



**Auckland Classical Association**

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## Newsletter 1: April 2008

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### 1. SUBSCRIPTION

**A sticker on your envelope indicates you are NOT yet a 2008 financial member.**

Please forward \$20 subscription or inform the Secretary if you wish mail-outs to continue. Students are exempt from payment of membership subscription and new graduates are exempt for one year after graduation. Subscriptions may be paid at a meeting, or by mail using the registration form at the end of this newsletter. Please make cheques in favour of the Auckland Classical Association.

Voluntary donation for the purchase of prizes for the Latin Reading Competition and/or towards the funding of University awards may be forwarded separately to the Secretary marked "Donation for purchase of prizes" or "Awards". See also the subscription form below which has a donation option appended.

Notices of special events organised at short notice will be sent by post if possible, but if you would like an email reminder prior to each meeting, please use the appropriate section on the attached mail-subscription form, or send your email address to the Secretary at [socrates@internet.co.nz](mailto:socrates@internet.co.nz).

Please remember to notify the Secretary of any change in residential or email address.

### 2. PROGRAMME

Our regular venue is The Federation of Graduate Women's Room on the first floor of Old Government House. The time is usually 7.30pm. Where the time and place are otherwise, this will be specified.

There are more events planned for this semester, but the dates and topics are still to be arranged at this time, and announcements will be made by email and on the website [www.classics.org.nz](http://www.classics.org.nz).

#### **Important ACA dates for Semester 1:**

**Tuesday, 22 April 2008, 7.30 pm** Old Government House, Federation of Graduate Women's rooms.

Dr Jeremy Armstrong: "*Servius Tullius: The Man and the Myth.*" This talk will present an analysis of one of early Rome's most enigmatic characters, the Roman king Servius Tullius. It will cover his origins and supposed accomplishments, discuss some of the issues which have made his study problematic, and present some suggestions as to how we might better understand this shadowy figure. Dr Armstrong is from the Department of Classics at the University of Auckland.

**Tuesday, 13 May 2008, 4.00 pm** Clocktower room 029.

Prof Edward James: "*How to recognize a barbarian.*" Recognizing the barbarian enemies of the Roman Empire used to be easy: they had horned helmets, funny names, and thick Germanic accents. Perhaps the main result of the work by historians and archaeologists on late antiquity during the last generation has been to show how very wrong and misleading the stereotypes of barbarians actually are. Professor James is a medievalist from University College Dublin.

### 3. **DINNERS HOSTED BY AUCKLAND CLASSICAL ASSOCIATION FOR VISITING SPEAKERS**

It is customary for the ACA President and Committee to host visiting speakers at dinner immediately before a meeting. Some members have expressed the wish to be able to join in such dinners, having a special interest in either the speaker or the subject. Such interest should be indicated by contacting the Secretary by the Friday before the meeting date. These dinners are necessarily under a time constraint and consequently it may be necessary to limit numbers.

### 4. **DEPARTMENT NEWS**

Dr Jeremy Armstrong has recently taken up a position as the newest lecturer in the Department of Classics at the University of Auckland, having come from the University of St Andrews in Scotland, where he did his graduate training (M.Litt. and Ph.D.). He was originally from the southwestern United States (Albuquerque, New Mexico), and he completed my Bachelors degree at the University of New Mexico in 2003. His primary research interests are early Rome and the development of the Roman Army, although he has begun to develop a related interest in the nature and transmission of Roman myth.

### 5. **STUDENT NEWS**

#### **Prize-winners 2007**

Ancient History Prize Stage 1:	Michael Fox
Classical Studies Prize Stage 2:	Richard Carpenter
Greek language Prize Stage 1:	Sam Foster
Latin Language Prize Stage 1:	Himmy Lui

### 6. **NEWS FROM THE WORLD OF CLASSICS**

All news articles were sourced by Kylie Burling unless otherwise cited. Please send news articles of possible interest to the Association to the Secretary. These will be collated and edited if necessary, for inclusion in the next newsletter. Thank you again to the editing team for the time and effort expended on our behalf, especially Professor Lacey, Mrs Warrington, and Mrs Janet Smale.

#### **Burial clue to early urban strife** [Abridged.]

30 August, 2007

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/sci/tech/6971289.stm> [For the full article.]

Archaeologists working in Syria have unearthed the remains of dozens of youths thought to have been killed in a fierce confrontation 6,000 years ago.

The findings come from northeastern Syria, near Tell Brak, one of the world's oldest known cities.

More than 30 years of continuous excavation have revealed the site's remarkable sophistication.

Studies by British and American archaeologists published in the journals *Antiquity* and *Science* suggest Tell Brak was a flourishing urban centre at the same time as better known early cities from southern Iraq.



A new paper, due to be published in an upcoming edition of the journal *Iraq*, details the burials at Tell Majnuna, 0.5km from the main urban site at Tell Brak.

Two mass burial pits have been excavated at this site. The first has so far revealed the bones of 34 young to middle-aged adults. Thus far, only a small portion have been excavated.

"There could be hundreds and potentially thousands," said Augusta McMahon, an archaeologist at the University of Cambridge, UK.

### **Ancient forensics:**

At least two skulls show signs of injuries that could have caused death. The absence of feet and hand bones and the fact that many of the skulls apparently rolled off when they were tossed in the pit hints that they were left to decompose before burial.

A mass of pottery, mostly vessels for serving and eating, along with cow bones were also found lying on top of the skeletons.

### **A More Precise Version of Your Chariot Awaits**[Abridged.]

29 March 2007, by Carol Vogel

[http://www.nytimes.com/2007/03/29/arts/design/29char.html?\\_r=1&scp=1&sq=a+more+precise+version+of+your+chariot&st=nyt&oref=slogin](http://www.nytimes.com/2007/03/29/arts/design/29char.html?_r=1&scp=1&sq=a+more+precise+version+of+your+chariot&st=nyt&oref=slogin) [For the full article.]

For close to a century, schoolchildren have been paraded by the Monteleone chariot, one of the Metropolitan Museum's most prized objects. Teachers explained to them how in 1902 a farmer in a remote Italian village accidentally unearthed the remains of a tomb, which held the pieces of this 2,600-year-old Etruscan chariot.



But the Met's curators long suspected that the chariot might not have been correctly assembled in 1903, the year the museum bought and reconstructed it. Among their most nagging questions was, how could the horses pulling the chariot have been harnessed to a straight pole?

Their doubts were confirmed in 1989, when Adriana Emiliozzi, an Italian archaeologist and the world's leading expert in Etruscan chariots, stopped by the Met on a visit to New York.

"I left her alone with the chariot for an hour," recalled Joan R. Mertens, a curator of Greek and Roman art. "And when I returned, she said, 'Can I show you how it should be put together?' Then she asked if at the time the museum bought the chariot, there weren't ivories found with it."

"She was right," Ms. Mertens continued. "We did have a box of ivories that were in storage."

Dr. Emiliozzi's insights set off a five-year restoration project, whose progress she oversaw on regular trips to New York. The timing was fortunate, coinciding with a re-examination of the Greek and Roman collection in anticipation of its move to new and vastly expanded galleries. The reconstructed and restored chariot, returning to public view after a decade's absence, now has pride of place as the centerpiece of the 30,000-square-foot new space, which opens on April 20. It is considered one of the best-preserved Etruscan objects anywhere.

"Originally it looked like an easy chair on wheels," Ms. Mertens said, though adding that "it was a pretty good early restoration." Because no examples of complete Etruscan chariots were available in 1903, the original restorer worked solely from chariots depicted on ancient pottery and other objects.

Made from bronze and wood and decorated with ivory, the Met's chariot is richly embellished. There are depictions of the mouth of a gorgon and the belly of a panther; heads of lions, rams, felines and boars; birds of prey; winged horses; and Achilles, the Greek hero of the Trojan War. Art historians believe it was made as a parade chariot for an important dignitary, to be used only for the grandest occasions.

"Fancy cars always capture the imagination," Ms. Mertens said, explaining the chariot's popularity among visitors to the Met.

"The Etruscans wouldn't have made these elaborate chariots had there not been a demand for conspicuous consumption," she said. "This is the ancient equivalent of the Beatles' famous Rolls-Royce."

The two-wheeled vehicle consists of a horseshoe-shaped car made of wood and covered with panels of bronze, in which the driver and his illustrious passengers stood. Two horses, on either side of the pole, would be yoked to the chariot with leather harnesses.

As the chariot is displayed now, it is missing the inlaid amber and other exotic materials that in ancient times would have embellished the eyes of an eagle, the boar and several mythological creatures.

*Sent in by Cath Mayo*

### **Italian police find tomb raider's 'museum'** [Abridged.]

23 October 2007, by Robin Pomeroy

[http://www.nzherald.co.nz/section/6/story.cfm?c\\_id=6&objectid=10471549&ref=watchafternoon](http://www.nzherald.co.nz/section/6/story.cfm?c_id=6&objectid=10471549&ref=watchafternoon) [For the full article.]

ROME - Italian police have discovered a huge stash of archaeological artefacts that a pensioner amateur archaeologist had dug up to create his own private - and illegal - museum.

Police in the Venice region were stunned to find 12,000 items ranging from bronze age combs to jewellery, weapons and pottery from down the ages - many in display cases in the man's home.



What was found has incredible value because it covers the whole history of the region from the 18th century BC to the 18th century AD - 3,600 years of history contained in the pieces.

There were little combs made of deer bone from the 13th century (BC), there were belt buckles, arrow tips, renaissance swords and very many pieces of renaissance pottery that experts said had a great market value.

There were hundreds of pieces of pottery that were intact. In total 12,000 pieces were seized. It could be worth millions of euros.

*...In Bulgaria also, whole villages are cashing in as tomb-raiders:*

### **The antiques rogue show** [Abridged.]

31 August 2007, NZ Herald, by Malcolm Moore, in Sofia

Among the paperclips in the bottom drawer of a desk in Bulgaria's National History Museum is a small cardboard box packed with 5000-year-old gold rings.

"We found 25,000 of them in a grocery shop a couple of months ago," said Svetla Tsaneva-Dimitrova, the head of the museum's restoration team.

"A farmer's wife was wearing them as a necklace. Her husband had just dug them up in a field nearby. As you can imagine, we were stunned."

Each tiny ring is 23-carat gold, but nobody knows how they were crafted. Tsaneva-Dimitrova added that similar rings were discovered at Troy.

Found at the same time was a small 20-carat gold dagger from 3000BC that is "still so sharp you can shave with it."

Priceless antiques are strewn all over the chaotic laboratory, as restorers are hard at work on a pair of bronze greaves, or leg armour, engraved with the image of Athena, the Greek goddess of wisdom.

Bulgaria, which was once part of Ancient Thrace, ranks behind only Italy and Greece in Europe in terms of the numbers of antiquities lying in its soil. The Thracians, who included Spartacus and Orpheus, had a highly advanced civilisation and fought with Alexander the Great on his expedition to Asia. Later, the country was ruled by the Romans, Persians, Byzantines and Turks, all of whom left a rich array of treasure behind.

However, since the collapse of the Soviet empire, little attention has been paid to Bulgaria's cultural heritage. Although the law says all archaeological finds belong to the state, much is being smuggled abroad.

Tens of thousands of tomb raiders are systematically stripping Bulgaria. In some parts of the country, whole villages have taken up tomb-raiding and many of the digs are organised by the local mafia.

Volodia Velkov, the head of the police unit that combats organised crime, said tomb-raiding was now generating about £4 billion (\$11.5 billion) a year for the crime syndicates. Velkov and a team of 30 officers are trying to track antiquities and stop them leaving the country.

"Since last October, when we started the new department, we have seized 16,000 artefacts," he said. "More than 30,000 people are involved in tomb-raiding. The business is very well-organised and the expeditions are financed by rich Bulgarians living in the US, Britain and Germany."

*Sent in by Robert Bowden*

### **Wooden throne 'significant discovery'** [Abridged.]

6 December 2007

[http://www.nzherald.co.nz/topic/story.cfm?c\\_id=314&objectid=10480676](http://www.nzherald.co.nz/topic/story.cfm?c_id=314&objectid=10480676) [For the full article.]

An ancient Roman wood and ivory throne has been unearthed at a dig in Herculaneum, Italian archaeologists said, hailing it as the most significant piece of wooden furniture ever discovered there.

The throne was found during an excavation in the Villa of the Papyri, the private house formerly belonging to Julius Caesar's father-in-law, Lucius Calpurnius Piso Caesoninus, built on the slope of Mt Vesuvius.

The name of the villa derives from the impressive library containing thousands of scrolls of papyrus discovered buried under metres of volcanic ash after the Vesuvius erupted on August 24, AD79.

Restoration of the throne is still ongoing with restorers painstakingly trying to piece together parts of the ceremonial chair.

While other wooden objects have been dug out in nearby Pompeii, experts have never found such a significant ceremonial piece of furniture. Previously such pieces have only been observed in paintings or made of marble.

"The find of ancient wooden furniture is not an absolute novelty in Herculaneum or Pompeii. Organic materials in fact were preserved in these cities because of the peculiar way in which they were submerged by the Vesuvius volcanic mud," said the head of the dig, Maria Paola Guidobaldi. "But we have never found furniture of such a significant structure and decoration."

Little is known about how the throne would have been used but the elaborate decorations discovered on it celebrate the mysterious cult figure of Attis.

The most precious relief shows Attis, a life-death-rebirth deity, collecting a pine cone next to a sacred pine tree.

*Sent in by Robert Bowden*

## Olympia

27 August 2007

<http://www.stuff.co.nz/4179022a12.html>

In August 2007 Greece was devastated by fires probably deliberately lit which threatened to destroy the site of the ancient Olympic games. The site, and others, were saved by an international effort, but many homes were destroyed and at least 10 people have perished.



## Gaulish haul discovered [Abridged.]

21 December 2007, By John Lichfield

[http://www.nzherald.co.nz/section/2/story.cfm?c\\_id=2&objectid=10483630](http://www.nzherald.co.nz/section/2/story.cfm?c_id=2&objectid=10483630) [For the full article.]

Asterix and Obelix, had they existed, might have paid for their mead and other magic potions with gold-silver-copper coins stamped with elaborate images of men and horses.

The largest treasure trove of pre-Roman, Gaulish money ever to be found has been discovered in central Brittany.

The 545 coins - each worth thousands of euros to collectors - could overturn much of the received wisdom about the complexity, and wealth, of pre-Roman Celtic society in France.

It has always been assumed that the Celtic nobility lived in fortified towns, not in the dangerous countryside.

Like all Gaulish coins, the 58 "stateres" and 487 quarter "stateres" found near the village of Laniscat are copies of early Greek money.

Gauls served as mercenaries in the armies of Alexander the Great. The money they brought home served as the model for home-minted coins.

Some of the coins, rescued from the site of a proposed dual-carriageway, have the familiar Celtic monetary pattern of a horse on one side and a man's head on the reverse. Others have hitherto unknown designs, such as horses with human heads.

Smaller caches of Gaulish coins have turned up in the past but rarely of such quality and never in such numbers.

"This is an exceptional discovery," said archaeologist Yves Menez. "It represents a colossal fortune for the period. Each of these coins was like a €500 (\$950) note today."

The coins were discovered by the French government agency, the Institut National de Recherches Archeologiques Preventives, which has the right to explore any potentially significant site before a road or new building covers it forever. The coins are believed to have been minted between 75 and 5BC.

*Sent in by Robert Bowden and Marjorie Newhook*

## Athens embraces modern renaissance while cherishing its past [Abridged.]

13 March 2008, by Chris Welsch, Minneapolis Star Tribune

<http://www.miamiherald.com/986/story/453794.html> [For the full article.]

In Athens, you can't escape time's arrow. Not even in a shiny new subway station in the heart of the city.

"Do you know how many Athens we are standing on right now?" asked Despina Savvidou as we

walked down the stairs into the Syntagma Square subway station. "At least six cities. When they dug up the subway system, they brought into light every old Athens."

Savidou is a native Athenian who proudly waves the banner for all things Greek. She was leading me and three others on a walking tour of the city. Our starting point was the subway station. The endpoint would be the Acropolis, which, to use the Greek alphabet, is the alpha and omega of Athens.

The new subway seemed an odd place to start an examination of one of the world's oldest cities. The station's sleek surfaces -- marble floors, metal railings, a giant metallic clock sculpture -- sparkle under large overhead lights. On one side of the station, however, a glass wall reveals layers of the past, directly where they lie. Signs point out a thousands-year-old road bed, a grave from 400 B.C., wine vessels and clay drain pipes for the city's ancient sewage system, among other things. The layers speak of pre-history, the glorious Greece of Pericles, the days of Rome, the Christian empire and the 400 years of Turkish occupation.

The subway, completed in 2000, became Athens' most ambitious archaeology project, Savidou said. As crews built three major metro lines and dozens of stations, archaeologists excavated more than 2 million artifacts. Some of them are on display in Syntagma Station: olive-oil lamps, vases, combs and pieces of jewelry that once adorned the beautiful women of the Greek capital. The subway itself is an important artifact of modern Athens.

They have also discovered that the Parthenon is built on a foundation of gravel, sand and straw -- "the first anti-seismic building in the world." The Parthenon survived many earthquakes as a result. It's been man, not nature, who posed the biggest threats to the building.

### **'Ancient' Forgeries Fool Art Markets** [Abridged.]

23 January 2008, by Matthias Schulz

<http://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/0,1518,529532,00.html> [For the full article.]

Archeologists and art experts are concerned about a wave of forgeries that have appeared on the art market. The fakes are meeting the growing demand for collectable art from the global jet set, but even the museums are being fooled.

The packed auction room at Sotheby's in New York was filled with feverish anticipation when, on June 7, 2007, assistants wearing white gloves rolled a delicate bronze statue about a meter (39 inches) tall into the room. According to the auction catalog, the bronze sculpture, titled "Artemis and the Stag," was a depiction of the Roman goddess of the hunt.

The sculpture was of a young girl with shining eyes, the folds of her knee-length robe draped suggestively over her body. A spokesman for the auction house raved about the sculpture, calling it "among the most beautiful works of art surviving from antiquity." The masterpiece promptly set off a vigorous bidding war.

A man from the sheikdom of Qatar offered the first bid, and an unknown man wearing a suit promptly countered with a higher bid. After that the bidding went up in \$100,000 (€69,000) increments with each wave of a hand. When the duel stalled at \$12 million, a new bidder seated at the rear of the room suddenly joined the fray.

The auctioneer's hammer finally came down with a bang at \$25.5 million (\$28.6 million, including the Sotheby's fee). The sculpture went to Giuseppe Eskenazi, a 68-year-old London art dealer, who promptly had the valuable piece flown to mainland Europe for his unidentified client.

It was the highest price ever paid for a Roman sculpture. Even Sotheby's called the sale "absolutely astonishing."

But the new owner, rumored to be a Russian, could soon be disappointed. In a report SPIEGEL has obtained, Stefan Lehmann, an archeologist from the eastern German city of Halle, raises doubts about the piece. He is troubled by the "unexpressive face and seemingly perfect condition" of the sculpture. At first glance, writes Lehmann, the sculpture reminds him of a "classical work from the period around 1800."

Josef Floren, the German author of a handbook titled "The Greek Sculpture," is also skeptical. The "box-shaped base" on which the goddess is standing seems "modern." Floren is also perplexed by the clothing the young woman is wearing. "Something resembling a shawl or a veil is draped across her shoulders. No one in Rome walked around like that."

Could comments like these spell the beginning of a major scandal in the art world?

### **Empty jars hold clues to old world's secrets [Abridged.]**

10 January 2008, NZ Herald

Storage containers from ancients' shipwrecks can give DNA answers, scientists discover. A new DNA technique could give an insight into the lives of the ancient Greeks – using jars that have lain on the seabed for thousands of years.

These amphorae were the cargo containers of the ancient world, used for shipping all kinds of things, from wine to olive oil. Studying those left in shipwrecks could tell us much about the trade, agriculture and climate of historic societies – except that the contents wash away over time, leaving archaeologists with glorified empty bottles.

Now a team from Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution in the US and Lund University in Sweden has performed the first successful extraction of DNA from a 2400-year-old shipwreck off the Greek island of Chios. The wooden merchant ship sank in the fourth century BC, coming to rest 70 metres down. The team was able to work with archaeologists in the Hellenic Ministry of Culture to obtain DNA sequences from the inside of two amphorae recovered by a submersible robot. One would have contained olive products and oregano, the other probably carried wine. Chios was an exporter of highly prized wines so the discovery of olive oil containing oregano, which was used as a flavouring and preservative, surprised archaeologists.

The other amphora is thought to have contained wine because fragments of DNA may have come from mastic, a plant that grows on Chios and was famous for its use in resinating and preserving the drink (the team cannot be certain, as the same DNA sequences are found in pistachio nuts).

Although these particular findings are limited, the work demonstrates that this technique works – and could be used to identify a vast range of other plant products from shipwrecks.

It is still to be determined whether the technique will work on amphorae that have been stored in museums, or only on those fresh from the ocean.

But there are already plans to investigate other ancient civilisations.

The team is working on artefacts from the Minoan and Mycenaean cultures (BC2500-BC1200), as well as Mayan ceramics in Mexico, and has approached experts on Roman amphorae in Britain.

*Sent in by Robert Bowden*

## **7. ACA WEBSITE**

[www.classics.org.nz](http://www.classics.org.nz)

If you have photos of classical sites which you would like to offer for the website, please send these to the Secretary for consideration. It will not be possible to use all photographs for the website as there are certain criteria which must be met (including rights to publication), and there is a size limit to the site, however all donations will be gratefully received and contributions not used for the website may well be utilised in other ways.

Also, if you have Greek or Latin phrases (and their translations), classical cartoons, or other things which could be of interest to our members and/or stimulate interest in non-members, please feel free to send these to the Secretary.

## 8. SUBSCRIPTION FOR 2008

The subscription for 2008 is \$20. This may be paid at a meeting or by mailing a cheque with this form to the Secretary at 52 Kohekohe Street, New Lynn, Waitakere 0600.

Membership is free for students and for graduates of less than one year's standing, however the return of the form would be appreciated in order to maintain the database of members.

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