From Philae to Space (via Dorset)

The 2nd century BC obelisk, originally from Philae, now in the grounds of Kingston Lacy, Dorset.

In 2014 the Centre for the Study of Ancient Documents became involved in an exciting collaboration with the National Trust combining two of the Centre’s current projects, the Corpus of Ptolemaic Inscriptions (CPI), and Reflectance Transformation Imaging (RTI). CSAD’s part in the collaboration has been to capture RTI and 3D interactive images of the 6.7 metre tall pink granite obelisk from the Ptolemaic temple island of Philae in Upper Egypt which now stands in the grounds of the National Trust’s Kingston Lacy estate in Dorset.

The three-year CPI project aims to create a corpus of up-to-date editions of over 550 Greek, bilingual and trilingual inscriptions on stone from Egypt during its rule by the Hellenistic dynasty founded by Ptolemy I in 323, and ending with the death of Cleopatra in 30 BC. The obelisk at Kingston Lacy is one of the most important of the multi-lingual inscriptions, recording Greek and Egyptian hieroglyphic texts alongside one another, which in the 19th century provided clues to deciphering the hieroglyphic script. The obelisk was discovered in 1815 by William John Bankes and brought from Egypt to England. It was originally one of a pair set up in the 2nd century BC by the priests of Isis at Philae, after Ptolemy VIII had granted them a tax exemption. The Greek inscriptions on the obelisk comprise a transcript of the priests’ petition and Ptolemy’s response in Greek on the base beneath an honorific text in hieroglyphs on the shaft. It is hoped that sections of the Greek text, which are now illegible, can be recovered through RTI technology.

RTI is a photographic method developed at Hewlett-Packard Labs by Tom Malzbender in the early 2000s that captures a subject’s surface shape and colour and enables the interactive re-lighting of the subject from any direction. A particular strength of RTI is that it can reveal surface information that is not easily visible with the naked eye. While the lettering on the shaft and lower range of the plinth of the Philae obelisk at Kingston Lacy is in a reasonably good state of preservation, and reading is still possible, the opportunity to improve the accuracy of the text, and to find and identify elements of the now invisible painted inscriptions on the upper range of...
the plinth, which record the royal response to the priests’ petition, provide more than sufficient reason for re-examining the monument. There are also considerable conservation benefits to be gained for the National Trust through the creation of an accurate, interactive virtual image of the obelisk as it is today, since gradual deterioration of the original over time is an inevitability.

By happy coincidence, it became clear soon after discussions with James Grasby, the National Trust’s regional curator for the South West, began that the obelisk was set to achieve considerably wider significance since its name had been given to the robotic craft that in November 2014 would land on Comet 67P/Churyumov-Gerasimenko, as part of a mission launched in 2004 by the European Space Agency (ESA) and named Rosetta, after the famous Egyptian trilingual inscription now in the British Museum. ESA chose the names in the hope that, just as a comparison of the scripts on the Rosetta Stone and the obelisk led to a greater understanding of the Egyptian writing system, the Philae and Rosetta space mission would lead to a better understanding of comets and the early Solar System.

CSAD’s work on the obelisk thus became part of a multi-disciplinary focus on the obelisk, which culminated at the time of the landing on the comet. RTI and 3D photography of the obelisk was carried out over the summer and early autumn of 2014; time-lapse photography recorded the process, from erection of a purpose-designed scaffolding, through the cleaning of the obelisk by the National Trust’s conservators, to the RTI photography and 3D scanning. The 3D scanning of the obelisk was completed by Andrew Cuffley of GOM UK Ltd. The RTI work on the hieroglyphic inscription was carried out by Ben Altshuler, Sarah Norodom and Uxue Rambla Eguilaz from Oxford; the team returned to Kingston Lacy in April 2015 to complete RTI photography of the Greek inscriptions.

On 22nd October 2014, CSAD staff members Charles Crowther, Jane Masséglia, Rachel Mairs, Kyriakos Savvopoulos and Ben Altshuler contributed to a media day hosted at Kingston Lacy by the UK Space Agency and the National Trust which attracted widespread attention. At the event Dr Gerhard Schwehm, of the European Space Agency, spoke of the commonality of the projects linked by the obelisk: “The Oxford team like to say they are engaged in digital archaeology; we’re also doing some archaeology, if you like – but in space”.

To mark the coincidence of the RTI project and the Rosetta-Philae mission, Roger Michel, of the Classics Conclave, hosted a celebratory event for supporters and members of the Oxford Classics Faculty and the National Trust of Kingston Lacy in the grounds of the estate on the eve of Philae’s successful descent to the surface of the comet.

Inscriptions and the Public at EAGLE 2014

On 1st October 2014, Dr Jane Masséglia presented an overview of the Ashmolean Latin Inscriptions Project (AshLI) to colleagues gathered at the Collège de France for the first international conference organised by the European Network of Ancient Greek and Latin Epigraphy (EAGLE) in Paris.

The theme of the conference was the use of information technology in the study of epigraphy and associated disciplines, and Jane’s presentation showcased AshLI’s use of imaging software and social media to encourage public interest in the Ashmolean collection of Latin inscriptions, and gave a preview of some of the online teaching resources that are being trialled by schools in the AshLI pilot programme. She stressed in particular the importance of an accessible blog (the AshLI blog for August 2014
was read by over 1800 people) and the benefits of engaging directly with the public via social media. She presented a case study in using Twitter, in which a challenge was set to provide a transcription for a short Latin text (below). This proved a great success, with members of the public (Latinists and non-Latinists) in various countries collaborating to resolve tricky letters and make (not always serious) suggestions. Epigraphists with access to the official transcription in CIL graciously stood back to allow non-specialists the chance to work, and the exercise was followed with a blog on the history of the inscription and the solution. Positive comments mean that AshLI will certainly be repeating the experiment.

Jane’s paper, one of 11 contributions in a session dedicated to public engagement, was the only offering from a UK-based epigraphy project, and the only one in official partnership with a museum. A noticeable feature of the session was the strength of public engagement projects based in Italy, such as Digital Invasions, Svegliamuseo and Archeowiki (Lombardy), which relied on crowdsourcing and social media to make traditionally closed collections accessible online and enhance museums’ public provision. These projects suggest a significant shift in the relationship between museums and the public, towards one of mutual benefit, for which all of us working in cultural heritage should be prepared.

The AshLI blog, ‘Reading, Writing, Romans’ can be found here: http://bit.ly/AshLI-blog, and the project can be followed on Twitter @AshmoleanLatin.

Teaching with Ancient Artefacts’ Teachers’ Day at the Ashmolean Museum

On 22nd November, 38 teachers from around the UK came to Oxford for a one-day course on how to use ancient artefacts in their teaching. The day was organised by Alison Cooley and Jane Masséglia as part of the AshLI project, based at the Centre for the Study of Ancient Documents. An important aim of the AshLI project is to ‘demystify’ epigraphy, and show how well it complements the existing secondary syllabus for Classical Civilization and Latin. Following an opening lecture from Warwick’s Dan Orrells, a team of Warwick and Oxford academics offered a programme of museum-based sessions in the Ashmolean Museum. Zahra Newby led a session on ancient art, focusing on the Cast Gallery and antiquities collections; Alison Cooley and Jane Masséglia led a session on reading inscriptions, using material from the Rome and Randolph Galleries; and Clare Rowan gave the teachers a chance to get even closer to their material with a coin-handling session in the Heberden Coin Room.

Mai Musié, Oxford’s Classics Outreach Officer, and Jo Rice, Head of Ashmolean Education, were also there to remind teachers of the variety of talks, teaching sessions and support available to schoolgroups, and a team of postgraduate volunteers from both universities accompanied each group between the sessions, keeping the event running smoothly.

The event was free to all participants, and travel bursaries were offered to teachers from the State sector, thanks to the generosity of Oxford Classics Outreach and Warwick’s Institute for Advanced Study.

Written feedback from teachers showed the event to have been a great success, and the team is now planning a similar event for Primary teachers. As for the ‘demystifying’ of epigraphy, the team were delighted to read among the participants’ comments:

‘I run a course called ‘An Introduction to the Classical World’ in my local comprehensive. I will now definitely add sessions on Inscriptions and Coins; I have previously been wary of both.’
Hyperspectral Imaging

We are pleased to announce the success of a recent application, led by CSAD Assistant Director Charles Crowther and David Howell, Head of Conservation Research at the Bodleian, to the John Fell Fund for support to provide the University with state-of-the-art hyperspectral imaging (HsI) equipment within a bespoke laboratory in the new Weston Library. The HsI system, essentially an advanced type of ‘camera’ capable of analytical imaging through extremely accurate and high resolution colour measurement, will be the most advanced of its type available in the UK for heritage and conservation research. The project is an internal collaboration between the Humanities Division and individual academic colleagues from within its faculties, the Digital Humanities (DH) network, the Bodleian Libraries, the Oxford e-Research Centre, the School of Geography and the Environment, and the Ashmolean Museum.

Hyperspectral imaging collects and processes information from across the electromagnetic spectrum, aiming to obtain the spectrum for each pixel in the image of a scene, with the purpose of finding objects, identifying materials, or detecting processes. The new HsI camera system will enable Oxford researchers to examine the University’s unique research collections with greater precision, to acquire data from diverse artefacts ranging from built heritage to historical manuscripts, to develop robust approaches to analysing results, and to collaborate with heritage organisations across the UK.
LGPN has been included as one of the basic datasets used by SNAP:DRGN (Standards for Networking Ancient Prosopographies: Data and Relations in Greco-Roman Names), an AHRC pilot project under the overall direction of Gabriel Bodard (King’s College London) which is investigating ways of linking the information about individual persons contained in different prosopographical works of reference (http://snapdrgn.net/about) and the potential for links to digital documentary source material, such as the inscriptions of Aphrodisias (http://insaph.kcl.ac.uk/iaph2007).

Dr Asuman Abuğla (Bilkent University, Ankara) spent a month during the summer in Oxford as LGPN visitor working on the publication of the Greek and Latin inscriptions from cities in northern Pisidia in the museums of Isparta and Uluborlu.

Oxford Teaching Awards

A grant has been awarded by the Oxford Institute of Learning for a new teaching project, Digital techniques in the study of ancient epigraphy: transforming MSt/MPhil teaching, led by Dr Jonathan Prag aimed at developing and embedding the teaching of essential digital technology-based skills into Masters-level training in epigraphy.

The project team, Dr. Jonathan Prag, Dr Charles Crowther, Dr Alex Mullen, and Dr Hannah Cornwell, will use the grant for a workshop, planned for the start of May 2015, which will offer training in the use of TEI-XML (EpiDoc) and related technologies. The aim of the workshop is to help graduate students in Ancient History to engage fully in the creation and use of digital resources for their research, thus giving them a skill-set to develop future research or to transfer to other sectors. The workshop will also provide support to faculty members to enable them to continue the training of graduate students in the future.

Teaching at the workshop will be led by Dr Gabriel Bodard and Dr Charlotte Tupman of King’s College, London.

An additional collaboration has been agreed with Professor Sophie Minon, of University of Lyon III, with the aim of adding a linguistic tool to the project’s online resources. This will provide a morphological analysis of the constituent elements and a basic translation of the semantics of every name of Greek derivation, as well as bibliographical references. It will enhance significantly what is offered by the LGPN website and, in a different way than originally conceived, fulfil one of the objectives set out in the Introduction to LGPN I in 1987. Some preliminary work has already started on this collaboration, which will begin in earnest in Autumn 2015.
CSAD Visitors Reports

Pierre Fröhlich

My stay at CSAD, between April and July 2014, had two aims: firstly, the preparation for publication of the unpublished inscriptions from the Euromos excavations (Caria, Asia Minor). This publication is in collaboration with my colleagues of Bordeaux-Montaigne University. Among these inscriptions, a decree for an Euromos citizen, datable at the end of the Hellenistic period (2nd c. BC), was presented at the Epigraphy Workshop on June, 9th 2014. Discussions with the epigraphists of the CSAD and other colleagues at Oxford were very helpful in the preparation for publication of the incomplete text. Secondly, the rest of the stay was devoted to work on the magistrate’s bodies of Hellenistic democracies. The evidence is mainly epigraphic and the resources of both the CSAD library and other Oxford libraries were essential. Notwithstanding the revision of an already written chapter and of the bibliography, I was able to write a further study of eponymous magistrates. These functions, honorary as their holder gave his name to the current year, were usually given to a unique holder. Nevertheless in some cities, these eponymous magistrates were members of a body. In certain cases, it seems that there even existed eponymous bodies. This situation raises difficult problems of precedence, bodies organisation, etc. which have never before been studied. Besides, the nature of the evidence deeply influences the institutional reconstitution: a far too formalist reconstitution has generally been held, as the study tries to point out. Last, the important regional gradations which appeared underline an institutional geography that I have tried to reconstruct. From this point of view my stay at the CSAD was very beneficial.

Pierre Fröhlich at Pidasa (Caria, Turkey).

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New CSAD Members 2014/15

Rachel Mairs

Dr. Rachel Mairs is a visiting researcher on the AHRC-funded Corpus of Ptolemaic Inscriptions project. She is a Lecturer in the Department of Classics at the University of Reading, prior to which she held positions at Brown University, Merton College Oxford and New York University. She has also served time as manager of a rare book dealership and a freelance copy editor. She did her undergraduate degree in Egyptology at the University of Cambridge, with a philological focus. After three years of Greek, Old, Middle and Late Egyptian, and Coptic (and the occasional essay) she continued with an MPhil in Classics at the same institution, with the intention of working on multilingualism and ethnic interaction in Ptolemaic Egypt. Having studied Demotic for this purpose, she was then sidetracked into working on Hellenistic Central Asia for her PhD, and has been retreating shamefacedly back towards Egypt ever since. The annual summer seminar of the American Society of Papyrologists, at Columbia University in 2006, was a welcome opportunity to get back to some proper philological work, editing Greek and Coptic texts from Egypt. She has published on bilingual texts of various genres in several phases of Egyptian and in Greek. She has a particular interest in translators and translation methodology in these texts, and is also working on a book on oral interpreting between languages in the ancient Mediterranean world. Languages which she has started to learn with enthusiasm but never quite got anywhere with include Sanskrit, Aramaic, Old Nubian, Akkadian and German. Rachel often finds herself trying to persuade people that there is more in common between her two geographical areas of interest - Egypt and Central Asia - than one might think. In the Hellenistic period, both were dynamic zones of ethnic, linguistic and cultural interaction. There are comparatively far fewer written texts from Central Asia, so her work on the region has had a more archaeological focus. Her latest book, *The Hellenistic Far East: Archaeology, Language and Identity in Greek Central Asia*, was published by University of California Press in 2014. She maintains an online bibliographical resource on the region at www.bactria.org Lately, she has developed a research interest in nineteenth-century travellers and archaeologists in the Middle East, and more specifically in the local guides and interpreters with whom they worked. *Archaeologists, Tourists, Interpreters: Exploring Egypt and the Near East* (with Maya Muratov) will be published by Bloomsbury in the summer of 2015. She is currently working on an edition and commentary of a collection of unpublished papers she found on ebay, relating to the life and career of a Palestinian
Christian *dragoman* (‘interpreter’) named Solomon Negima (fl. 1885-1918), who in his youth served in the Nile Expedition to relieve General Gordon at Khartoum, and in old age became a Mormon in a Jerusalem mission house. Rachel has taken part in archaeological excavations in Afghanistan, Jordan, Turkmenistan and Egypt. Occasionally nomads hand her goats for no obvious reason.

For the Ptolemaic Inscriptions project, Rachel is taking responsibility for the Egyptian (Demotic and Hieroglyphic) portions of bi- and tri-lingual texts, such as the Decrees of Canopus and Memphis (the Rosetta Stone). She is especially interested in translation methodology: the writer’s choices in rendering words and phrases in specific ways in the target language. The Hieroglyphic texts, in addition, show us translators working with a classical language in which they are not absolutely competent, and there is interesting linguistic interference from the Demotic. She finds that Ptolemaic hieroglyphs have their own perverse logic, but that there are elements of Demotic that will never make any sense to anyone.

Tommaso Mari

Tommaso, a DPhil Candidate in Classical Literature and Language at Brasenose College, Oxford, has joined the BA/Leverhulme funded project led by Prof. Alan Bowman and Dr. Roger Tomlin, for the publication of *Roman Inscriptions in Britain* vol. IV, Part 1. The principal objective of the project is to bring to completion the revision and re-publication of approximately 1,000 wooden writing-tables from Vindolanda, Carlisle and a number of other sites, as a continuation of the standard corpus of *Roman Inscriptions of Britain*. The Vindolanda Tablets in particular, numbering almost 900 ink-written texts published between 1975 and 2011, have been the major contribution to the documentation of Roman Britain in the past four decades.

Visiting Scholars 2014/15: Elif Akgun

Elif Akgun joined CSAD as a visiting scholar in the Autumn 2014 and will be working in the Centre for seven months. She is a research assistant and PhD candidate in the Ancient Languages and Cultures Department of the Literature Faculty, Akdeniz University. Her doctoral supervisor is Prof. Dr. Mustafa Adak.

Elif’s research focuses on the Second Sophistic in Anatolia from the first to the third centuries AD, considering what the sophist, orator and philosopher did with their time, and asking what their social positions and professions were in their cities, in the province and within the empire. This includes a consideration of their relationship with the emperor. The materials for Elif’s research are the ancient literary and epigraphic sources. Whilst at CSAD, Elif is examining ancient Greek and Latin inscription catalogues about Anatolia, and is working with Dr. Peter Thonemann.

As well as researching for her doctoral thesis, Elif is also using her time at CSAD to practise her English.

Epigraphy Workshops

There was another very successful series of Epigraphy Workshop seminars during Michaelmas Term 2014 and Hilary Term 2015, with speakers drawn from among Oxford faculty and graduate students as well as visiting scholars.

October 20: Peter Thonemann, ‘Croesus and the oracles: a new inscription from Thebes’

October 27: Juliane Zachhuber, ‘A revised reading of a decree from Bargylia: three kings, sympolities and Carian concerns’

November 3: Charles Crowther, ‘Cilicia and the Commagenian dynasty’
Circulation and Contributions
This is the eighteenth issue of the Centre’s Newsletter. The Newsletter is also available online in HTML and pdf formats (http://www.csad.ox.ac.uk/CSAD/Newsletters).
We invite contributions to the Newsletter of news, reports and discussion items from and of interest to scholars working in the fields of the Centre’s activities—epigraphy and papyrology understood in the widest sense. Contributions, together with other enquiries and requests to be placed on the Centre’s mailing list, should be addressed to the Centre’s Administrator, Maggy Sasanow, at the address below.

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November 24: Alan Bowman, Simon Hornblower, Charles Crowther, Rachel Mairs, Kyriakos Savvopoulos, ‘The Corpus of Ptolemaic Inscriptions from Egypt (CPI)’.
December 1: Susan Walker, ‘Dignitas amicorum: text on late Roman gold-glass.’
January 22: B. Helly and R. Bouchon (Lyon, CNRS, Hisoma): ‘Territorial changes in Northern Pelasgiotis (Thessaly) after the Third Macedonian War: two new inscriptions from Doliché and Lorisa’.
Feb. 9 : Robert Parker, ‘4216 lead question tablets from Dodona’.
March 2: Jonathan Prag, ‘From the I. Sicily project’.
March 9: Alison Cooley, ‘New discoveries among the Ashmolean’s Collection of Latin inscriptions’.

Visitors to CSAD

The Centre is able to provide a base for a limited number of visiting scholars working in fields related to its activities. Enquiries concerning admission as Visiting Research Fellow (established scholars) or as Visiting Research Associate should be addressed to the Centre’s Director, Professor A.K. Bowman. Association with the University carries with it membership of the University’s Stelios Ioannou School for Research in Classical and Byzantine Studies. Further information concerning application procedures and other formalities can be obtained from the Centre’s Administrator and Research Support Officer, Maggy Sasanow (margaret.sasanow@classics.ox.ac.uk).