



THE FRIENDS
OF APHRODISIAS
TRUST

Dear Member,

The Friends have had a good year; we contributed substantially to a notably successful season at Aphrodisias. I remain, at least nominally, as Chairman; Dick Wilkinson, who insists that I should, has nobly shouldered almost all the work and reinstated events for Members, which were suspended for some eighteen months after my accident. He comes up to London at least once a month so that we can confer. Membership has held up well, there were three very enjoyable and successful events and we were able to make a record contribution, of over £60,000, to Aphrodisias. This included £15,000 from the Headley Trust and a number of particularly generous donations from members.

The AGM and annual lecture were held on 8 March: as informative and interesting as ever, with Bert Smith and Trevor Proudfoot relaying each other as usual. The photography, which now includes aerial photos taken from a drone, was breathtaking and reminded us what an exceptionally beautiful site Aphrodisias is. A few months earlier Professor Andrew Wilson, also from Oxford, had given us a well-attended lecture on the South Agora at Daunt Books. In May a group of Friends took the train to Cambridge where Bert Smith joined them. Thanks to his contacts they were shown first around the Classical collection in the Fitzwilliam Museum and then the Museum of Classical Archaeology to see its magnificent collection of casts of classical sculpture. The Friends have tended to concentrate on Oxford for excursions, but Bert has friends and former pupils everywhere and it was good to visit Cambridge for a change.

The 2018 Kenan Erim Memorial Lecture will be delivered by Professor R.R.R. Smith at The Artworkers' Guild, 6 Queen Square, London WC1N 3AT at 6.30pm on Wednesday 7 March 2018, preceded by the Trust's AGM. Please put this in your 2018 diary and don't fail to renew your membership of the Friends, using the attached form. Meanwhile, you are invited to a party at Daunt Books, 83/84 Marylebone High Street, 6.30–8pm on Tuesday 5 December for the launch of my book of Turkey articles; and we hope to have another event in the spring.

Bert was heavily involved in meetings which culminated in the designation earlier this year by UNESCO of Aphrodisias as a World Heritage Site. A good augury, one hopes, but on the downside the drastic decline in cultural tourism to Turkey does not help. Whereas only three years ago the carpark at Aphrodisias was busy with cars and charabancs bearing European visitors, Dick Wilkinson reports that when he visited towards the end of

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August the carpark and site were almost deserted. Repercussions from the recent spats between the Turkish Government and its Western allies, notably the United States (Aphrodisias is officially a NYU project) further complicate prospects. Plans for the 2018 season are, as Bert will explain on 7 March, nonetheless well advanced and fingers are firmly crossed.

2017 season

The two-month season in July and August saw rich finds and important results. The team worked on a variety of monuments and projects – the Stadium, Sebasteion, Temple of Aphrodite, Bronze Age material from the Theatre Hill – as well as conservation, documentation and restoration in the Basilica. The main focus, however, was on excavation in the Tetracylon Street and the South Agora.



Aerial view of Aphrodisias. The theatre is in the foreground. Behind are the South Agora pool and Tetracylon Street, where work was carried out in 2017.



View of the post-Byzantine bathhouse with the Tetracylon Street behind.

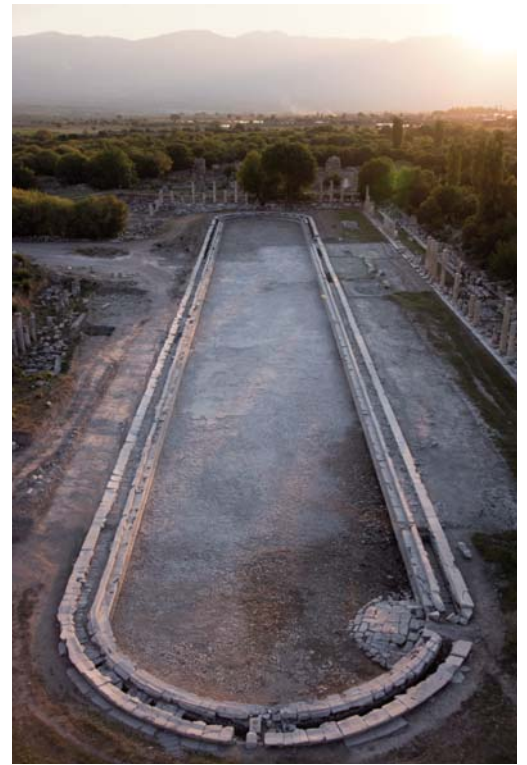
STREET. The excavation of the Tetracylon Street is designed to facilitate access to the site, whilst investigating a key urban artery and revealing new information about Roman, Byzantine and Ottoman Aphrodisias. Work in 2017 was concentrated to the south of the Propylon of the Sebasteion; a specific aim was to investigate further the post-Byzantine bath building discovered in 2016. It was to this work that we and the Headley Trust contributed substantially. As exposed this year, the bathhouse consists of four rooms and a praefurnium on its eastern side: Room 1 is a water chamber or built water tank; Room 2 a large hot room with a hypocaust floor; Room 3 is a smaller chamber, possibly a tepid room; and, to its east, Room 4 was possibly a changing room (apodyterium).

The bathhouse was probably first constructed not in the mid-Byzantine period (as supposed in 2016) but in the Seljuk period. It was adjusted and enlarged through Ottoman times. Finds in 2017 include remarkable fragments of moulded plaster decoration from the hot chamber.

POOL. The complex known as the South Agora at Aphrodisias is dominated by its pool (right), partly excavated in the 1980s. Tests in 2012 revealed planting trenches for palm trees; a major five-year project – The Mica and Ahmet Ertegun South Agora Pool Project – to which we contributed too, was finished this year, 2017. The excavation of the pool, completed as planned in August, brought a sharp light to bear on ancient and mediaeval life in the centre of the site.

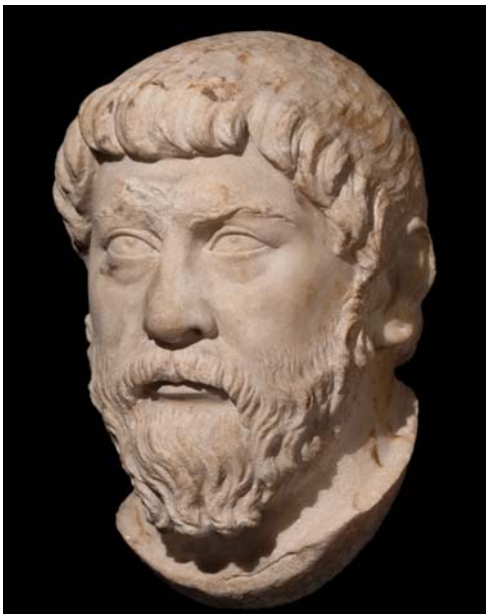
The South Agora was a sumptuous public park laid out in the Tiberian period (AD 14–37) with a 170m-long ornamental pool at its centre surrounded by palm trees and marble colonnades. The pool was completely renovated in c. AD 500 and was kept functioning into the early seventh century. It was then gradually filled in on both sides, with successive layers of rubble and debris from the surrounding buildings.

FINDS. Dense and important finds came from the lowest of these layers, close to the pool floor. The range is impressive: pottery, lamps, roof tiles, wooden planks, marble architecture, statuary, inscriptions, bronze coins, reliquary crosses, lead tablets, gold-glass ornaments and a variety of iron weapons.



Among several high-quality finds of marble portrait statuary – an Aphrodisian speciality – two pieces are of special importance. A remarkably preserved bearded male portrait head (below, left), probably of a provincial governor, has the hairstyle and technique of the Theodosian period (c. AD 400). It also bears a tiny covert Christian three-letter inscription added surreptitiously on its neck under or ‘behind’ the long beard: XMG, abbreviation of the Greek ‘Christ was born to Mary’. It marks emphatically the faith of the person writing it, very probably the sculptor himself.

The second find is a masterpiece from the very end of ancient statue production (below, right). It has a stubble beard, bald skull and a Constantinopolitan ‘mop’ hairstyle of the early sixth century AD. The portrait combines personal truthfulness in its unflinching baldness with the best contemporary fashion in its deeply drilled crown of curls. Even the very last statues at Aphrodisias remained undiminished in technique and effect.





HORSE'S TAIL. Those of us long fascinated by the sculpture of the mounted Troilos being unhorsed by Achilles, installed in the Sebasteion gallery of the Museum after meticulous work on it by Trevor Proudfoot, were thrilled by news that the so-called blue horse's missing tail had unexpectedly been discovered! The blue-grey marble piece was excavated on the southern side of the pool; it was found to join break-to-break to the rear of the then tailless blue horse. The tail was carved in one piece with the body of the horse – a bravura sculptural performance in a huge block of difficult local marble.

Trevor Proudfoot attaches its newly discovered tail to the blue horse.

This year too, the Friends of Aphrodisias supported the work on site of Trevor Proudfoot and his team from Cliveden Conservation. In addition to replacing the tail on the horse, Trevor worked elsewhere in the museum and on various restoration projects around the site. In particular he and his team contributed to completing the restoration and repair work to one of the most totemic monuments at Aphrodisias, and the one perhaps most closely associated with the late Professor Kenan Erim – the Tetrapylon (right).



The 2017 campaign produced an abundance of other important finds on the street and in the pool. As usual, work on them was undertaken not just by archaeologists, architects and other scholars but also by students and a substantial local workforce, all watched over by a helpful Turkish government representative.

Envoi

As usual we are indebted to Bert Smith and Trevor Proudfoot for their continued close involvement with the Friends, to Andrew Wilson for his fascinating talk on the South Agora, to Dr Anastasia Christophilopoulou from the Fitzwilliam Museum and Dr Tiziana D'Angelo of the Classical Faculty at Cambridge for their kindness in showing us round the collections in their charge and particularly to Dick Wilkinson; and thanks too to other Trustees and to Gina Coulthard for her continued assistance with all things calling for expertise in IT.

Heartfelt thanks from me to all of you who support the Trust, not least to our major anonymous donors and to the Headley Trust. I like to think that, in this time of strained relations between the Turkish Government and many of its Western allies, the sort of multinational cooperation exemplified by the work at Aphrodisias takes on a significance even beyond its scientific and cultural importance.

With thanks and all best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Patricia Daunt". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Patricia Daunt

Postscript: Sadly, we have just been informed that our longstanding Friend Kevin Lavery died on 22 October. He was most generous with both advice and financial support. He will be greatly missed.