: When Archaeological Research turns into Sustainable Business. The IRIAE was set up in Naples at the end of 2012 to carry out academic research and international archaeological and ethnological promotion.

Its aim is to make sure that new discoveries are available both to philanthropists and sponsors and to a wider public by means of documentary and other kinds of reporting.

To illustrate this, the IRIAE presented the findings of the recent joint Italo-Japanese expedition in the Bay of Takashima in Japan, where shipwrecks of Kublai Khan’s fleet, that unsuccessfully attempted to invade Japan in AD 1281, were found.

An archaeological park – modelled on those established in Italy at the submerged sites of Baia (near Naples) and Cala Gadir (near Pantelleria-Trapani) – is being constructed on land and under water at Takashima.

Dalu Jones

• The next Borsa Mediterraneo del Turismo Archeologico (www.bmta.it) will be held from 30 October to 2 November 2014.
• For further information on the IRIAE’s work, visit www.iriae.com.
They got the Stonehenge blues

A new paper by Dr Richard Bevins of the National Museum Wales, Dr Rob Ixer of the Institute of Archaeology, UCL, and Professor Nick Pearce of Aberystwyth University, has uncovered a source for one of the bluestone types found at Stonehenge.

In 2011, Bevins and Ixer confirmed for the first time the exact location of some of the bluestones known as rhyolites (a type of silica-rich igneous rock). Their research traced the source of the stone to the prominent outcrop of Craig Rhos y Felin near Crymych, Pembrokeshire.

Together with Pearce, they are now confident of the location of another major type of bluestone – the spotted dolerite, a kind of relatively silica-poor igneous rock containing distinctive alteration spots.

Experts have argued that the large sarsen stones at Stonehenge are local to the Salisbury Plain area. However, the origin of the smaller bluestones has been the subject of research for many years, although there has been little refinement of the research conducted by geologist Herbert Henry Thomas in 1923 concerning their origins.

HH Thomas from the Geological Survey published a paper in The Antiquaries Journal in which he claimed to have sourced the spotted dolerite component of the bluestones to hilltop rock outcrops, exposed in the high Preseli, to the west of Crymych in west Wales. Specifically, he thought that the tors on Carn Meini and Cerrig Marchogion were the likely source outcrops. He went on to speculate about how humans had transported the stones to the Salisbury Plain, favouring transport across land rather than a combined land- and sea journey. As a result of Thomas’s views, recent archaeological excavations have concentrated on finding Stonehenge-related quarries at Carn Meini.

Using geochemical techniques, Bevins, Ixer and Pearce have compared samples of rock and debris from Stonehenge with Thomas’s findings and geochemical data published in the early 1990s by Richard Thorpe and his Open University team. The current findings conclude that the majority of the spotted dolerites analysed come from Carn Goedog, which is about 1.5km away from Thomas’s proposed site of Carn Meini.

Dr Richard Bevins, who has been studying the geology of Pembrokeshire for more than 30 years, commented:

‘I am very pleased that we have continued to revisit the area and been able to further study the standing stones and debris from Stonehenge. The geology of Pembrokeshire is unique, which is why I have spent so much time in the area.

‘The area has much to offer in helping us understand what happens when magma is erupted from underwater volcanoes, and how those igneous rocks are transformed by the effects of increased temperatures and pressures during later mountain building events. Equally interesting is the fact that these igneous rocks have been used in the construction of Stonehenge, and only once we know their correct geographical origins can we fully interpret the archaeological significance.

‘I hope that our recent scientific findings will influence the continually debated question of how the Bluestones were transported to Salisbury Plain.

‘Dr Rob Ixer, who first studied Stonehenge bluestone 25 years ago, concluded:

‘As this and earlier papers show, almost everything we believed 10 years ago about the bluestones has been shown to be partially or completely incorrect. We are still in the stages of redress and shall continue to research the bluestones for answers. This paper is a very important component of this search and must redirect us (and others) to relook at the standing stones, their debris and possible quarry sites so that we can correctly determine their origins.’

How these stones got to Stonehenge is a question that still has to be answered.

• The complete paper on this subject will be published in the Journal of Archaeological Science later this year.

Hot stuff

A team of American and Mexican archaeologists has found the residue of chili pepper while analysing 2,000-year-old pottery vessels that were unearthed at the site of Chiapa de Corzo in southern Mexico. Chiapa de Corzo was settled around 1200 BC by Mixe-zoquean speakers with strong ancestral ties to Olmec people residing in the Gulf and Pacific Coastal regions of Mesoamerica. By 900 or 800 BC, the small Mixe-zoque village of Chiapa de Corzo had established a strong, possibly direct relationship with the Gulf Olmec centre of La Venta. The two centres replicated each other’s pottery and figurine styles, and seem to have tapped the same obsidian and andesite sources.

Flowering plants of the genus Capsicum are usually known as chili peppers. There are relatively few sites in Mesoamerica, Central

Five vessels, circa 400 BC, including two sprouted jars, from Chiapa de Corzo, bore traces of chilli pepper.

Minerva January/February 2014
The eagle has landed

Archaeologists have discovered an extraordinarily fine piece of Roman sculpture in the form of an eagle firmly grasping a writhing serpent in its beak. The find was uncovered in the City of London on a site being prepared for the development of a 16-storey hotel.

At first the team from MOLA (Museum of London Archaeology) hesitated to announce that their discovery was Roman because its condition seemed almost too good to be true. But now specialists have confirmed that the sculpture dates from the 1st or 2nd century AD.

Depictions of eagles and serpents are typically Roman, but the closest comparison to this sculpture comes from Jordan. The eagle and the snake are thought to symbolise the struggle of good, the eagle, against evil, the snake. This theme is common in funerary contexts. An important Roman cemetery is known to have been located on the site.

Archaeologists believe that this statue once adorned a rich mausoleum, the foundations of which were also unearthed. The lack of weathering on the statue corroborates this theory, as does the absence of detail on the back of the sculpture, suggesting it once sat in an alcove. It is described by experts as ‘amongst the very best statues surviving from Roman Britain’, and the skill of the craftsman is very apparent, with the forked tongue of the snake and the individual feathers of the eagle still clearly discernible today. Some 65cm tall and 55cm wide, the sculpture is made from oolitic limestone from the Cotswolds. A well-known and celebrated school of Romano-British sculptors worked in that area but, until now, examples of their exquisite work have been scant and fragmentary.

‘The eagle is a classically Roman symbol and this new find provides a fascinating insight into the inhabitants of Roman London and demonstrates their familiarity with the iconography of the wider Classical world,’ commented MOLA Finds Specialist Michael Marshall.

‘Funerary sculpture from the city is very rare, and this example, perhaps from a mausoleum, is particularly fine, which will help us to understand how the photographs of those buried there.’

Reverend Professor Martin Henig, Honorary Professor at the Institute of Archaeology at University College London said:

‘The sculpture is of exceptional quality, the finest sculpture by a Romano-British artist ever found in London, and among the very best statues surviving from Roman Britain. Its condition is extraordinary, the carving as crisp as on the day it was carved.’

• The eagle will be on display at the Museum of London (www.museumoflondon.org.uk/london-wall/) until April 2014.
New museums: from Hatay to Troy

A new museum showcasing previously unseen mosaics has recently opened in the province of Hatay in southern Turkey. This building is larger than the old museum and allows visitors to better see the mosaics after their careful recent restoration. A significant collection of ancient coins is also on display, as well as reconstructions of the ancient settlements of Ucagizli Cave and the mounds of Tell Tayinat and Accana.

New museums are also planned in Sanliurfa, where Turkey’s largest mosaic museum is under construction; in Usak, where a new museum complex will display the famous treasure of King Croesus; and in Troy of the fabled wooden horse. All are expected to open later this year.

It was the discovery of the highly valuable mosaics during the building of a theme park that has prompted the creation of the new museum in the south-eastern district of Sanliurfa. The mosaics, which are Roman, feature hunting scenes and depictions of fighting Amazons, and date from the 5th and 6th centuries. Experts have classified them as some of the most important in the world. When completed, the large museum complex will include an archaeology museum and an archaeopark as well as the mosaic museum.

Another exciting piece of news is the museum in Usak, which will be housed in the town’s historic railway station and display the fabled treasure of King Croesus, 363 valuable Lydian artefacts dating from the 7th century BC, and other objects dating back to 400 BC.

Lastly – and perhaps the best news – is that in Troy the long-awaited museum project is at last under way. After an architectural competition, a Modernist-Cubist design has been chosen for the ancient site’s museum.

The main building will be built on ground level, with the galleries displaying artefacts underground. The museum will display the results of excavations of the ancient city of Troy, which began over 150 years ago, although experts believe that two or three more centuries of work are still needed to fully excavate it. The displays will include the “Troy gold”, stunning early Bronze Age jewellery that was found there. The delicate and distinctive gold artefacts, which were made for aristocratic women 4,400 years ago, were produced by two particular manufacturing techniques, known as filigree and granulation.

This much-anticipated museum is bound to be a popular visitor attraction. Can we expect the gold from Troy excavated by Schliemann and now in Russia to return?

Lindsay Fulcher
Cinerary Urn Fragment
Roman, First century AD
Marble with 19th century inscribed ink
8.5 in. Height
Provenance: Sue Mengers 1932-2011,
Beverly Hills, California, acquired in the 1970s - 1980s

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Musing on a mystery

Were the erotic verses written by a female Roman poet called Sulpicia really her work? Diana Bentley investigates

While the female poets of Classical Greece cut quite a dash in the annals of poetry, Latin literature is sadly lacking in women writers. But two, remarkably both named Sulpicia, are said to belong to its ranks: one is from the age of Emperor Augustus (63 BC-AD 14); the other, Sulpicia Caleni, from the time of Domitian (AD 51-96). Only two of the latter's poems, based on her experience of married life and love with her husband Calenus, survive. In his Epigrams (10.35) Martial (AD 40-102/4) famously recommended them to married couples if they wanted to please each other.

To me, though, the earlier Sulpicia presents a particularly beguiling figure. Whether such a poet actually existed at all has caused much debate: to some, she is a whimsical invention; to others, a bold, patrician elegist who should be allowed to take her place among the illustrious contemporaries.

At the end of Book III of the work of Tibullus, the renowned Latin poet and elegist (circa 55-19 BC), are 11 poems, part of a group, which either Sulpicia, or he or his fellow poets, could have composed. These lie at the heart of the storm.

Six brief, love-fuelled verses, written in the first person, feature a woman called Sulpicia. The other five (often called 'The Garland of Sulpicia'), which are longer and more elaborate, also refer to her. All suggest that Sulpicia was having a passionate affair with a certain Cerinthus.

From references within the poems, it appears that she was from a gifted family, the daughter of the aristocratic Servius Sulpicius Rufus, a lawyer who dabbled in love poetry, who was consul in 51 BC. She was also the niece of the statesman and literary patron Marcus Valerius Messalla Corvinus, consul in 51 BC, who was a composer of erotic and bucolic verse. But whether some, or any, of the 11 poems were written by a female poet called Sulpicia is now a contentious issue with some scholars.

A reluctance to accept that a woman could have written the poems has fuelled the debate. Arguments for and against Sulpicia fall into various groups, as Judith Hallett, Professor of Classics, University of Maryland, College Park, explains:

'The 19th-century German scholar OF Gruppe suggested that Sulpicia may have written the last six elegies, as they are in the first person and feature a woman called Sulpicia. Another proposition of the same vintage is that the first five poems, because they are longer and more complex, must be the work of a male impersonating the female voice. A third proposition is that, even if one person wrote all 11 poems, this person, too, was a man – perhaps Tibullus – posing as a woman called Sulpicia. A fourth argument is that Sulpicia was not a historical person at all but a literary fantasy.'

The argument against a woman writer is one that champions of Sulpicia say is relatively recent and contrasts with the acceptance of female poets from ancient Greece.

'Generations of people have accepted Sappho [620-570 BC] as a poet – she was just “there” – and Carullus [84-54 BC] was a fan of hers,' says Jane Stevenson, Regius Chair of Humanity, University of Aberdeen.

But Sulpicia's authorship of the poems was not a subject of dispute during Renaissance times, as Jane Stevenson points out:

'People took it for granted then that women wrote poetry. Only when women writers become a problem did Sulpicia become a problem. So by the 19th century, Latin scholars mostly refused to believe that a woman wrote the poems and thought Tibullus, or another male poet, must have written them for her.'

Dr Nick Lowe, Reader in Classics, Royal Holloway, University of London, agrees that Sulpicia's authorship became contentious when social attitudes changed.

'It becomes an issue with the Romantic Movement and is probably part of a patriarchal resistance to the idea that women were writing in antiquity. Sulpicia's candour and sexual independence, in particular, presented a problem. But Sulpicia seems to have been the highly educated daughter of a well-connected aristocratic family and her existence and work as a poet is perfectly plausible.'

While Hallett and Stevenson believe that all 11 poems were by Sulpicia, Lowe thinks only the six shorter ones were written by her. All, however, contend that Sulpicia's verses present a clear, sophisticated female voice in a distinctly male genre and that she could surely have been part of an experimental literary set that included Tibullus.

'I believe Sulpicia wrote these verses about the same time as Tibullus was writing his later verses – that is, about 19 BC – when she was in her mid to late 20s,' says Judith Hallett. 'By then, I think she was divorced or widowed and belonged to a group of poets, encouraged by her uncle, an influential literary patron whose protégés included Tibullus and Ovid. Tibullus' sudden death may have prompted Messalla's decision to publish Tibullus' verses, including those of Sulpicia.'

If the body of Sulpicia's work is small, it is highly charged. Her voice is spirited and contains more than a hint of erotic longing. In Sulpicia Regrets, she berates herself for leaving her lover on his own and concealing her passion:

Sulpicia Regrets

Light of my being, let me not be so passionately

Desired by you as I guess I was some days since

If in the whole of my young years

I ever did anything quite so silly,

As I think it was

When I left you on your own the other night,

Hoping to hide the fierceness of the passion

That all the time was burning within me.

In It’s Out at Last, she insists that she has no intention of keeping her love a secret and, obviously determined to throw caution to the wind, declares her indifference to whatever the world may think about it:

It’s Out at Last

Love has come at last. The very idea

That I’d hide it makes me more ashamed

Than openly confessing. Won over

By my Muse’s supplication, Cythera’s Goddess

Has brought him to me, placed him in my arms.

What Venus promised, she has fulfilled.

Let them hassle who have missed

their chance.

I’ll not entrust the news to a sealed letter

That none may read of it before my lover does.

I loathe to wear a mask in deference

To what the world may say. Let everyone hear

That we have come together – each of us

Deserving the other.

In Cerinthus Is Unfaithful, she displays her fury after discovering her lover has taken up with ‘a togged-up tart’. Some things never change, and the feelings of a young woman...
households. But more importantly it said that she had belonged to someone called Sulpicia, who is thought to have written the tribute. After the Second World War, the inscription was largely forgotten until Jane Stevenson studied it again and concluded that, as an independent poem voiced by Sulpicia and considering its linguistic features, it supports her authorship of the poems in Tibullus’ Book III. This inscription, which was more recently incorporated into the wall of an apartment building on the Via del Corso, disappeared some years ago, but luckily not before it had been both recorded and photographed.

With no further references to Sulpicia, the question remains: was she one of the bold Roman women who ventured into verse and, if so, what happened to her? Nick Lowe finds the lack of material about Sulpicia unsurprising: ‘Women in the Roman world tended to be erased from history unless they had some public role as, say, the mother of someone notable. Also, many people died early at that time. It could be that we’re looking at a young talent who largely slipped through the net of history.’

Judith Hallett believes her attitudes may have become an issue. ‘Sulpicia takes a morally defiant stance,’ she explains. It’s possible that she may have been an increasingly problematic literary presence after the passing of Lex Julia, Augustus’ moral and marital legislation of 18-17 BC.’ Under this law, which aimed to restore traditional Roman family values, Augustus had his own daughter exiled for adultery, and Judith Hallett thinks that Lex Julia may have silenced Sulpicia. But if Sulpicia was silenced then, her supporters today will not be. As well as being a talented poet, Sulpicia may have been one of the first feminists, too.

The history of women in ancient Rome is a fascinating and exhilarating subject. It gives an important insight into one of the world’s most dynamic and successful superpower civilisations and, at the same time, illuminates any number of admirable, exciting, sophisticated, slatternly, dangerous and evil women fighting to be heard and seen against insurmountable odds in a world run by men for men.

‘Silent’ is a word that is often used to describe Roman women. First, because of the paucity of contemporary direct evidence for their lives; ‘silent’, too, because for 1,500 years they were relegated to the shadows of history, largely ignored by historians until an explosion of scholarly articles and books covering every conceivable aspect of Roman women’s lives in the 1970s, which has continued ever since.

‘Silent’ can also be used to describe how the typical Roman man liked his women: silent, unobtrusive, and at home. This silence is deepened because the Roman *familia* was a very private institution in which the woman was encouraged as wife, daughter or mother to be discreet; what she said and did in the home tended to stay in the home; only writers extolled, or vilified, exceptional, high-profile women.

Any study of women in ancient Rome is beset by a problem of evidence or, rather, the lack of it. Just like slaves and children, women were second-class citizens on the margins of society: they were, technically at least, always under the control of a man – be it father or husband or guardian, depending on time of life and circumstances. They were barred from holding public office and excluded from the Roman war machine. They were also politically invisible because they had no vote and, Vestal Virgins apart, they played only a limited role in state religion. From what survives of Roman literature they emerge as largely reticent; their education was delimited by early marriage, managing the household and serial childbirth. In the 4th century AD John Chrysostom, the Archbishop of Constantinople, the Archbishop of Constantinople, summed it up in *The Type of Women Who Ought to be Taken as Wives*:

‘A woman’s role exclusively is to care for children, for her husband, and for her home… God assigned a role to each of the sexes: women look after the home, men take care of public affairs, business and military matters – in other words, everything outside the home.’

In this he was echoing the words of Livy, from the end of the 1st century BC, who voiced the predominant male attitude when he described the debate on the repeal of the Oppian Law in 195 BC, a rare example of woman-power exerting itself in Roman politics:

‘Women cannot hold magistracies, priesthoods, celebrate triumphs, wear badges of office, enjoy gifts, or booty; elegance, finery, and beautiful clothes are women’s emblems, this is what they love and are proud of, this is what our ancestors called the world of women.’

In other words, let them go shopping and, according to Philo of Alexandria, writing soon after Livy,
woe betide any woman who acts immoderately, or indeed acts like a man. For Philo, things had already gone way too far; women should keep their hands to themselves, or lose one of them:

‘But as it is now, some women are advanced to such a pitch of shamelessness as not only, though they are women, to give vent to intemperate language and abuse among a crowd of men, but even to strike men and insult them, with hands practised rather in works of the loom and spinning than in blows and assaults... but that is a shocking thing if a woman were to proceed to such a degree of boldness as to seize hold of the genitals of one of the men quarrelling... and let the punishment be the cutting off of the hand which has touched what it ought not to have touched.’

When, in *The Bacchides*, the comic playwright Plautus (254-184 BC) wrote the line ‘there’s nothing more miserable than a woman’, was he referring to her mood or social status? Probably both. While a nostalgic Cicero (106-43 BC) stated: ‘Our ancestors, in their wisdom, wanted all women to be under the power of guardians because of their feebleness of mind.’ In his *Institutiones*, written around AD 160, the jurist Gaius confirmed that, on reaching puberty, boys were freed from their guardians, but not girls – the reason being ‘portunity animi levitatem’ – generally girls were considered to be what today some would disparagingly call ‘airheads’.

These assertions, which no doubt received general acceptance, remind us how we receive what we know about Roman women. They were almost always seen through, and distorted by, the prism of middle-class, educated or powerful men. Descriptions of women...
Roman history

and their actions are often refracted from the margins of a male world through descriptions of men’s actions and achievements. What little the historians and politicians do tell us about women is therefore a kind of ricochet, almost second-hand and derivative, often edited to embellish the description of a man and his actions.

The essence of Roman womanhood was the matrona: the Roman wife and woman of the household. The matrona was the glue which held the Roman family together and provided the offspring essential to the running of the farm or business, the recruits needed for bar and battlefield, and for the ever-burgeoning administration at home and in overseas provinces and dependencies. The qualities expected of these stay-at-home one-man women (unio rei) can be identified in funerary inscriptions, where we read time and time again of pudicitia (sexual propriety), modesty, virtuousness, loyalty, docility, unobtrusiveness, strength of character and fortitude, pietas towards the family, and unswerving devotion to children.

The ability to run the home (domum servat) and work the wool (lanae fecta) became badges of the matrona. A girl, often in her very early teens, took on these responsibilities and obligations from the minute she arrived in her husband’s house during her wedding and was judged for the rest of her life on how far she lived up to this paradigm.

The famously virtuous matronae of Rome – Lucretia, Verginia, Cornelia, Aurelia Cotta – all reputedly had these qualities in spades.

All the more impressive, then, was the achievement and impact of the women who did break through this ancient glass ceiling. Some were social paradoxes: conspicuous, capricious, assertive and influential, everything they should not be. But, by the end of the Republic and during the early days of the Empire, a number of elite Roman women attained levels of intellect, power and responsibility, directly or indirectly, through male politicians, lovers and emperors, unimaginable less than a century before.

Although these women say little themselves, down the years, Roman men describe these exceptions to the rule of silence. In politics, law, business, religion, the fine and the dark arts, we meet extraordinary and notorious women who excelled and won the admiration, or otherwise, of their male counterparts. They shook off their traditional restrictions and forged identities of their own in a largely suspicious, paranoid, patronising and critical male world.

Occasionally, though, Roman women themselves do speak to us: through poetry, graffiti and funerary inscriptions. Thankfully, the latter are not always the impersonal and formulaic eulogies they are often made out to be; some are achingly personal and heartfelt.

Even more occasionally, we hear women speaking through literature. Poems by Sulpicia, active in the same coterie as Tibullus (circa 55-19 BC) survive, but surely there were others who put stylus to parchment. Sometimes we get an oblique glimpse of their eloquence, for example, through the recipients of letters from Cicero, or Pliny the Younger, or in the textbooks of Greek gynaecologists like Soranus, where we can assume that a patient interview, or a physical examination has occurred to substantiate his findings. Hortensia was a fine orator; and we can add another, later Sulpicia – Sulpicia Caleni, a female poet praised by Martial (AD 40-102/104).

Are the outstanding women that we hear about the exception rather than the rule, or do they represent the tip of the iceberg? The answer is that we simply do not know how far those who are celebrated represent Roman women in general. So it seems prudent to assume that the truth lies somewhere in between – we should not take what little evidence there is as typical, but see it as a mould being broken – examples of out-of-the-ordinary women who
reacted against type and tradition obtrusively, impetuously, valiantly, cleverly, salaciously or notoriously. Stereotyping is another problem. Many of the more conspicuous women of Rome are defined in terms of their sexual mores, or their deficient femininity, or both. There are many examples: Sempronia, the Catilinarian conspirator; Fulvia, wife and military comrade of Mark Antony; Clodia, the mistress of Catullus and Cicero’s hated haridan; Julia, wayward daughter of Augustus; Agrippina the Younger; Mesallina; even Cornelia, that paragon of feminine virtue. All these women were subjected to sexual slurs dished out by male politicians or writers, for powerful women ignited in them a sense of insecurity and misogyny that found stereotypical expression in hostile references to female sexual conduct.

As women could not be charged with offences against the state, maestas, the next best thing was an allegation of sexual impropriety or lewdness. Charges of immorality were repeatedly made against prominent women, many of them pure calumny. Similarly, exceptional achievement in a woman, good or bad, is often expressed and explained away as masculine behaviour. In the eyes of the Roman male, the impressive, outstanding woman was the distinctly un-Roman solider in the war of love.

As the Republic battered itself overseas territories, led to more independence amongst the women left behind to run the households. Another by-product of constant warring was the influx of foreign goods and slaves, both male and female, with all sorts of skills: from doctors, midwives and teachers to astrologers and prostitutes.

Exotic culture began to percolate through staid Roman traditions via Egyptian religion, Greek actors and mimes, foreign musicians, and multilingual, educated and urbane women of independent means with minds, bodies and independent lives and lovers of their own. Catullus’ Lesbia typifies the unattached, or readily detachable, sophisticated lady of the day who could exert considerable sexual, psychological, even political influence over her male friends.

A real Roman man would never be a slave to a woman, or to love. But in the world of the love poets women were dominae, while the men were slaves, lovesick, cuckolded, languishing locked out on the doorstep, and their only combat was the distinctly un-Roman soldiering in the war of love.

As the Republic battered itself into an Empire forged by Augustus, gradually women, as the wives, daughters and mistresses of the triumvirs and emperors, began to assume unprecedented influence both as king-makers and as assassins. Even in that seemingly unsalvageable bastion of male exclusivity that was the Roman military machine, two women were able to demonstrate rare but highly effective influence and skill in military matters. Velleius Paterculus indignantly records how Fulvia Flaccia Bambula, wife of Mark Antony and mutilator of Cicero’s decapitated corpse, was active in the Perusine Wars (41-40 BC), making a thorough nuisance of herself with her man-like activities: ‘she who had nothing of the woman in her except her sex was creating general confusion by armed violence’. Nevertheless she was the first Roman woman to appear on a coin.

Agrippina the Elder, the wife of Germanicus, also showed impressive military skill and panache in AD 15. Pursued by enemy troops, the Romans made a dash back to the Rhine, where Agrippina, pregnant, stood encouraging the soldiers and replenished field dressings for the returning legions as she stood at the head of the bridge. Tacitus reveals how she prevented the bridge over the Rhine at Vetera (Xanten) from being destroyed in panic, which would have cut off the Romans on the wrong side of the river. In a rare case of giving credit where credit is due, he calls her femina ingens animi (‘a great-minded woman’), assuming the qualities of a general, munia ducis. Apart from two powerful foreign women, Cleopatra and Didia, dux usually describes a man. These are only a few examples from what Livy describes as ingens mulierum aegmen, ‘a powerful body of women’.

Women in Ancient Rome by Paul Chrystal is published in hardback by Amberley Publishing at £20.
The lure of the Nile

Dalu Jones visits an intriguing new exhibition investigating the captivating effects that Cleopatra and Ancient Egyptian culture had on the Romans.
Cleopatra VII, the last queen of Egypt (69-30 BC), has recently returned to Rome as the inspiration for an exhibition entitled *Cleopatra: Rome and the Magic of Egypt*. Major museums and galleries worldwide have lent almost 200 works of art to this show celebrating a woman whose appeal and influence remain undiminished even now, 2000 years after her death.

These include the ‘Nahman Cleopatra’, a marble head (circa 33-30 BC), on show in Italy for the first time (16). The portrait, which is still in private hands, takes its name from Maurice Nahman (1868-1948), the most famous of Cairo’s antique dealers and collectors in pre-Nasser Egypt.

The ‘Nahman Cleopatra’ resembles another head dating from the second half of the 1st century BC (4), from the Vatican Museums, which is also on view here (circa 45 BC), one of the few portraits thought by scholars to really represent the queen. Found in 1784 at the Villa dei Quintili on the Via Appia, the young woman wears the royal diadem, a broad band of cloth tied around the head (first adopted by Alexander the Great) that came to symbolise Hellenistic kingship.

Both heads may be Roman copies, in marble, of the lost, gilded bronze statue of Cleopatra given by Julius Caesar to the Temple of Venus Genetrix, while she was living in Rome from 46 to 44 BC. Another marble head found in Rome, on the Via Labicana, may be a portrait of Cleopatra in her youth (cover picture), represented in the guise of the goddess Isis and dating from the 2nd or 1st century BC. The likeness of Cleopatra shown on coins does not do her justice. Men found her extremely attractive, although she may not have been a great beauty in the conventional sense but probably a highly intelligent *solie-laide* whose allure was derived from her...
elegant bearing, notable wit, regal status and undoubted political savoir faire.

Representing the queen’s illustrious Macedonian ancestry there is the ‘Guimet Alexander’ (5), a masterpiece of Hellenistic sculpture from the Louvre. Alexander the Great was the founder of Alexandria, where he was reputedly buried by Ptolemy Soter I (circa 367 BC-circa 283 BC), one of his generals, the initiator in 305 BC of the Ptolemaic dynasty that ended with Cleopatra’s death in 30 BC. Cleopatra’s lovers Julius Caesar (100-44 BC) and Mark Antony (83-30 BC) are also represented (3 and 6), as is Caesarion (47-30 BC), her son by Julius Caesar, who became Ptolemy XV. Caesarion was killed by Octavian, the future Emperor Augustus (63 BC-AD 14), when he conquered Egypt in 30 BC following the battle of Actium (13), and after both Mark Antony and Cleopatra had committed...
suicide. The great queen did have a kind of revenge on her arch-enemy, though, as Octavian soon realised that he had to respect the millennium-old traditions of ancient Egypt in order to be accepted as sovereign there. Soon this prim and proper general, staunch defender of Roman virtues, who was opposed to the effeminate mores of the East, was depicted Egyptian-style (7 and 8), although he did not mind adopting the god-like attributes of a pharaoh.

Later emperors, such as Tiberius, Nero and probably Domitian, were also represented as pharaohs in several portraits. Surprisingly, Augustus even had his home in Rome on the Palatine decorated with frescoes on Egyptian themes.

Following Cleopatra’s triumphal arrival in the capital in 46 BC as Caesar’s conquest and her two-year stay in her lover’s suburban mansion (Horti Caesaris) in Trastevere, a wave of Egyptomania spread among the fashionable circles of the Republic. Cleopatra’s ‘Roman years’, during which the city’s customs and fashions were heavily influenced by the Egyptian queen and her court, are the subject of one of the most interesting sections of this exhibition.

Soon the ladies of the capital began to sport Egyptian hairstyles and wear beautifully crafted jewelry incorporating exotic symbols, such as the snake, the sacred uraeus that symbolised sovereignty and immortality. A snake bangle (10), dating from 1st century BC to 1st century AD, was found among the belongings of a Roman lady, probably the owner of the famous House of the Faun in Pompeii. The wealthy had their villas decorated with paintings, mosaics, sculptures and furnishings inspired by the fabled kingdom of Egypt. Alexandrian artists and craftsmen travelled to Rome and other important centres of the empire in order to respond faster and more efficiently to the growing demands for the new fashion.

The ubiquitous ‘Nilotic scenes’, depicting an extraordinary range of aquatic fauna including hippopotami, crocodiles, frogs, wild ducks and ibis, along with lotus flowers, thickets of papyrus and fish of all kinds, evoked the teeming fecundity of the River Nile. They also often provide the background for improbable battles between diminutive warriors, crocodiles and hippopotami, as in ‘Nile Scene with Pygmy Hunters’ (2), found on the walls of a mansion in Pompeii and dated circa AD 55-79.

Another fine example decorates a five-metre-long threshold mosaic dating from the 1st century BC that came from a luxurious domus in Privernum. Both are included in the exhibition. But the most spectacular of the Nilotic scenes was the great early floor mosaic found in an
Exhibition

apse of the temple of the Fortuna Primigenia in Palestrina, where the goddess Isis was associated with the Latin goddess Fortuna. This proves that Egyptian cults had infiltrated the peninsula even before the presence of Cleopatra in Roman society. The floor dates from the end of the 2nd century BC and the first half of the 1st century BC. In his *Naturalis Historia* written circa AD 77-79, Pliny the Elder states: ‘Mosaics came into use as early as Sulla’s regime. At all events there exists even today one made of very small *tesserae* which he installed in the temple of Fortune at Palestrina.’

This craze for Egyptian style even went so far as to cause the building of small-scale pyramids in Rome as tombs for the capital’s wealthy citizens. One of these still stands by the Ostia Gate outside the Aurelian walls at the beginning of the Via Ostiensis, near the Porta San Paolo and the Protestant Cemetery.

Built circa 18-12 BC and standing almost 37 metres high, it is the pyramid-tomb lined in white marble of Gaius Cestius Epulo, chief magistrate (*praetor*), tribune of the plebs and one of the seven state priests in charge of public banquets (*epulones*), in honour of Jupiter and other religious festivals. Gaius Cestius had made his considerable fortune by trading and possibly serving in Nubia, in Upper Egypt. Another such tomb, demolished in 1499, was built at the beginning of the Via Triumphalis, as well as one or two more pyramids on the Via Flaminia, on the site of the present-day Piazza del Popolo.

Sphinxes, too, appeared in wall paintings or as garden statues. In Pompeii, a crouching sphinx wearing the headdress of the pharaohs, and dating from the 1st century AD, decorated a fountain in a *domus*, and two sphinxes guarded a trellised garden (18). Another sphinx in the exhibition, made of pink granite, comes from as far from the Italian mainland as Sardinia – it was found near Cagliari. It was presumably part of a local Iseum, a temple to the Egyptian goddess Isis, one of many that dotted Central and Southern Italy at this time.

A number of Egyptian gods and goddesses made their way into the Roman pantheon or into the private beliefs of the inhabitants of the peninsula, despite the opposition of the more conservative members of the Roman Senate. They illustrate the existence and increasing popularity of Egyptian religious cults, mostly adopted – it appears – by women and the lower classes but not necessarily only so, well before the coming of Cleopatra to Italy.

First and foremost there is the image of Isis, goddess of life (11, 12 and 14) and, as Iside Pelagia, goddess of sea travel, who invented sails. She is represented both in traditional Egyptian garb – that worn by Cleopatra, who as a queen was held in Egypt to be the embodiment of the goddess – and in Hellenistic/Roman-style clothing, breastfeeding her son the god Horus. *Isis lactans*, as she is known, is shown in a small 1st-century AD terracotta, signed by a craftsman named Pausania, that was found in Herculaneum.

A large, striking statue of Anubis,...
the jackal-headed protector of the dead (1st century BC-1st century AD) found at Cuma near Naples, shows the god with a dog's head and the body of Hermes/Mercury. This is the result of a meeting of Hellenistic culture with the Egyptian Pharaonic cults that flourished in Alexandria under the Ptolemaic dynasty. The fusion then spread to Italy through the intermediary of Egyptian merchants who plied the Mediterranean back and forth and who settled in large communities in the Italian ports and in Rome itself.

This could be assimilated what troubled the Romans, though, was the powerful aura surrounding the female identity in Egypt's religious and political context. In an irredeemably paternalistic society, it was unthinkable that such authority should be given to a woman.

Women should limit themselves to being symbols of matronly virtues. They should devote their lives to the benefit of the pater familias, father and husband and to their children, never exercising masculine daring or independence.

Cleopatra VII, on the contrary, enjoyed divine status as Isis, a goddess whose power was equal to that of men, and she was a queen who ruled in her own right. She embodied, and still embodies, a challenge to a male-dominated society where she was cast as the foreign seductress, the 'femme fatale', the 'serpent of the Nile'. She was described as the ‘fatal monster’ and the ‘whore queen’ by leading poets of Augustus’ time, Horace in his Odes (I.37.21) and Popertius in his Poems (III.11.39) respectively.

The coins minted by Octavian around 28-27 BC (15) after his victory over Antony and Cleopatra bear the inscription Aegypt Capta (‘Egypt held captive’), but this exhibition shows that it was, in fact, Rome that was captivated by Egypt's powerful spell and that of her beguiling queen.

Cleopatra: Rome and the Magic of Egypt is on show at Chiostro del Bramante in Rome (+39 06 916 508 451; www.mostracleopatra.it) until 2 February. The accompanying catalogue, edited by Giovanni Gentili, is published by Skira at €38.
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Squaring the circle

As the new £27 million development and Visitor Centre open at Britain’s number one heritage site, David Miles surveys the latest attempt to solve ‘Problem Stonehenge’
Pile of Stonehenge! So proud to hint yet keep
Thy secrets, thou that lov’st to stand and hear
The plain resounding to the whirlwind’s sweep,
Inmate of lonesome Nature’s endless year...
(Incidents upon Salisbury Plain, William Wordsworth, 1793-94)

In her little masterpiece, A Land (1951), the archaeologist Jacquetta Hawkes wrote that ‘every age gets the Stonehenge it deserves...’ and, bemoaning the modern treatment of Britain’s most iconic monument, she went on: ‘...it can be debased by man. Cafés and chewing gum, car-parks and conducted excursions, a sense of the hackneyed induced by post cards... has done more to damage Stonehenge than the plundering of some of its stones... It will never again be possible to see it as Constable did.’ Here, of course, she is referring to the wonderfully wild watercolour made by John Constable, exhibited at the Royal Academy of Arts in 1835. It was captioned: ‘The mysterious monument... standing remote on a bare and boundless heath, as much unconnected with the events of the past as it is with the uses of the present, carries you back beyond all historical records into the obscurity of a totally unknown period’. It is thought that Constable himself may have written these words.

Maybe Jacquetta sounds a little stuffy now, but for the past 60-odd years most people would have concurred with her view – Stonehenge is a mess. Since its creation in 1984, English Heritage, which is responsible for the site, has sought to cut through the Gordian knot of ‘Problem Stonehenge’ – a tangle complicated by the involvement of government departments, local authorities, the Army, the National Trust and a plethora of pressure groups. Everyone agreed that something had to be done but no one could agree exactly what. Having spent the best part of a decade enmeshed in the issue myself, I often felt as if I was herding cats.

Now a 21st-century transformation has just taken place and, not surprisingly, what we have is an English compromise. But the great unsolved conundrum remains – the A303, the main road from London to the south-west, which runs hard by Stonehenge. The road carries a constant torrent of traffic, often clogged as the road narrows to only two lanes. It is also a notorious accident black spot, with an unfortunate number of fatalities. Heritage supporters have always wanted the A303 to disappear, while traffic managers wanted the road enlarged.

Here, I should declare an interest because I was part of a team that persuaded the Treasury and the Highways Agency and the Inspector at the Public Enquiry to support the construction of a 2.1km (1.6-mile) bored tunnel beneath the Stonehenge landscape. Unfortunately, the continued opposition of a number of heritage bodies and rising costs gave the then Chancellor of the Exchequer, Gordon Brown, the ideal excuse to scupper the tunnel proposal. Hence we continue to enjoy the presence of the A303, complete with traffic jams and noise.

I found the whole episode particularly frustrating because I compared...
it to how a similar problem across the Channel had been solved. I regularly drove to the south of France and experienced their Grand Bouchon, the great traffic jam of southbound holiday traffic on the A75 at Millau, where the main road through Central France negotiated the canyon-like Tarn Valley. The French took action, commissioned the great British architect Sir Norman Foster and a team of fantastic French engineers, and spent €400 million to build the Millau Viaduct – an elegant 21st-century World Heritage Monument, if I ever saw one, that solved the problem to great acclaim.

Anyway, enough about England’s congenital inability to untangle its transport system. The Stonehenge compromise does offer some good news. First the A344, the minor road to the north which, with the A303, held Stonehenge in a vise-like grip, has gone and with it the scruffy 1968 visitor facilities and car park. Visitors now have open access to the north to other major monuments: the Avenue, the Cursus and some of the largest barrow cemeteries. The stone circle provides the powerful image that everyone knows, but this lies at the centre of a natural bowl, a sacred prehistoric landscape containing hundreds of other monuments. The removal of the A344 and barbed wire fences provides visitors with the opportunity to explore the landscape, approach Stonehenge along the Avenue and experience the way that the mighty stones appear above the horizon, brilliantly choreographed by the prehistoric set designers.

The second piece of good news is the new Visitor Centre, set one and a half miles to the north-east. The Australian architectural partnership responsible, Denton Corker Marshall, has not designed...
one of those ‘look-at-me’ buildings beloved by regeneration projects. Rather, their work blends into the landscape with a subtly curving roof, supported by slim columns that resemble a copse of birch trees. The two main blocks inside, housing the visitor facilities, are screened by the pillars, and a gap between them provides a view to the horizon. When the landscaping is complete, I suspect that this will prove to be a very clever building indeed. Although I must reserve judgement to the extent that at the time of writing the interior and its exhibition were not yet complete, there is no reason why the interior should not also be a success.

It is true to say that until recently we did not know all that much about Stonehenge and the society that built it. This has changed in the last decade or so. While the authorities argued and vacillated, archaeological researchers have made spectacular new discoveries, providing a much more coherent and interesting picture of the people who built and worshipped at Stonehenge and of the source of the stones themselves. Brilliant work by English Heritage’s Alex Bayliss, in partnership with Alistair Whittle of Cardiff University, has also much clarified the vexed chronological issues.

The latest discoveries and theories are described with panache by Mike Parker Pearson in his book *Stonehenge: Exploring the Greatest Stone Age Mystery* (Simon & Schuster, 2012).

The Visitor Centre is sited so that it does not dominate the Stonehenge landscape. Walkers can still explore the nearby countryside, while the less energetic will travel on a shuttle of mini-trains running along the line of the old A344. Another benefit of the scheme is the co-operative links formed with the newly refurbished museums at Salisbury and at Devizes (see pp30-33), which hold most of the spectacular artefacts excavated from around Stonehenge during the past 200 years.

Until recently the average visitor spent only 20 minutes at Stonehenge – taking time to have a cup of tea, a pee and a quick glimpse of the great stones. Now there will be the opportunity for a much more in-depth encounter with our prehistoric ancestors and their most spectacular monument. The new scheme may not be perfect, but it is probably the Stonehenge we deserve.

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*Set in Stone? How our ancestors saw Stonehenge* is the first special temporary exhibition featuring loans from many national museums at Stonehenge’s new Visitor Centre. It charts over 800 years of ideas and debate – from 12th-century legends to radiocarbon debates in the 1950s – on who built Stonehenge and when. For further information on visiting Stonehenge go to: www.english-heritage.org.uk/dayout/properties/stonehenge
Martin Green is a Wessex man through and through. Born in Dorset, he was brought up on Down Farm (worked by three generations of Greens) on the edge of Cranborne Chase, the archaeological hunting ground for General Pitt Rivers (1827-1900), the father of modern archaeology.

Inspired by Pitt Rivers and a few finds made by his father, as a young lad Martin, too, began to discover artefacts on his family’s farm – and he has continued to explore the area. As a result he built up such a large archaeological collection that, in 1970, he set up his own museum. This is no handful of pottery sherds in a damp shed but an extensive collection of objects, ranging from flint tools and clay pipes to gold coins, from the Palaeolithic through to the medieval period – and it is still growing. Arranged in chronological order, the objects are professionally captioned and displayed and, as well as archaeology, there are also sections on geological finds and items of interest to local historians.

Martin’s museum is often visited by schoolchildren, ensuring that the next generation are educated about their local heritage and, as I discovered when I visited last summer, he is generous in sharing his knowledge and time with those who have made an appointment to visit him. If you are lucky, he will also show the sites from which the objects in his museum were excavated.

As Professor Richard Bradley says in the foreword to Martin’s book, A Landscape Revealed: 10,000 Years on a Chalkland Farm: ‘He has built up a picture of the ancient landscape that can hardly be matched anywhere else in the British Isles.’

How old were you when you made your first find?
I was about 11 years old when I started fieldwalking. My father had a general interest in archaeology and natural history and had picked up a few ‘shepherd’s crowns’ (fossil sea urchins) and half a stone axe when he was working on the farm. These finds inspired me as a child and I started looking around in the flint-strewn fields myself and soon I found many ‘crowns’. I gradually learnt how to recognise ancient pottery and worked flints, too. I also remember being taken on a family outing to nearby Rockbourne Roman Villa in Hampshire. They had a couple of trays of potsherds for sale at a penny a sherd, and I managed to persuade my father to part with half a crown, so I was able to buy some and take them home with me.
Who is your ‘hero’ in archaeology?
I have always been an admirer of Lt General Pitt Rivers, who is widely regarded as the father of scientific archaeology. He inherited the Rushmore Estate (which actually adjoins our farm) in 1880 and spent the remainder of his life investigating the ancient sites in the area. He made a huge contribution to the subject, so much so that Sir Mortimer Wheeler, working in the following century, described himself as ‘a disciple of the General’.

Did you ever consider studying archaeology at a university?
Yes, but my teachers were all pretty pessimistic about job prospects in that profession. Then I began my working life on the family farm at the age of 15. But you could say that I have studied archaeology all my life, and in 2006 I was awarded an Honorary Doctor of Science degree from the University of Reading.

How many years have you been excavating on your land?
I began excavating in 1976 through a chance discovery on the farm when we had mains water installed due to the great drought that year. Walking along the pipe trench, I spotted a feature cut through the chalk. It turned out to be a Bronze Age ditch. Over the next three and a half years, I spent practically all my spare time uncovering a complete settlement of that date. It was the first dig of my own, although in my teens I had been on a number of digs organised by MOPBW [Ministry of Public Buildings and Works – a forerunner of English Heritage] and had learnt the basics of excavation techniques and recording.

What is the most exciting discovery you have made on your land?
My best find came through studying some aerial photographs held at the National Monuments Record Centre in Swindon. Among a cluster of crop marks was an intriguing ring of dots with a large dot in the centre. This looked to me as though it had the potential to be a Neolithic ‘temple’, perhaps the remains of a woodhenge or a demolished stone circle. Excavation in 1997 proved the site was Neolithic and clearly ceremonial, although the pit circle had never held posts or stones. We found a Bronze Age secondary burial in the central pit, which caught the eye of the Meet the Ancestors team from BBC2, who came to film it. But ‘Adam’, as we called him, never made it on to the telly because near the end of the dig we found another grave, which contained four Neolithic skeletons. Analyses, sponsored by BBC2, including pioneering isotopic work on their teeth, revealed evidence of life movements, family relationships,
diet and the health of this woman and the three children that we had uncovered. This site, with its ring of outer pits, massive central pit, chalk ramp and almost seven-metre-deep shaft, is without parallel in this country, and it is likely to remain my best ever find. That dig was screened on Meet the Ancestors in 1998. I also made a contribution to a Time Team Special last year. It features a group of Bronze Age burials that I uncovered on my last dig in 2009. Analysis revealed some very unusual treatment of the bodies.

**What is the most interesting object you have found?**

I was digging about six metres down in the shaft at the site I just mentioned, when I turned over a large block of chalk. I gasped as the sunlight illuminated a series of designs pecked into the surface of the block, and, underneath, a cup-shaped hollow was revealed. This was an extremely rare example of portable Megalithic rock art dating to about 3300 BC, and it remains the rarest artefact I have ever uncovered.

**How did your museum evolve?**

From 1970 onwards my collections have been housed in an outbuilding. Before that, I had a room in our family home where I stored most of it, with a few items on display. I hadn’t intended to start a museum. I just inevitably accumulated archaeological material from my investigations. Later, I thought it might be worthwhile to put on a permanent exhibition. However, these days I am a real museophile and visit museums whenever and wherever I can.

**How many artefacts are in your collection and what do they tell us?**

Thousands – and many of them continue to provide information as they are re-examined by researchers and new questions are asked. Samples are taken and analysed that lead to fresh interpretation and new connections being made. For example, a postgraduate student is currently busily collating, re-examining and digitising all the human remains from my excavations. The group of Neolithic burials found on Down Farm are going to be displayed in the new ‘Ancient Wiltshire’ gallery in Salisbury and South Wiltshire Museum later this year.

**Who comes to visit your museum?**

A real mixture of people, ranging from primary-school classes to groups from colleges, universities, Adult Education (such as U3A), as well as families and interested individuals. Many of these have a particular focus, such as landscape interpretation, environmental studies or the presentation of archaeology to the public. I am regularly visited by groups of postgraduates from University College London studying for MAs in Public Archaeology. A trip here usually consists of looking round the museum first, to set the scene, then a walk over the farm – short or long, depending on group preference. This encompasses several archaeological restorations of sites I have formerly excavated, such as burial mounds and henge monuments. Our land is also crossed by a fine portion of the Roman road, Ackling Dyke, and by the Dorset Cursus, the longest Neolithic monument in England.

**Has your work inspired anyone other than archaeologists?**

Yes, it has. Two years ago a great friend of mine, the potter Chris Carter, and I put on a joint exhibition called Out of the Earth in the Salisbury and South Wiltshire Museum. Chris’s stunning archaeologically inspired pots were displayed among some of my major finds. A joint team from Reading and Glasgow Universities. Teams from Cambridge University and Oxford Brookes have also worked here, and Wessex Archaeology ran a highly successful annual Training Dig. This year Bournemouth University will hold their annual Forensic Archaeology field school here, and later a group of undergraduates from Southampton University will come to work on the Training Dig site, uncovering more of an earlier Iron Age settlement that I excavated with a team from Wessex Archaeology. I also work closely with universities on post-excavation studies. I find facilitating all of this very rewarding.

**Do archaeology students come and work on digs on your land?**

Yes, my first collaboration began in 1977, when I was invited to contribute to a new appraisal of the prehistory of the region by
finds and they looked really good together. BBC Radio 4’s Open Country has visited us twice and has featured artists explaining the inspiration they have gained from the ancient sites while excavations were in progress. Last summer we hosted a professional storytelling event here when the Epic of Gilgamesh was told beside our Neolithic and Bronze Age sites. Wildlife groups also visit regularly. They monitor the habitats we have created and enjoy the rich biodiversity that has been established by our environmentally friendly farming approach.

What effect do you think that archaeology programmes on television have had on the subject? They have definitely increased public interest enormously. The subject used to be a fringe one. Now, thanks largely to television, it has become mainstream. The increase in community-based archaeological projects is impressive. Although there have been legitimate concerns raised over some aspects of television programmes on archaeology, on the whole, I think they are hugely a force for good. The thrill of discovery is something we all share. Getting involved gives us that opportunity. The UK is immensely rich in archaeological remains – I doubt if there is a field in this country without something of archaeological interest waiting to be discovered. Being able to contribute to revealing past lives and sharing that experience with others is very rewarding. We Brits seem to be more archaeologically inclined than other nations – we certainly have a very long and distinguished tradition of antiquarianism going back several hundred years.

A Landscape Revealed: 10,000 Years on a Chalkland Farm by Martin Green was published by the History Press (2011) at £17.99.
I

f you go down to Devizes today, you are sure of a big surprise, for there, in the newly refur-
bished Wiltshire Museum, displayed for the first time in a permanent gallery, is England’s finest collection of prehistoric gold-work and other artefacts from the age of Stonehenge. For, strangely, unlike the other countries, England does not have a national museum.

Fortunately this gap in our cultural life is partly filled by some superb collections in local muse-
ums, and this is just one example. Unfortunately, while our politi-
cians are obsessed by underwriting the cost of free admission to all of London’s national museums and galleries, most of our local and county institutions are grossly underfunded.

The museum in Devizes was established in 1873 by the Wiltshire Archaeology and Natural History Society to provide a home for the collection accumulated by some of Britain’s most prolific barrow-diggers.

The passion for excavating bar-
rows and for collecting and studying artefacts was widespread during the 19th century. In Wiltshire, an engraving from William Stukeley’s book *A Temple Restor’d to the British Druids*, published in 1740, shows the famous Bush Barrow and Stonehenge, which Stukeley was responsible for rediscovering in 1722.

David Miles admires the new display of priceless artefacts at the Wiltshire Museum

1. Bush Barrow and Stonehenge by William Stukeley, an engraving from his *Stonehenge, A Temple Restor’d to the British Druids*, 1740. 28.3cm x 15.2cm.

2. Neolithic stone axes circa 3700-2500 BC, from Wiltshire, from 80mm to 200mm in length.

3. Axe made of jadeite brought from high in the Italian Alps, circa 4000 BC or later. 208mm x 68mm x 4mm.

4. Aerial view showing Bush Barrow in the foreground and Stonehenge in the distance.
all things ancient began a century earlier – the Society of Antiquaries of London was formally established in 1751 – although not everyone was impressed: the art historian Horace Walpole, for example, described antiquarians as ‘the midwives of superannuated miscarriages’.

In Wiltshire, a wool merchant named William Cunnington undertook fieldwork sponsored by Richard Colt Hoare, a banker and the proprietor of the great country house at Stourhead. Together these two wanted to up the antiquarian game. Their predecessors had simply bagged barrows like grouse, gutting a dozen before lunch. But, in 1803, Cunnington said that he excavated barrows ‘in the hopes of meeting something which might supersede conjecture’, while in his two-volume *The Ancient History of Wiltshire*, published in 1812, Colt Hoare wrote: ‘We speak of facts not theory. I shall not seek among the fanciful region of Romance an origin of our barrows.’ They worked, of course, at a time when the Druids were a popular conception and no scientifically based system had provided any real sense of prehistoric chronology or deep time.

Then, in the month of September 1808, Cunnington struck it rich while digging at Bush Barrow on the highest point of the rim of land south of Stonehenge and, by the standards of the day, he recorded...
his finds with commendable accuracy. He wrote to Colt Hoare: ‘I have the pleasure to inform you that our discoveries are truly important… We found the skeleton of a stout and tall man. On approaching the breast of the skeleton we found immediately on the breast bone a fine plate of gold… it has a grand appearance.’

Now, for the first time, this ‘grand’ lozenge-shaped gold breastplate can be seen displayed in the context of the entire funerary assemblage and alongside the remarkable grave groups from neighbouring barrows.

This is thanks to the energy and ambition of the Wiltshire Museum’s Director, David Dawson, and his team, who have managed in austere times to raise £750,000 to refurbish four rooms that now provide the required security and environmental conditions previously lacking. The redisplay was also kick-started by the opening of a new £27 million Visitor Centre at nearby Stonehenge, England’s finest prehistoric site (see pages 22-25).

In the new display, ‘Prehistoric Wiltshire: Gold at the time of Stonehenge’, gold artefacts form the centrepiece of the galleries, but there is much, much more. The period between 3700 BC and 1500 BC was one of enormous change in British society. Hunter-gathering gave way to farming, the landscape was transformed as forests were cleared for grazing animals, and people came together to engineer huge monuments, places for seasonal rituals and feasting, and cavernous chambered tombs to inter the bones of their ancestors.

With the exception of Orkney, nowhere in Britain rivals Wiltshire for great prehistoric structures: causewayed enclosures such as Windmill Hill; tombs like West Kennett (a replica burial chamber is in the Wiltshire Museum); the henges of Stonehenge, Durrington Walls, Avebury and Marden, and the great mounds at Silbury Hill and Marlborough – and, of course, the hundreds of barrows that dominate the skyline of Wiltshire, particularly around Stonehenge. Though let us have a moment’s silence for all those barrows ploughed into oblivion.

These barrows are monuments to yet more radical changes in British society, when metallurgy first arrived – copper, gold and bronze initially as part of the so-called Beaker package. At that time individuals were buried under prominent mounds along with the latest symbols of power – copper and bronze daggers, amber and jet necklaces and the Beaker drinking vessels that distinguished this new era. The quantity of gold on display is impressive. But where did the stuff come from? Traditionally, Ireland is seen as the source, probably the Mountains of Mourne, though isotopic analysis may yet reveal that Cornwall and Wales also had their Bronze Age gold rushes.

Time has a habit of erasing the subtleties of the past – the colours, sounds and smells. But these new galleries at the Wiltshire Museum provide the most startling insight into the sophistication and complexities of life in Britain 4,000 to 6,000 years ago. The curators and designer have managed to display a remarkable amount of material in these somewhat difficult and idiosyncratic spaces. Yet all that glisters is not gold; there are many other wonderful artefacts. For example, the grave goods of the Roundway Archer, buried three kilometres north of Devizes and excavated in the mid-19th century. This strapping figure of a man met his maker armed with a massive copper dagger, probably made in Central Europe, and beautifully flaked barbed flint arrowheads. The flint-knappers responded to the appearance of metal by creating some of their finest works. Like other men of the period, he possessed a stone wristguard, possibly protection from the bowstring, but unusually made of Spanish jade.

During this period there was an obsession with exotic and colourful stone – amber from the Baltic, jet from Whitby, Dorset shale, material for polished stone axes from the Lake District, Wales and Cornwall. Rivalling, and exceeding, the gold
in sheer beauty, is the jadeite axe carved about 4000 BC or later with mind-boggling effort from a boulder on Monte Viso, near the Franco-Italian border (the precise one is now known thanks to recent research).

The last prehistoric owner of this prized possession may have deposited it as an offering in the waters of the Avon. When stone from distant sources clearly had such symbolic powers, it is perhaps not surprising that the builders of Stonehenge went to such effort to transport the dolerite bluestones from the Preseli Hills, or from other rocky outcrops in Wales, all the way to Salisbury Plain.

Over time power can, of course, seep away. The finder of the jadeite axe was a Mrs Jeans. She used it as a paperknife until, frustrated at its failure to perform that role effectively, she hurled it out of the window.

A generation ago archaeologists generally saw the occupants of these rich Wessex burials as chieftains. However, at the Wiltshire museum the curators have resurrected the interpretation first put forward by Stuart Piggott in 1962 – that these people were shamans, guides to the spirit world, healers, communicators with ancestors, and guardians of ritual knowledge.

Now that we can see the full range of grave goods, this interpretation is convincing. Take, for example, the man and woman buried at Upton Lovell, overlooking a routeway leading to Stonehenge. He wore a cloak decorated with a fringe of animal bones that must have rattled as he moved. Around his neck hung an enormous collar of perforated sheep and deer bones; by his feet lay a collection of six stones of red, black and buff volcanic rock – traces of gold show that they were used for burnishing the precious metal. This man seems to have been privy not only to spiritual power, but to the new art of metallurgy.

The museum’s collection contains other intriguing ritual paraphernalia, including so-called incense cups, which were probably used like censers or thuribles to burn sweet-smelling resins. Artefacts that held feathers may have been used to fan the pungent smoke while the spirits were summoned by the music of cranes’ wing-bone flutes.

Sometimes the past does feel like a foreign country. But this is Wiltshire. So, for the latest news from Ancient Britain, go to Devizes. Support a local museum – and take in Stonehenge on the way.

Prehistoric Wiltshire: Gold at the time of Stonehenge is on show at Wiltshire Museum (+44 (0) 1380 727369; www.wiltshiremuseum.org)
On the fringes of the
My involvement with the Roman monuments of Algeria was kick-started by an invitation to help the great photographer Don McCullin with a project. Our mutual friend, the journalist and broadcaster Brigid Keenan, suggested it and I was delighted to be asked, as it not only allowed me to travel in Don’s inimitable company, in both Libya and Algeria, but also to be involved in the resulting book, *Southern Frontiers*.

One of the first rewards of the project was to find myself sifting through two boxes of Don’s photographs at his home in Somerset. I had expected a state-of-the-art, glinting photo-lab, not an old cheese-store off the family kitchen of his farmhouse, and I began to warm to the man, not just the famous photographer, and started to listen with care to his stories. It soon became clear that as far as this project was concerned he was locked into some sort of personal dialogue with two 19th-century photographic pioneers – Francis Frith and Maxime du Camp, who had both taken pictures in the Middle East.

Don’s obsession with Algeria had begun during the 1970s, the hey-day of investigative travel writing, when he was sent to accompany Bruce Chatwin on a commission for *The Sunday Times*. Chatwin was on the trail of some gangland, racist thuggery in Marseille, which he believed led back to the infamous massacre of Sétif in Algeria, but in the end his investigation led nowhere. Nevertheless, as a reward for the weeks wasted on this abortive mission in central Algeria, Bruce took Don on an impromptu tour of some of the country’s beautiful Roman ruins.

No photographs were taken, but the places lodged in Don’s mind like grit in an oyster. Then...
30 years later, came the pearl, his book *Southern Frontiers*.

Don never looked at a map when he travelled with Chatwin and has no recollection of their itinerary but, in homage to this original journey, I designed a grand tour of Classical Algeria. It started in Algiers, with a leisurely day walking the streets of the old medieval city to get a feel for the topography of ancient Icosium. The string of offshore islands that first drew Phoenician traders to this place have now been fused by siege and counter-siege to the mainland and there is nothing ancient to be physically touched on the ground, although the geography of Algiers is pregnant with later history.

Cherchell, ancient Caesarea, was the first potent Classical site on the itinerary, preceded by the remains of a splendid aqueduct. I was obsessed by Cherchell long before I began to visit it, for it was the capital city of that dream pair of monarchs: the historian King Juba II, who was brought up in the household of Caesar, and his wife, Cleopatra Selene, daughter of Mark Antony and Cleopatra of Egypt. They ruled over the Roman client kingdom of Mauretania Caesariensis, a grand enough slice of territory composed of western Algeria and eastern Morocco, but a mere pittance considering their lost inheritance, for Juba was heir to all Numidia and his wife to the Empire of the Ptolemies.

A museum stands beside Cherchell’s 19th-century piazza, decorated with many antique *objets trouvés*. The collection centres on a sensuous, yet grave, statue of Apollo, a marble reinterpretation of a Phidias bronze, which is believed to have been sculpted to adorn the house of a collector, rather than a temple sanctuary. You should treat the identification of various heads (Prince Ptolemy, Cleopatra Selene, Cleopatra VII) as inspired, spirit-of-place suggestions, not certainties – the bulk of these finds come from two Roman bath complexes and the intact rock-cut theatre.

The hilltop Tomb of the Christian Woman, Khour er Roumia, is truly magnificent – in scale, position, size, in the age of its stone and the mystery of its original occupant. It is tempting to associate it with King Juba and Queen Cleopatra, but local legend favours the nameless daughter of the Byzantine Count Julian, who was ravished by the king of Visigothic Spain. But it has been found to be much, much earlier than either of these legends. It is a vast Hellenistic circular tomb (63 metres in diameter and 40 metres high) within which is buried a circular ambulatory leading to a small tomb chamber. It was probably built sometime around the time of Alexander the Great by a Berber royal dynasty allied to Carthage in the 4th to 3rd century BC.

Neighbouring Tipasa is a place apart, made enchanting by its position overlooking the sea and by the woodland that throws shadows over its ruins. It is one of the few Classical sites that has been...
absorbed into the imagination of Algerians, who picnic here at weekends and seek out moody corners for a reflective smoke. From the moment you wander in, straight into a very late amphitheatre (3rd, if not 4th, century AD) that partly overlays two temple sites, you realise the complexity of the remains, which span 1,000 years of occupation. It is a place in which to wander and get lost, searching for the villa by the shore, the cathedral, the walls, the hilltop theatre, the theatre and nymphaeum, before you settle down to try and date anything. Friends with lesser stamina can arrange to meet you at a table at one of the dozen fish restaurants outside the gates next to the remains of the great baths. To the east of the modern fishing harbour lies an immense Christian cemetery whose tombs jostle around the church-shrine of the martyr St Salsa.

Far over in the north-eastern corner of Algeria, the port of Annaba has a similarly obsessive relationship with a saint, for the hilltop colonial Cathedral of St Augustine dominates the excavations of the ancient city of Hippo. A muddle of massive stones from a Berber-Carthaginian dock, the low walls of a pair of Roman churches (there is a theory that Augustine of Hippo celebrated a Mass here), a large villa, a bath complex and a stunningly extensive forum (carved with proud dedicatory lettering to ‘Proconsul C Paccius Africanus’) make for a fascinating walk into the past, while the little site museum is packed full of unexpected treasures. Some enchanting urban and marine details animate the mosaics, there are fine marbles of Dionysus, Minerva and Hercules and something that will take your breath away – the only intact bronze Roman military trophy I have ever seen, linked to Julius Caesar’s defeat of Juba (and his Republican allies) at Thapsus, now in Tunisia.

Inland, about 65km south-west of Hippo, is Guelma, one of those hill-towns fated to be fought over – be it the Jugurthine wars or the Independence struggle. The Roman ruins of ancient Calama, left...
smoking after the attack of Genseric
the Vandal, were refortified by the
Byzantine general Solomon in 533,
and reoccupied by the vanguard of
Marshal Clauzel’s French column in
1837, after which they became the
barracks at the centre of a colonial
market-town. The much-photo-
graphed ‘theatre’ is an almost total
colonial re-creation but not so the
splendid collection of statues on
show there. As well as the naked
Neptune and crowned Aesculapius
on centre stage, there is a fascinat-
ing jumble in the two side-rooms
including a gallery of Punic and
Romano-Berber tombstones.
Chatwin would have loved all this
juxtaposition, especially when seen
in contrast to the forgotten ruins
of Thibilis, a deserted, over-grown
site with ruined arches, a forum
and basilica, half hidden by holm
oak on the spur of a hill known as
Announa, about 18km out of town.
Cutting further east and almost
abutting the Tunisian frontier are
three more deeply evocative sites.
First, the ruins of Madauros, a
highland town of scholarship where
St Augustine learnt his letters and
Apuleius taught philosophy.
Both must have spent many an
animated hour in the well-preserved
forum and its associated odeon,
which were saved from destruc-
tion when they were converted into
a Byzantine fortress. Khemissa is
equally moody in atmosphere, for
it was an ancient cult-centre built
at the source of the river Medjerda
(the Bagradas of the ancients) with
a nymphaeum and massive theatre
Minerva January/February 2014

built below the old hilltop forum. Tebessa has no such arcan-
dian sympathies, for it is a bus-
ting modern town. But as you
walk through its animated market-
streets in order to admire the com-
plete circuit of Byzantine city-walls,
containing an intact 3rd-century
smithy (dedicated to Minerva), then
walk through the fortified arch of
Caracalla down to the fortified 4th-
century Roman church complex,
you begin to pinch yourself, for you
are here alone in sites that can only
be usefully compared to Maison Carére in Nimes or the church of St
Simeon outside Aleppo.

After this we headed west, towards the centre of Algeria, tak-
ing a coffee break at Khenccha and
examining the two open-air Roman
bath pools – still as Hadrian would
have known them, packed full of
bronzed men and natural steam.

Timgad was not so much exca-
vated as cleared of the sand that
covered it from the 7th century AD
to reveal a virtually intact provincial
city from the Antonine heyday of
Empire. Looking at its great market
places, forum, theatres, baths, arch-
ways, temples, public lavatories and
opulent library, you could imagine
it a proud capital, but its magnifi-
cence was quite ordinary, just one
of the 600 cities of Roman North
Africa. On a second visit, once you
have satiated yourself with the
architectural mass of the city centre,
you can walk out to the vast hulk of
the Byzantine fortress.

Around Timgad there are three
other memorable sites that might
haunt the imagination of an impres-
sionable young photographer. First
is Medracen, the sister of the Tomb
of the Christian Woman, another
vast circular mausoleum raised to
the honour of an ancient, but long-

next is Lambaesis, a rich but con-
fusing place. The central piazza of
the 19th-century town is an open-air
museum of Classical carving. There
are also the slightly reclusive exca-
vations into the Roman civil town,
including a capitoline temple and a
processional way to an Aesculapius
healing shrine. Then there are the
separate excavations of the legion-
ary barracks, dominated by what
is called the Praetorium, a majes-
tic hallway accessed through four
arches, which stands in the middle
of this military compound.

To the north lies Zana (ancient
Diana Veteranorum) one of those
broody, unexcavated sites, just a
pair of intact arches and a tem-
ple platform rising above a ruin-
field of stone. Where else could
Chatwin have taken the young Don
McCullin? Outside Constantine, a
fortress city protected by a natural
gorge, there is Tiddis, a Romano-
Berber village draped over a hill-
side complete with a tiny forum, a
Mithraeum and a hilltop sanctuary
to Baal. On the edge of the settle-
ment, alone in a great field of barley,
stands the circular tomb of a local
boy made good, one Quintus Lollius
Urbicus who conquered Scotland for
his Emperor.

Then, there is Setif, which like
Guelma is a much fought-over site,
with the ruins of a Roman city
turned into a Byzantine fortress
that would later be occupied by the
French army. On my last visit young
boys were making music from
homemade drums just beside the
villa where the Triumph of Bacchus
mosaic was recently discovered.

An hour’s drive from Setif, nest-
ing into the foothills of the Kabyle
Mountains, is Djemila, the most
beautiful ruined city in Algeria. It
is of the same age, scope and rich-
ness as Timgad but instead of a

Mosaic was recently discovered.

An hour’s drive from Setif, nest-
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Mountains, is Djemila, the most
beautiful ruined city in Algeria. It
is of the same age, scope and rich-
ness as Timgad but instead of a

museum of Classical carving. There
includes a fascinating series of
mosaics depicting Dionysiac rituals.

During our last trip together in
Algeria, Don and I spent a whole
morning at Algiers’ brand new travel
fair. We were looking for old desert
guides who might have taken visitors
to see fragments of the limes, the old
Roman frontier that stretched deep
into the Sahara. Unlike Hadrian’s
Wall, this was not a completed struc-
ture but a series of watch-towers
and dyke-like ditches, used as much
for collecting tithes from nomadic
herdsmen and customs from passing
merchants as a system of defence.

No one could tell us what was
left of the Castellum Dimmidi at
Messaad. We looked at each other
and agreed that this was ‘just the
sort of thing that needs to be looked
for on the ground’ – producing the
unmistakable glint of the promise of
far-off future travels in our eyes.

Southern Frontiers: A Journey
Across the Roman Empire by
Don McCullin (Jonathan Cape,
hardback, 2010).

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39
In the year AD 613 the East Roman, or Byzantine, emperor Herakleios issued a silver coin bearing the desperate petition, ‘God help the Romans’, made at least in part from melted church plate requisitioned from the ecclesiastical buildings of Constantinople (1). The Byzantine Empire had been at war with Persia for over a decade and was running out of resources.

Two generations later, the Umayyad Caliph Abd al-Malik minted the first aniconic Muslim coinage, rejecting depictions of religious and political figures in favour of words of faith. It bore the inscription ‘There is no God but the one God’, and was used beyond his reign, as in the example of a half dinar of Umar II (2).

These two coins form the starting point for the Barber Institute of Fine Arts’ current numismatic exhibition. They express in microcosm the twin themes of religious expression and economic imperative that determined the course of monetary developments between the 4th and 8th centuries in the eastern Mediterranean. This transitional period from the Classical or antique period of Hellenistic Greek and Roman cultural ascendancy to the medieval world is termed ‘late antiquity’.

This is an era of deep significance as the Christianisation of the Roman (Byzantine) Empire in the 4th to 6th centuries and the rise of Islam and the establishment of a Muslim state in the eastern Mediterranean, Middle East and North Africa in the 7th and 8th centuries are events that have defined much of the shape of subsequent world history. It is also a period for which coinage offers a unique insight into political, religious and economic changes often unclear in written sources.

At the start of the 4th century the Mediterranean was dominated by the increasingly Christian Roman Empire, but its eastern and western halves were already beginning to develop distinct political identities. From the reign of Constantine I (306-337), Christianity was actively promoted...
by the state, and Constantine moved the capital of the empire to Constantinople. As the West gradually came under the rule of non-Roman powers, the empire in the east evolved new strategies of government
and a cultural identity which modern historians term ‘Byzantine’ (from Byzantium, the settlement refounded as Constantinople). Its inhabitants, however, thought of themselves as Romans, and many of their political and social systems continued to follow Roman models.

The role of money as a vital component of state and private commerce was one legacy of the classical Roman past. Coinage was used to pay civil servants and the army, to conduct a high volume of day-to-day transactions and usually to pay taxes. In addition to serving an important economic function, coinage also provided a means by which imperial authority could be represented to a large proportion of the empire’s population. Simply the ability to mint coinage was a statement of authority in late antiquity, and messages of succession and religious sentiment could also be conveyed.

A follis of the emperor Justinian I (53), worth 40 nummi (the lowest unit of value in the Byzantine monetary system) and among the most widely used copper coin in the empire, visibly demonstrates the economic character of money in late antiquity. It shows the location at which it was minted, including both the city (CON = Constantinople) and the workshop within the mint (B). It also displays the year in which it was minted (the 12th of Justinian’s reign, 539), the reigning emperor (the authority which gave it legitimacy as coinage) and its value or denomination (‘Μ’ being the Greek numeral 40).

The 7th-century coinage of the emperor Herakleios (608-642) provides a valuable case study of the complexity of political messages coinage might carry. He came to power as a result of an armed rebellion, and his first coins were minted on his journey from his home in Carthage to Constantinople to overthrow the incumbent emperor, Phokas (602-608). Coins minted in Alexandria show Herakleios and his father wearing consular robes (6). By issuing coins in his own name, Herakleios was usurping a right reserved for the emperor, yet his clothing evoked the alternative political authority of the Roman senate. Only after his conquest of Constantinople and official recognition as emperor did Herakleios issue coins bearing his portrait in full imperial regalia (7).

Herakleios’ rebellion occurred at a time of war between Byzantium and its eastern neighbour, Persia, leading to the issue of the first coin illustrated in this article (1). The desperate situation of the Byzantine Empire turned around remarkably between 624 and 630, however, when Herakleios inflicted a resounding defeat on the Persians. It is illustrative of how much remains to be understood about the role of coins as media for political messages that this astonishing change in imperial fortune is not marked in the numismatic record. In comparison, issues of imperial succession received significant numismatic attention. From 626 Herakleios appeared with his son Herakleios Constantine, later the emperor Constantine III (8). From 632 a third figure also appears: Heraklonas was Herakleios’ son by his second wife, Martina (9). Since she was also his niece, Herakleios’ marriage to Martina was deemed incestuous and therefore invalid by the Church. By depicting Heraklonas on his coins, Herakleios was making a very public statement that, contrary to the judgement of the Church, he considered him a rightful son and heir. The interplay of faith and fortune on Byzantine coinage was not, therefore, always straightforward. If it is surprising to a modern scholar that Herakleios’ greatest triumph did not appear on his coinage, it is perhaps unsurprising that the biggest crisis he faced did not.

In 622 the Prophet Muhammad journeyed from Mecca to Medina, where he established the nascent Muslim community. Within the Prophet’s lifetime the community returned to and conquered Mecca. From there, the new religious movement, founded on the Abrahamic scriptures and the revelation of the Qur’an, expanded out of Arabia. By the 690s it had completely absorbed the former Persian Empire and around two-thirds of the lands formerly held by Byzantium. This Muslim state was led by a Caliph, or ‘successor’ of Muhammad. In the late 7th and early 8th centuries the Caliphs were drawn from the Umayyad family, lending their name to the Umayyad Caliphate (661-750).

The historical sources for the rise of Islam are fragmentary and often unclear, as is our understanding of Islam in its earliest period, but it seems clear that the earliest Arab conquerors were uninterested in disrupting existing administrative and religious practices in their territories. The easiest models to use to those already available, a strategy most immediately visible on coinage. In lands once ruled by the Persians, Umayyad local governors issued coins imitating Persian types but often with Arabic legends outside the main design (10).

In areas formerly ruled by Byzantium it seems likely that as early as the 640s local authorities, whether Muslim or Christian, began producing coins to make up for a lack of centralised production. These were based on various Byzantine prototypes but retained different features and made different modifications to reflect local needs. One
14. Gold imitation solidus, Umayyad, late 7th century, mint location unknown, 19mm, 4.49g, Barber Institute A-B20.

15. Copper imitation folli, Umayyad, circa 670–690, Aleppo, 18mm, 4.53g, Barber Institute A-B36.

16. Gold solidus, Justinian II, 692–695, Constantinople, 19mm, 4.32g, Barber Institute A-B324.

As the Caliphate developed a clear political unity represented by the Caliph (14). A standing figure also appeared on coinage, probably representing the Caliph (15). Modifying Byzantine types and maintaining Byzantine structures of governance and representation was not the long-term strategy adopted by the Caliphate, however. In the 690s the Caliph Abd al-Malik initiated reforms that restructured the Caliphate fiscally and administratively. The gold coin mentioned at the start of this article (2) was the numismatic declaration of more formalised Islamic sentiments. The coins used only the word of God to assert the political and spiritual authority of the Caliph.

The relationship between Byzantium and the Umayyad Caliphate in late antiquity was usually adversarial, and coinage represented a sphere in which interplay and opposition could be expressed both ways. In the same decade as Abd al-Malik’s coin reform, Byzantine coinage, too, underwent a striking design modification. During his first reign (685–695), the emperor Justinian II replaced for the first time the Byzantine emperor on the obverse (front) of his gold coins, emblazoning them instead with an image of Christ Pantokrator, ‘ruler of all’ (16).

The positions chosen by the Byzantine and Umayyad states in the late 7th and early 8th centuries have defined world history since late antiquity. Christianity and Islam became the basis for competing political and cultural identities in constant interaction. Decisions about just how to visualise the divine – such as Justinian II’s choice of an image of Christ and Abd al-Malik’s choice of the divine word – continue to resonate in the Christian and Muslim artistic representation of the modern world, and in debates about depicting religious figures and negotiating political and religious landscapes.

As in the modern world, however, the medieval period provides ample evidence of syncretism, experimentation and complex appropriation of cultural symbolism, as well as the development of strict political and theological principles. Faith & Fortune examines the development of distinct Christian and Muslim investment in sacred image and sacred word through the medium of coinage, but it also showcases the rarely displayed coinage of the Muslim Artuqid state, which ruled in Anatolia from the 12th century.

Turkmen coinage in many respects provides a fitting epilogue to the numismatic experiments of late antiquity and an appropriate prologue to the complexities of modern inter-religious dialogue and contest. It is fascinating for its use of symbols of power and religious significance drawn from both Muslim and Christian traditions. One coin in the exhibition bears the Arabic calligraphic design pioneered under Abd al-Malik on one side, and the image of Christ Pantokrator, probably directly imitating earlier Byzantine coin types, on the other (17).

The relationship between the neighbouring Byzantine and early Muslim empires was one that involved trade, intellectual exchange and military confrontation. Images and words displayed on these coins demonstrate how each power used money to assert cultural difference and promote its own concept of the divine.
The Eastern Desert of Egypt between the Nile and the Red Sea is harsh and arid, a labyrinth of wadis choked with gravel and stones, almost devoid of vegetation, watered rarely by the run-off from thunderstorms in the mountains that line the coast, inhabited only by a few ibexes and hyraxes and the camels of a handful of Bedouin families. But it was not always like this. The rocky walls of the wadis and the boulders that litter them are adorned with thousands of rock-art images that bear witness to a period when what is now a desert was a grassy savannah supporting herds of animals, both wild and domestic, and the people who hunted or tended them. The images are almost without exception petroglyphs, made by scratching or cutting into the rock surface, but there are hardly any paintings – for these you have to go across the Nile and far out into the Western Desert.

South of the Wadi Hammamat, which runs east from the Nile valley south of Qena to the coast at Quseir, the rock is mainly Nubian sandstone that is yellow or pink when fractured, but acquires a dark patina, chocolate-brown or even black, when exposed. This patina can easily be scraped away, so the rock forms an ideal medium for drawing, rather like a modern scraper-board. An image drawn on it stands out clearly because of the contrast in colour between the newly exposed substrate and the dark patina, but over time it fades as the patina re-forms.

More than half the images are of animals. Most prominent among the wild animals are giraffes and elephants. There are also hundreds of ibexes, various antelopes, many ostriches and other animals including wild asses. There are also a few crocodiles and hippopotamuses. Cattle are numerous. In some wadis there seems to be a cow on every...
other rock. Most have long horns and some a broad band or stripe round the girth.

In the main the animal images are not realistic (although there are important exceptions to which we shall return). Most seem to modern eyes to be caricatures, in that the distinctive features such as the elephants’ trunks and the giraffes’ tails are exaggerated. Many images are somewhat crude but a few are elegant and refined.

There are anthropoid images as well as animals. We have to be cautious about calling them ‘people’ because they might be gods. They are even less realistic than the animals, and most are ‘stick men’ with arms and legs indicated by single lines. Some are decorated with one or more lines sprouting from the top of the head – something that is reminiscent of the stylised plumes in the headdress of some of the Pharaonic gods, such as Min, who was associated particularly with the Eastern Desert. Some of them wield bows and use dogs to hunt antelopes or ibexes, while others are shown controlling cattle, either by what appears to be a rope or halter attached to the animal’s horns, or by holding its tail.

Some hold their arms up above their heads, with the hands pointing down (in the gesture made famous by the long-distance runner Mo Farah at the Olympic Games). This image can also be found on Naqada II funerary pottery dating from the 4th millennium BC.

You might be tempted to ask what the rock art means, but that is probably unwise because it begs the question of whether it ‘means’ anything at all. It is quite possible that some of the images of animals and people had as little meaning as graffiti, the work of someone who today finds himself in front of a blank wall with a can of spray paint in his hand and time to fill. To draw a picture by scratching off the patina is easy; it needs no tool other than a hard stone and it takes no longer that a few minutes.

Some of the rock art we see now was probably done by someone with nothing better to do while he minded the cattle on a hot afternoon. That cannot be the whole story, of course, because some of the images exhibit considerable skill and must have been thought out with care, but it cautions us against attempting to weave theories and draw elaborate conclusions about the culture of the people who left these ancient records.

These images of animals and people speak of a time before about 3000 BC when the climate was much, much wetter than it is now and the landscape was similar to the present-day grasslands of Kenya or Tanzania. They show the wild animals typical of that kind of habitat and the people who hunted them and pastured their cattle. They are interesting but not particularly unusual because there are similar rock art images all over the world, in other parts of Africa, for example, and in Asia and America.

What sets the Eastern Desert rock art apart, what make it so surprising and even unique, are the drawings of boats.

For here in the desert, 100 kilometres from any navigable water of the Nile on one side, or the Red
Sea on the other, we find hundreds of images of boats. Some are very simple, consisting of no more than a carved line to indicate the outline of a hull, but many are elaborate. Some have straight hulls, others curved. Many have decorated vertical posts at bow and stern, and often equipment such as oars, steering oars and cabins, and apparently crews of oarsmen. Possibly the most striking boat image is in the Wadi Abu Wasil, some 100 kilometres east of Luxor, with five large figures, two of whom are taller than their companions and have twin ‘plumes’ on their heads. There are at least four boats here, and there are other sites, especially in the Wadi Barramiya east of Edfu, which have collections of several and even dozens of boats on the same rock face.

A few of the boats – those with curved banana-shaped hulls – are similar to boats on Naqada II pottery of the mid-4th millennium. They are not identical but the similarity is great enough to suggest that they are contemporaneous. But others, those with straight hulls carrying large passengers, are so much like the boats that decorate the walls of New Kingdom tombs – the boats that carry the deceased on their journeys through the underworld, as described in the Book of the Dead – that we have to conclude that they are much more recent, from the mid-second millennium or even later. Indeed a ‘rock art’ boat incised into the wall of a temple of Amenhotep III (1390-1352 BC) in the wadi behind El Kab almost proves this.

The obvious question is: why are boats here in the desert? There is no archaeological evidence to explain them. There has been no excavation at any of the desert rock art sites – or at least none has been reported – and it is not likely that digging would reveal anything of interest. This is because the wadis are subject to flash floods severe enough to carry away great quantities of sand, gravel, and even boulders. Any habitations there would have
been destroyed and any artefacts swept away.

The association of boats with beliefs about the afterlife allows us to conjecture, however, that they are associated with funerary practices of some sort. Perhaps they are memorials or grave-markers, the equivalent for ordinary people of the tombs in the Valley of the Kings. Perhaps the collections of boat images denote a family’s graveyard, each boat having been drawn to speed a departed relative on his or her journey to the Western Land.

Little was known to the outside world about the Eastern Desert rock art before 1938, when the Egyptian Exploration Society published Hans Winkler’s Rock Drawings of Southern Upper Egypt. Winkler was killed in the Second World War and it was many years before the interest his work had evoked was revived. He travelled by camel guided by Bedouin, the only people who knew where to find the rock art in the tortuous maze of wadis.

It was only in the 1990s that two technological advances – reliable off-road vehicles and, crucially, GPS navigation – made it possible to explore the desert more easily and continue Winkler’s work of documenting the rock art.

By the end of the millennium the Eastern Desert between the Wadi Hammamat and Wadi Barramiya roads had been surveyed and much of its rock art revealed. No doubt there was still more to be found, but enough was known to give confidence that it was more or less understood. It was a rock art ‘province’, dating from the 4th millennium and later, consisting mainly of simple non-realistic representations of animals and anthropoids, and of course, of boats.

It was therefore something of a bombshell when, in 2007, a Belgian team led by Dirk Huyge announced that two years earlier they had discovered rock art of a completely different style and of a much greater age. At Qurta, in the Nile Valley some 40 kilometres south of Edfu, they found several highly realistic images of cattle and other animals. They differ from the images in the desert wadis not only in their realism, their size (they are much larger, typically nearly a metre long), their technique (they are deeply incised outlines, not just surface scratches) and their amazing age. For they have been dated by optically stimulated luminescence of the wind-blown deposits with which some of them were partially covered, until between 10,000 and 15,000 years ago.

This means that the rock art of Qurta dates to the last Ice Age. Not only do the images resemble those of the cave art of France and Spain in subject matter and realistic style but they may also be contemporaneous. The intriguing possibility suggests itself that there may actually have been contact between Egypt and France 15,000 years ago, and that people may have migrated across the 3,000 kilometres that separates them, taking with them their culture and their artistic style.

In 2000 we thought we understood the rock art of the Eastern Desert, only to find our thinking turned upside down by the Qurta revelations. Gaining access to the desert recently has been difficult, as it has been restricted by the Egyptian authorities, but we can look forward to further discoveries when it is possible again. What remains to be found? What new understanding of the past will this ancient record reveal? There is no reason to think that the Eastern Desert has yielded everything it has to tell us.
Turkey, the Greek Islands & the Dalmatian Coast

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GUEST OF HONOUR: ROYAL MUSEUM FOR CENTRAL AFRICA / TERVUREN

DELEN
PRIVATE BANK
Ex-Yves Saint Laurent Roman torso sold to a Swiss collector

Dr Jerome M Eisenberg reports on two lively autumn antiquities sales held in London

The star of Christie’s sale held on 24 October was undoubtedly the cover-piece of the catalogue, an over-life-size (H. 37 inches) Roman marble torso of an athlete (1), dating from 1st-2nd century AD, from the collection of the late Yves Saint Laurent, acquired in 1974. It was purchased by a Swiss collector at the Saint Laurent sale held at Christie’s Paris on 25 February 2009, for an unexpected €1,297,000, well over its estimate of €300-€500,000, and in spite of surface losses on the front and back. Now re-offered with an estimate of £800,000-£1,200,000, it sold for £962,500 (£1,128,050, $1,559,250) to an anonymous buyer.

The same Swiss buyer acquired an elegant Roman shell-shaped silver dish (2), circa 3rd century AD (W. 6¾ inches), that had been acquired by the New York collector/dealer Ernest Brummer in 1928 and had been in a private European collection since 1979. Estimated at £50,000-£70,000, it brought in £116,500.

A fine, large Cycladic marble reclining female figure (H. 13¼ inches) of the Early Spedos variety (3), circa 2600-2500 BC, from a major Swiss collection, estimated at £120,000-£180,000, sold for £216,000 to a private collector on the telephone. This buyer also purchased a slightly earlier marble Cycladic female figure (H. 11 inches) of the Kapsala variety (4),...
circa 2700-2600 BC, from another Swiss collection, with an estimate of £50,000-£70,000, for £92,500.

A sensitively carved Roman marble head of Venus, circa 1st-2nd century AD. H. 7½ in (17.8 cm). (Lot 76: £68,500).

With a complex, high-relief scene of the chariot race between Pelops and Oinomaos, an unusual Etruscan alabaster funerary urn, circa 3rd-2nd century BC (L. 30 inches), excited several bidders. It had passed to the Second Earl of Lonsdale (d. 1869) in a sale in 1850 and entered his collection at Lowther Castle. Published by A. Michaelis in 1882, it was last acquired by an English collector some time before 1954. Though estimated at a conservative £20,000-£30,000, it eventually went to an American collector on the telephone for a healthy £92,500.

Sculpted in a polychrome pavonazzetto marble, a Dacian prisoner, Roman, circa 1st-2nd century AD (H. 23½ inches), was originally sold by Frères Feuardent, Paris, during the 1930s. This type of marble was usually employed for depictions of Oriental types. The missing head, bust and hands were most probably made of a white marble. Bearing an estimate of £60,000-£90,000, it brought in £68,500 from a private American telephone bidder.

Although estimated at only £25,000-£35,000, a large (H. 13¾ inches) buxom, nude, Roman bronze Isis-Aphrodite,
 circa 2nd century AD, was finally purchased by a European collector by phone for £80,500, despite lacking its arms and the lower parts of its legs.

A complete Egyptian Old Kingdom wood figure (H. 16¼ inches) of the overseer Tjeteti (11), from the 6th Dynasty reign of Pepi II, circa 2278-2181 BC, was excavated by CM Firth and B Gunn in 1921-22 in the Teti Pyramid Cemetery. Since 1925, it has been in several private European collections. A conservative estimate of £20,000-£30,000 did not prevent it from selling for £68,500 to a European dealer.

A charming Egyptian nude figure of a servant or concubine (12) from the Old Kingdom-First Intermediate Period, circa 2300-2025 BC (H. 15¾ inches), acquired by a Swiss collector from N Koutoulakis in 1973, was estimated at £30,000-£50,000. But it achieved £98,500 from an English collector on the telephone.

An unusually large and well-modelled Egyptian bronze Osiris (H. 23½ inches) (13), circa 664-150 BC, its eyes and brows inlaid with silver, was acquired by an Italian collector in the 1970s. Again with an estimate of £30,000-£50,000, it went for £80,500 to another American collector bidding by telephone.

The sale of only 129 lots totalled £3,395,750, with just 78% sold by number of lots and 91% sold by value. It is interesting to note that six of the top 10 lots were won by telephone bidders.

(All prices include the buyer’s premium.)
Gaius Caesar returns to Italy

A handsome Roman marble bust (H. 18 inches) of Gaius Caesar (1), (circa AD 1-4), the grandson of Augustus, was the highlight of the sale at Bonham’s held on 23 October. Gaius Caesar and his brother, Lucius Caesar, were adopted by the childless Augustus, who intended them to be his successors; however, they both predeceased him.

This fine bust had been in two private American collections, but this is the first time that it has been offered at auction.

Due to some 19th-century Italian restorations, it was estimated at only £120,000-£150,000, but that did not prevent some enthusiastic bidding, which resulted in an Italian collector finally securing it by telephone for a resounding £374,500.

A sensitive Greek marble head of a goddess (2), perhaps Aphrodite or Artemis, (circa 3rd-2nd century BC (10½ inches)) was originally in the Swiss collection of Simon Bavier (1825-1896), who may have acquired it in Rome, where he served as the Swiss ambassador from 1883 to 1894. Hans J Morgenthau of Chicago (d. 1980) acquired it at the Münzen und Medaillen sale in Basel on 13 December 1969, for SwFr 6,000 (the writer was an underbidder). Now, with an estimate of £30,000-£50,000, it eventually went to a European dealer for £62,500.

An intriguing eastern Greek marble funerary stele (H. 24 inches), with a carving of four men in a small boat and inscribed with lines of poetry (3), (circa 1st century AD), had an estimate of only £15,000-£20,000, but, after active bidding, realised £56,250 from an English dealer bidding by telephone.

A Roman marble torso of Asclepius, the god of medicine and healing (4), (circa 1st century AD), that had been acquired by an American collector during the 1960s, was estimated at only £12,000-£15,000, but it brought in a respectable £52,500 from a European collector.

The sale of 265 lots realised £1,813,000, with only 57.7% sold by number of lots and 71.35% sold by value.

(All prices include the buyer’s premium.)
Love is a very serious subject – at least it was in the ancient world. Now it has been brought down to the level of the cute cupid-covered cards sent, and received, on St Valentine's Day, but once it was a force to be reckoned with – in fact, according to Lucretius, Eros was the primal generative power behind everything. It was a dangerous energy that could unbalance the mind, possess the body and obsess the lover to the point of madness. Alongside Chaos and Night, Eros was one of the first gods to be born, and he inspired some extraordinary Greek and Latin love poetry, while mighty Aphrodite, attractive but feared, had to be revered and flattered at the same time, as the opening lines of this verse by Sappho illustrate:

Aphrodite divine, enthroned in splendour, Beguiling daughter of Zeus, I beg you, My lady, slay not my spirit With pain and grief.

Then as now, love could be bitter-sweet and can quickly and inexplicably turn into its opposite, a fact that perplexes Catullus, as these lines show:

I hate and I love. Why should I do that, perhaps you ask? I've no idea; but I feel it happen and it tortures me.

This pre-Christian verse is often strongly and shamelessly sexual in nature, for physical love had not yet been tainted by the murky stain of guilt, as can be seen in these lines taken from Amores (i:5) by Ovid:

I tugged at her dress. Skimpy as it was, It didn't hide much, though still she fought to keep it on. But the fight was one she wanted to lose – Happily defeated, she gave herself up.

Those shoulders; those arms ... I looked, I stroked; Those nipples prompt, inviting; Those tumescent breasts, above a slimline stomach; Those long, fine curves, those girlish thighs ... No more specifics. What I saw was faultless. I held her naked body, tight to mine. As for what followed, you'll guess. Tired out, we slept. More afternoons like this? I'd not say no.

On a more romantic note, in this poem Petronius tells his partner that he wants to take time to savour his lovemaking:

Sex is but brief, degrading fun, And quickly palls when it is done. So let's not, like livestock filled with carnal greed, Rush blind and headlong at the deed; Such love goes stale, the flame is burned. But thus, with business evermore adjourned, Let's lie together and just kiss.

Alexander to Constantine: Archaeology of the Land of the Bible

Eric Meyers and Mark A Chancey

Yale University Press

400 pp, 17 colour, 170 b/w illustrations, 10 maps

£30

The last time that I visited Masada, the great Herodian fortress and palace in Israel overlooking the Dead Sea, I approached it in the pitch dark, up the massive siege ramp built by the troops of the Roman general (and later emperor) Titus. Masada's only defender that night was a porcupine, who turned his back on me and was reluctant to budge. Nevertheless I reached the top just as the first light of the sun appeared over the Mountains of Moab, and with the light came thousands of storks, a massive flotilla of white sails passing only 30 metres or so above my head.

As the Bible says, 'Yea, the stork in heaven knoweth her appointed times' (Jeremiah 8.7). In fact, about half a billion birds know their appointed time, and each spring migrate from their winter grounds in Africa, along the Rift Valley into Europe. It is one of the great sights of the natural world. King Herod must have had a fantastic view from his palace perched on the northern cliffs over 400 metres high.

Most people know Masada as Israel's national shrine. Everyone is told the story: how a thousand Jewish Zealots and Sicarii were besieged by 10,000 or more Roman troops, in AD 73 or 74 (the date, like everything else, is debated). The survivors killed themselves rather than surrender and be taken prisoner.

It goes without saying that Israel and its neighbours occupy one of the great contested territories. The lands of the Bible, the Holy Land, lie not only on a geological tectonic fault line, but also a cultural, political and ecological one. A place where the empires of three continents collide, religions rise like rugged mountains and cultures clash. The Chinese curse ‘May you live in interesting times’ has applied to the people of this region for generations. So it is not easy to find objective histories of this complex and frustrating part of the world.

Eric Meyers and Mark Chancey have
periods in history, when Graeco-Roman culture spread across much of Europe, North Africa and the Near East. And how a tiny group of people, living around Jerusalem, adapted to these shock waves, and developed two world religions. If you are interested in the Graeco-Roman world, Judaism, Christianity, the Bible or how cultures change and adapt, then read this book. 

David Miles

The Classical Cookbook
Andrew Dalby and Sally Grainger
The British Museum Press, 2012
176pp, 80 colour illustrations
Paperback, £10.99

Recently I got into an argument about food. Not, I should emphasise, one of those ‘who gets the last sausage’ arguments. No, this was much more highbrow, as befits a Minerva reviewer. I claimed, in the words of the gastro-historian Felipe Fernández-Armesto, that ‘culture began when the raw got cooked’. My opponent argued for the sophistication of the raw. Now, I was punching above my weight here because the guy across the table was Ferran Adrià, chef-proprietor of the three-Michelin-star Catalan restaurant El Bulli, which, until it closed in 2011, was regularly hailed as one of the best in the world.

Ferran delivered the killer blow. ‘The only way I can convince you,’ he said, ‘is if I show you what I mean at my brother’s restaurant. Are you doing anything on the 28th?’ I gave his question deep and considered thought – for a nanosecond. That’s how I came to sit down in Barcelona to experience a 41-course meal.

‘Meal’ is, of course, hardly the word. Most of it consisted of things that I could not recognise and had never eaten before. What was put before us was a choreographed performance: food as art, nostalgia, fantasy, risk and amusement (and it did taste good). This seemed like the 21st-century celebrity chef taking food to new levels – except that with its mixture of theatricality and surprise it reminded me of accounts I had read of Roman banquets and medieval feasts. For humans food has always been about much more than calories.

A very handsome little book published by the British Museum Press makes the point with admirable elegance and lightness of touch. The Classical Cookbook is co-authored by Classical historian Andrew Dalby and chef/food historian Sally Grainger. Classical gastronomy often comes in the form of academic translations of a cookery book by Apicius – and an unappetising read it usually is, with its yucky mixture of roasted dormice, sows’ wombs, stuffed birds and fish sauce. Dalby and Grainger take a much more appealing approach, with eight chapters based on informative historical themes, supported by a selection of recipes adapted for the modern cook, which are practical, edible and beautifully illustrated.

Of course with food ranging from 700 BC (the return of Odysseus to his home in Ithaca) to Imperial Rome and the northern British frontier, we are in a world long before the Columbian exchange introduced tomatoes, eggplants, potatoes, maize, coffee and chocolate into Europe. Nevertheless, Greeks and Romans scoured their world for exciting flavours. Boring old lentils were spiced up with leeks, coriander, mint, rue, pepper, asafoetida, wine vinegar, honey, fish sauce, reduced grape juice and olive oil – and that recipe comes from the chapter concerning the farm belonging to Cato, that most upright and austere of Romans, the Consul who sacked an equestrian for being too fat to ride a horse. ‘How can such a body be useful to the state,’ Cato declared, ‘when everything between gullet and genitals has been taken over by the stomach?’

Ancient recipes, wall paintings and artefacts such as decorated silvereware usually reflect the world of the rich and privileged. Obviously for most people day-to-day food was fairly basic. Yet when I excavated a series of modest Romano-British farms in the Thames Valley, we found that, within decades of the Roman Conquest, coriander, cumin, fennel, poppy seeds, olive oil and wine were universal.

And one small farm near Oxford already possessed in the first century AD a magnificent sturdly mortarium or spice-grinding bowl stamped ‘SOLLUS F’ (‘Sollus made it’). Sollus was probably a Gallic potter, newly arrived in Britain, who set up shop in St Albans (Verulamium) to take advantage of the developing British fondness for Italian cuisine.

The Roman army marched on its stomach and its food conquered the known world. The Classical Cookbook reveals why.

David Miles
**UNITED KINGDOM.**

**CAMBRIDGE**

**The Night of Longing: Love and desire in Japanese prints**

Exquisite Japanese prints featuring lovers from both life and literature are displayed in this show of woodcuts and books of the Edo and Meiji periods. The exhibition, which explores how both love and desire were depicted and accepted in Japanese art during these eras, circa 1600–1900, includes work by the most famous artists of the time – Harunobu, Utamaro, Hokusai, Hiroshige, Kunisada, Kuniyoshi and Yoshitoshi. Images of desire take many forms, from the chaste writing of a poem or a letter to the beloved to dramatic scenes of thwarted lovers close to suicide and intimate encounters as in Utamaro’s Night of Longing (above). You just have time to catch this show.

Fitzwilliam Museum
+44 (0) 1223 332 900
(www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk.com)
Until 12 January.

**LONDON**

**Court and Craft: A Masterpiece from Northern Iraq**

A precious metalwork bag (above) made in Northern Iraq, around AD 1300, is the centrepiece of this exhibition. One of the finest pieces of Islamic inlaid metalwork in existence, it is decorated with a courtly scene showing an enthroned couple at a banquet with musicians, hunters and revellers, and completed with a rhyming couplet, probably composed specifically for the bag, and intricate geometric patterns. No other object of this kind is known, and it remains little understood even by specialists. This focused exhibition will provide the first in-depth examination of this exquisite object, exploring its origin alongside other artefacts including illustrated manuscripts and ceramics.

The Courtauld Gallery
+44 (0) 20 784 48 25 26
(www.courtauld.ac.uk)
From 20 February until 18 May.

*Daumier (1808–1879): Visions of Paris*

Daumier worked as a caricaturist for newspapers in turbulent 19th-century Paris, observing and ridiculing the conceits of bourgeois society, as in The Connoisseur (below). This exhibition sets out to explore his legacy through 130 works, many unseen in the UK before. Spanning the decades from 1830 to 1879, it looks at his wide range of subject matter, from images of fugitives fleeing the cholera epidemic to local street entertainers in his neighbourhood. The paintings, drawings, watercolours and sculpture go far beyond the last show of Daumier in the UK, an exhibition to re-imagine the art world as an alternative History Channel concerned with remembering, recording and responding to historical events. More than 30 international artists suggest that exploring archaeology is part of the artistic process in many contemporary cultures. The exhibition is arranged within two major conceptual frameworks. The first grouping has a more metaphorical view of archaeology, with an emphasis on art that addresses the form of historical research. Most of this work is photographic, or film- or video-based, and explores art as it relates to documentation.

Estorick Collection of Modern Italian Art
+44 (0) 20 7704 9522
(www.estorickcollection.com)
From 15 January until 19 April.

**UNITED STATES.**

**CHICAGO, Illinois**

*The Way of the Shovel: Art as Archaeology*

This is a group exhibition tracing contemporary artists’ interest in history, archaeology and archival research, which has become a prominent feature in art produced in recent years – such as Tony Tasset’s 1995 work Robert Smithson (Las Vegas), below. The show re-imagines the art world as an alternative History Channel concerned with remembering, recording and responding to historical events. More than 30 international artists suggest that exploring archaeology is part of the artistic process in many

**CLEVELAND, Ohio**

*Fragments of the Invisible: The Rene and Odette Delenne Collection of Congo Sculpture*

This exhibition marks the American debut of the Delenne Collection of Congo sculpture – 34 works of different attributions that the Cleveland Museum of Art acquired in 2010. It addresses the fragmentary nature of African works of art in Western collections and explores how in their original setting many
of them connected with the invisible world of deities or spirits. The history of the Delenne Collection is discussed against the background of collecting African art in Belgium and covers issues of provenance, cultural heritage and patrimony.

**Cleveland Museum of Art**
+1 21 6421 7350
(www.clevelandart.org)
Until 9 February.

**HOUSTON, Texas**
**Roads of Arabia: Archaeology and History of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia**
This exhibition examines the impact of ancient trade routes that traversed the Arabian peninsula, carrying precious frankincense and myrrh to Mesopotamia and the Graeco-Roman world and allowing for a vibrant exchange of both objects and ideas. With the later rise of Islam, pilgrimage roads converged on Mecca and gradually replaced the well-travelled incense roads. The show features objects recently excavated from more than 10 archaeological sites throughout the peninsula. Many surprising and interesting discoveries are on display.

**Museum of Fine Arts Houston**
+1 713 639 7300
(www.mfah.org)
Until 9 March.

**LOS ANGELES, California**
**Gods and Heroes: European Drawings of Classical Mythology**
Graeco-Roman mythology has inspired and challenged generations of artists to depict the colourful and dramatic stories of the Classical gods and heroes. Through a selection of nearly 40 drawings, dating from the Renaissance to the 19th century, this exhibition explores the pictorial representations of myth that have been instrumental in the formation of Western culture. Visitors will see images of familiar and compelling characters, such as Venus, Apollo, Hercules and Achilles. Tales of love and lust, rivalry and treachery, crime and punishment come to life in this beautiful collection. One of the highlights of the show is Agostino Carracci’s drawing (above), *Cupid Overpowering Pan* (1590), which refers to Virgil’s famous dicum *Amor omnia vincit* (*Love conquers all*).

**Getty Museum**
+1 310 440 7300
(www.getty.edu)
Until 9 February.

**NEW YORK, New York**
**The Nelson A Rockefeller Vision: In Pursuit of the Best in the Arts of Africa, Oceania and the Americas**
The Metropolitan Museum of Art’s Department of the Arts of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas (AAOA) celebrates the genesis of its permanent collection with this special exhibition, marking the 60th anniversary of the founding of the Museum of Primitive Art, the direct precursor to the Metropolitan’s Department of AAOA. The Museum of Primitive Art, which opened in 1982, was a pioneering cultural institution that featured Nelson Rockefeller’s non-Western art collection. Some 50 masterpieces – including this nose ornament with shrimp from Moche, Peru (below) – reveal his vision for the museum.

**Metropolitan Museum of Art**
+1 21 2535 7710
(www.metmuseum.org)
Until 5 October.

**AUSTRALIA**
**CANBERRA**
**Gold and The Incas: Lost Worlds of Peru**
This impressive survey of Peruvian art showcases the splendour of the art of the ancient pre-Hispanic cultures of Peru. For more than 2,000 years before the Spanish came to Peru, great civilisations rose and fell, and were conquered by others or absorbed into them. The rich tapestry of the Incan empire and its predecessors is beautifully illustrated in more than 200 objects. Intricate jewellery, elaborate embroidered or woven cloth, and sophisticated ceramic sculpture is on show. Look out for the lively depictions of birds, fish and animals that decorate numerous works of art, highlighting the importance of the natural world in Inca culture.

**National Gallery of Australia**
+61 (0) 26 24 06 411
(www.nga.gov.au)
Until 21 April.

**COPENHAGEN**
**INTERSTICES: NEW WORKS**
The modern Danish sculptor Anita Jørgensen has created a series of new pieces to complement the Glyptotek’s permanent antiquities collection. Below is her *In Between X* next to...
Wounded Amazon, a Roman statue dating from circa AD 150. Her striking minimalist sculpture creates an intense dialogue with ancient masterpieces, some two millennia old. Catch this show if you can as it closes early in the New Year.

Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek
+45 33 41 81 41
(www.glyptotek.com).
Until 12 January.

GERMANY
FRANKFURT
Nok: Origins of African Sculpture
This is a display of more than 100 sculptures and fragments recovered from an eight-year research project (under the direction of archaeologist Peter Breunig) into the Nok people of central Nigeria. Archaeological finds from several Nok sites, such as the double-headed lizard above, are displayed alongside Ancient Egyptian and Graeco-Roman artefacts of the same period to highlight stylistic differences. The exhibition will also address the problem of illegal excavations fuelled by a market hungry for ancient African artefacts.

Liebieghaus
+49 69 60 50 98 234
(www.liebieghaus.de)
Until 23 February.

FRANCE
PARIS
Desire and Sensual Pleasures: Victorian Masterpieces
Some 50 works by Britain’s leading 19th-century artists, including Burne-Jones, Waterhouse, Millais, Leighton and Rossetti, have been brought together for this exhibition. All these artists looked back to the Classical and medieval periods for inspiration and created pictures showing sensual worlds that were in striking contrast to the morally rigid times in which they lived. They celebrated ‘the cult of beauty’ by reinventing ancient or medieval heroines, showing them as sublimely sensual, often naked, women, and setting them in lush landscapes or sumptuous palaces. One star painting is Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema’s riotous The Roses of Heliogabalus (above). This is a touring exhibition that will go on to Rome, Madrid and, finally, London.

Musée Jacquemart-André
+33 14 45 62 11 59
(www.musee-jacquemart-andre.com)
Until 20 January.

ISRAEL
JERUSALEM
Mapping the Holy Land II: Cartographic treasures from the Trevor and Susan Chino Collection
The centrepiece of this show is a map of the Holy Land from Bernhard von Breydenbach’s Peregrinato in Terram Sanctam, published in 1486, three years after the author’s pilgrimage to Jerusalem (shown below). It went on to be published in several languages. One of the first printed maps, it was created from three woodblocks by the Dutch artist Erhard Reuwich. The six other maps displayed provide evidence that many cartographers who had never visited the Holy Land relied on original ‘prototypes’ such as this one by Breydenbach.

The Israel Museum
+972 26 70 88 11
(www.imjnet.org)
Until 28 January.

KOREA
SEOUL
The Taoism in Korea: Deities and Immortals
In addition to Confucianism and Buddhism, Taoism has always played a significant role in Korean culture, but until lately has been somewhat neglected in academic circles. Now for the first time a major exhibition focusing on Taoism is taking place in South Korea’s capital, Seoul. This collection of Taoist cultural artefacts includes paintings, books, crafts and archaeological achievements from the 7th century BC to the 16th-century Joseon Dynasty, last of the long-ruling Confucians.

National Museum of Korea
+82 220 77 90 00
(www.museum.go.kr)
Until 3 February.

Minerva January/February 2014
The emphasis of the show is on the art, education and religion. The he encouraged in architecture, These include innovations that cultural and historical achievements. in a splendid exhibition exploring his of Charlemagne is commemorated until 30 March. www.antikenmuseumbasel.ch +41 61 20 11 212

Antiken Museum
adult males and adolescent boys. homoerotic relationships between politics, drinking, religion and of male life are explored, including paintings, statues and reliefs. All areas perfect man as illustrated on vase with the Athenian perception of the 6th, 5th and 4th centuries BC. Visitors will be represented. As usual there will be a good showing from Belgium – more than 51 exhibitors including Hamarkhis Archeologie, which will offer this 2nd-century Roman head of Medusa (above). Many different kinds of collectors are drawn to BRAFA because, as well as antiques, furniture, paintings and drawings, books, ceramics and porcelain, silver and goldware, coins and medals and curios, it also includes stunning antiquities and splendid pieces of tribal art. This year’s Guest of Honour is the Royal Museum for Central Africa, Tervuren. Some extremely rare artefacts from its collections – masks, totems, jewellery and other ethnographic objects, some never exhibited before – will be on show. There will also be a series of talks given by experts in different fields, at 2.30pm each day.

BRUSSELS
BRAFA 14
With more than 130 exhibitors BRAFA (Brussels Art Fair) is hoping to attract over 50,000 visitors. As the first international art market of the year, this event always attracts a lot of interest – especially as it brings together exhibitors from all over the world. This year more than a dozen countries – including Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Great Britain, Hungary, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, Monaco, the Netherlands, Switzerland and the USA – will be represented. As usual there will be a good showing from Belgium – more than 51 exhibitors including Hamarkhis Archeologie, which will offer this 2nd-century Roman head of Medusa (above). Many different kinds of collectors are drawn to BRAFA because, as well as antiques, furniture, paintings and drawings, books, ceramics and porcelain, silver and goldware, coins and medals and curios, it also includes stunning antiquities and splendid pieces of tribal art. This year’s Guest of Honour is the Royal Museum for Central Africa, Tervuren. Some extremely rare artefacts from its collections – masks, totems, jewellery and other ethnographic objects, some never exhibited before – will be on show. There will also be a series of talks given by experts in different fields, at 2.30pm each day.

Tour & Taxis +32 (0) 2 513 48 31 (www.brafa.be)
25 January to 2 February, from 11am to 7pm.

SWITZERLAND
BASEL
How to be a Man: The Stronger Sex in Antiquity
This special exhibition of objects from the permanent collection is devoted entirely to men. To be precise, men living in Athens in the 6th, 5th and 4th centuries BC. Visitors will accompany an ancient Athenian on a typical journey through life from childhood to death. Modern-day representations of man are juxtaposed with the Athenian perception of the perfect man as illustrated on vase paintings, statues and reliefs. All areas of male life are explored, including politics, drinking, religion and homoerotic relationships between adult males and adolescent boys.

Antiken Museum
+41 61 20 11 212 (www.antikennuseumbasel.ch) Until 30 March.

ZURICH
Charlemagne and Switzerland
The 1,200th anniversary of the death of Charlemagne is commemorated in a splendid exhibition exploring his cultural and historical achievements. These include innovations that he encouraged in architecture, art, education and religion. The emphasis of the show is on the Carolingian legacy in Switzerland. An epilogue sheds light on the cult and legends around Charlemagne that developed after his death. Albrecht Dürer’s 1514 portrayal of Charlemagne (below left) is one of many idealised portraits that fuelled the development of his legend.

Swiss National Museum
+41 44 21 86 511 (www.nationalmuseum.ch) Until 2 February 2014.

EVENTS
UNITED KINGDOM, LONDON
University College London
Anglo-Israeli Archaeological Society lecture series
+44 (0) 20 83 49 57 54 (www.aias.org.uk) Admission free, ticket not required

13 January, 6pm
The Promontory Palace at Caesarea Maritima, Israel
With Professor Barbara Burrell

10 February, 6pm
The Quest for King David: New light from Khirbet Qeiyafa
With Professor Yossi Garfinkel

POLAND, WARSAW
National Museum Warsaw Lectures to accompany the exhibition
Guercino: Baroque Triumph throughout January +48 22 621 10 31 (www.mnw.art.pl)

2 January, 6pm
Angels & Demons: Baroque Music
Discover the secret code binding Baroque painting and music.

9 January, 6pm
Different stories: The narrative in the Baroque era majolica
This lecture covers Italian majolica style narrative and how it evolved in the 17th and 18th centuries.

16 January, 6pm
Baroque sculpture in Meissen and other factories in Europe in the 18th century
An insight into what inspired Baroque sculptors and the way in which their work was implemented in chapels, churches and court.

23 January, 6pm
The workshop Baroque painter
How the workshop functioned in 17th-century Italy.

30 January, 6pm
Temptation, betrayal and hurt innocents: Biblical heroines Giovanni Barbieri
A comparative study of the way in which biblical sources were read and understood in the time of Guercino.

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LONDON
ADVENTURE TRAVEL SHOW TICKET OFFER

The Adventure Travel Show presents a world of extraordinary discoveries all under one roof. It is the UK’s foremost event for people who like to travel outside the mainstream – whether on small-group adventures, epic journeys or exclusive expeditions.

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Admission to The Adventure Travel Show costs £10 on the door, or £8 in advance, but readers of Minerva can get tickets for only £6 by quoting ‘MINERVA’ when booking tickets online at www.adventureshow.com or when calling 0871 620 4024. (Calls cost 10p per minute plus network extras.)

Olympia 0871 620 7159 (www.adventureshow.com)
25 January (10am to 6pm) and 26 January (10am to 5pm).

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Tour & Taxis +32 (0) 2 513 48 31 (www.brafa.be)
25 January to 2 February, from 11am to 7pm.

QATAR
DOHA
Relics
This is Damien Hirst’s first solo exhibition in the Middle East and it is also billed as the largest collection of his work ever assembled. It incorporates pieces spanning 25 years from every major series Hirst has ever made, such as the ‘Spot’ and ‘Spin’ paintings, the natural history sculptures, and the medicine cabinets, and will include his 2007 diamond-encrusted skull For the Love of God, as well as art fresh from his studio.

Al Riwaq Art Space +973 17 71 74 41 (www.alriwaqartspace.com) Until 22 January.

© STIFTUNG DEUTSCHES HISTORISCH MUSEUM, BERLIN

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A comparative study of the way in which biblical sources were read and understood in the time of Guercino.

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20/12/2013  12:31
Finely carved red jasper Bes amulet.
Egypt, Late Period, 664-332 BC. Height 5.8cm.
Participating BAAF Basel Fair 8-13 November 2013

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Gold and garnet box in shape of a realistic looking fish. Making utilitarian objects into works of art appears to have been a passion for the elite of ancient Eurasia. This fanciful artifact is a prime example, turning a simple two-part container into an elaborate and rather realistic looking carp. Each of the fins is detailed with wire, in imitation of the bony ridges seen in the living fish. Hundreds of individually cut sheet gold scales have been soldered, one at a time, to the body of the fish, giving the surface a naturalistic texture. Rough polished garnet inlays form the eyes, which are set in bezels of twisted wire filigree. Even the gills are accented with a line of filigree, separating the smooth head from the scaled body. Research to date has yet to uncover a comparable to this box, but one other fish-shaped vessel is worth noting.

Part of the famous Oxus Treasure, the highly realistic looking carp is fashioned from sheet gold to form a vessel with the pouring spout in the mouth of the fish. Unlike the box seen here, the scales on the Oxus fish are a pattern working into the surface of the metal, rather than separately made pieces attached by soldering. The Oxus fish also lacks inlay for the eyes. Now housed in the British Museum (artifact 1897,1231.16), the fish-vessel is dated 5th – 4th century BCE and attributed to the Achaemenid culture. The fish-shaped box is believed to date a bit later and, as yet, no firm cultural attribution has been identified. Some theorize that it was used as a document box, to send important messages between kings in Central Asia. Future research and excavations may reveal more about the history of this most intriguing artifact.

Date: ca. 2nd – 4th c. CE / Medium: Gold and Garnet / Subject: Zoomorphic Box
Size: Assembled Length 9 13/16” / XRF Analysis / Radiography / Tool Markings, Construction & Patination Study / Uranium, Thorium-4Helium Dating
An Egyptian Turquoise Faience Crocodile

Late Period, 26-30 Dynasty, circa 664-343 BC
Dimensions: 6.2 cm W
Provenance: with J.J. Kleiman, New York, 1966
The Mezes S. Schupf Foundation Inc.
Sotheby’s, New York, 8 June 1994, lot 3

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