



Auckland Classical Association

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Newsletter 3: December 2007

1. MINUTES OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The minutes of the Annual General Meeting are attached for your information.

2. DONATION FROM HONORARY CONSUL

It is with great pleasure that the Auckland Classical Association has received recognition for the role it plays in the dissemination and promotion of the literature and culture of Ancient Greece and Rome in Auckland. The acknowledgement came in the form of a generous financial donation from the Honorary Consul with the Consulate of Greece, Mr Nikos Petousis. It is encouraging to know that the valuable work that we do by bringing top-rate speakers to the public and arranging events which are both enjoyable and competitive for school pupils is noticed and appreciated in wider circles. We would also like to thank all members of the ACA who have given donations this year. Your gift is received with gratitude and helps in many ways.

3. 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. socrates@internet.co.nz Thank you again to the editing team for the time and effort expended on our behalf, especially Professor Lacey and Mrs Warrington.

Libya Through the Ages Part I: Ancient Libya

10 September 2007, by R. Scott Peoples

A large and informative 7-page article about Libya through the ages has been received. Members may ask for a copy or refer to <http://www.bitsofnews.com/content/view/6070/>

'Super-scope' to see hidden texts [Abridged.]

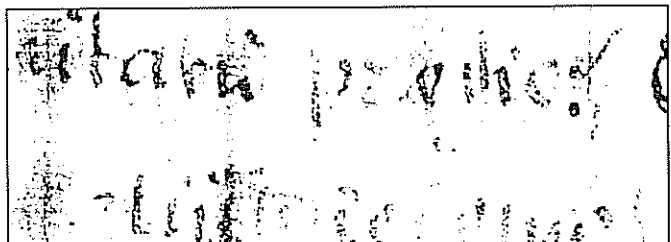
12 September 2007, by Liz Seward, Science reporter, York

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/sci/tech/6991893.stm> [For the full article.]

Super-powerful X-rays could peer beneath the skin of manuscripts.

The hidden content in ancient works could be illuminated by a light source 10 billion times brighter than the Sun.

The technique employs Britain's new facility, the Diamond synchrotron, and could be used on works such as the Dead Sea Scrolls or musical scores by Bach, and perhaps the Herculaneum papyri.



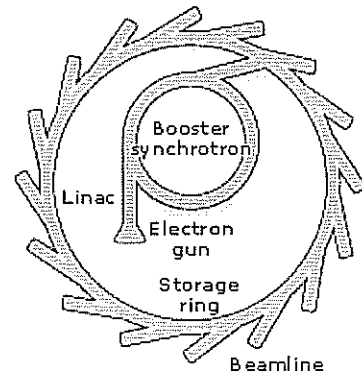
Intense light beams will enable scientists to uncover the text in scrolls and books without having to open - and potentially damage - them.

Now, scientists from the University of Cardiff have developed a technique that uses a powerful X-ray source to create a three-dimensional image of a document.

The team then applies a computer algorithm to separate the image into the different layers of parchment, in effect using the program to unroll the scroll.

How diamond works

Electrons fired into straight accelerator, or linac
Boosted in small synchrotron and injected into storage ring
Magnets in large ring bend and focus electrons accelerated to near light-speeds
Energy lost emerges down beamlines as highly focused light at X-ray wavelengths



Professor Wess, who led the research, explained: "The letters have got iron in them, so you shine a band of X-rays through, and you end up with an absorption image, rather like your bones would absorb on an X-ray."

"This is something we can take forward with Diamond, to try to unravel the secrets inside documents that we're too scared to try to open, or that are beyond the point of conservation."

"There are some parts of the Dead Sea Scrolls which have not been unrolled."

Reading books without opening them was a goal of the project, added Professor Wess. The technique works best with rolled parchment. The flat nature, as well as the thickness of books, presents a challenge.

Veni, Vidi, Wiki: Latin Isn't Dead On 'Vicipaedia' [Abridged.]

29 September 2007, by Lee Gomes

<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB119103413731143589.html> [For full article, and links.]

Online Reference Features Britannia Spears, Disney; Disputing Computatrum

Vicipaedia is a labor of love for a small group of Latin buffs and weekend philologists. Their goal is a Latin reference work that is hip and alive -- or at least as much as can be expected from a tongue long since given up for dead.

They write in authentic classical Latin, too, not in the kitschy *feastus maximus* stuff you might see at Caesar's Palace.

Bartholomaeus Simpson is a skateboarder experto. As a pre-teen, Britannia Spears apparuit in Canali Disney cum Christina Aguilera et Iustino Timberlake in Sodalitate Mici Muris.

Wikipedia is a reference work to which anyone can contribute. It has 15,000 articles. Catullus, Horace and the Roman Senate all are there; so are musica rockica, Georgius Bush and *cadavera animata*, aka zombies. You can read in Latin about hangman (*homo suspensus*), paper airplanes (*aeroplanum chartaceum*) and magic 8-balls (*pila magica 8*), as well as about famous Italians like Leonardo da Vinci and the Super Mario brothers.

There are Latin translations of Dr. Seuss, Elvis Presley and Harry Potter. In Finland -- a Latinist hotbed, apparently -- there are weekly radio news broadcasts.

So why bother? Vicipaedia's volunteers usually say they simply enjoy keeping up with the Latin they had in school, keeping in practice well enough to be able to read classics like Isaac Newton's "Principia" in the original. "Latin has a tradition of 2,700 years ... and we don't want that to end. Latin isn't dead, it just smells funny."

Diggers begin Herculaneum task of finding masterpieces lost to volcano [Abridged.]

24 October 2007, The Times

http://entertainment.timesonline.co.uk/tol/arts_and_entertainment/books/article2726757.ece [For the full article.]

Archaeologists have resumed their search for a library of Greek and Latin masterpieces that is thought to lie under volcanic rock at the ancient Roman site of Herculaneum.

Previous digs have unearthed classical works at a building now known as the Villa of the Papyri, thought to have belonged to Julius Caesar's father-in-law, Lucius Calpurnius Piso, who was known to be a lover of poetry. The villa was found by chance in the 18th century by engineers digging a well shaft. Tunnels bored into the rock brought to light stunning ancient sculptures — now in the National Archaeological Museum of Naples — and 1,800 carbonised papyrus scrolls. The writings were mainly works by the Epicurean Greek philosopher Philodemus, who was part of Piso's entourage.

Ten years ago two floors of the villa were discovered, as well as the remains of nearby gardens, ornamental ponds, a bath-house and a collapsed seaside pavilion.

The site has been closed to the public so that archaeologists can dig out the frescoed corridor or cryptoportico on the lower ground floor. They are also conserving mosaics and frescoes already found on the top floor to protect them from damp and erosion.

Some historians believe that the papyri, which may have included lost masterpieces by Aristotle, Euripides or Sophocles, were being packed to be taken to safety when the eruption occurred. The scrolls would have been scattered throughout the 30,000sq ft (2,800sq m) of the villa by the violent force of the 100mph (160kmh) "pyroclastic flow" of ash, gas and mud.

Professor Wallace-Hadrill, director of the British School at Rome said that next year work would also begin on excavating the basilica, the great hall housing Herculaneum's legal and administrative centre some of it built illegally with the connivance of the Camorra - the Naples Mafia.

The carbonised scrolls recovered so far were deciphered by computer-enhanced multispectral imaging at UCLA - covered in a previous Newsletter.

Tutankhamun's face goes on display [Abridged.]

05 November 2007, by Cynthia Johnston

http://www.nzherald.co.nz/section/2/story.cfm?c_id=2&objectid=10474100&ref=watchafternoon [For full article.]

LUXOR, Egypt - Egypt has put the mummy of the boy pharaoh Tutankhamun on display in his tomb in the Valley of the Kings, giving visitors their first chance to see the face of a ruler who died more than 3,000 years ago.

In the dimly lit burial chamber workmen removed the gilded lid of Tutankhamun's mummy case and then hoisted the padded box containing the mummy out of the stone sarcophagus where it has lain for most of the time since Tutankhamun's early death.

They then moved it to a climate-controlled acrylic glass showcase in the tomb's antechamber and sealed the cover. His wizened face is visible at one end, a white linen cloth covers his body and his blackened feet protrude at the other end. The mummy's face has high cheekbones and cracked and blackened skin with an intact nose.



Although the tomb's artefacts have toured the world, the mummified body has been examined in detail only a handful of times. Until now, Tutankhamun's mummy had rested in a gilded coffin inside the stone sarcophagus in the tomb.

But Zahi Hawass, the Egyptian government's chief archaeologist, said humidity caused by the breathing of thousands of visitors a day threatened to further damage the mummy, which has deteriorated over the years.

Modern Glass Inspired By Ancient Rome [Abridged.]

21 November 2007

<http://www.huliq.com/42409/modern-glass-inspired-ancient-rome> [For full article.]

The beauty of ancient Roman glass and its lasting impact on the modern glass industry will be explored in *Reflecting Antiquity: Modern Glass Inspired by Ancient Rome*, opening at The Corning Museum of Glass on February 15, 2008.

Reflecting Antiquity examines the rediscovery of Roman glass and brings together 112 objects from more than 24 international lenders, featuring ancient Roman originals as well as the modern works they inspired. More than 70 objects come from the collection of The Corning Museum of Glass, reflecting the museum's extensive collection of glass objects from all periods and cultures, the most comprehensive collection of glass in the world.

In the late 18th and early 19th centuries, archeological excavations in Greece and Italy, including sites such as Pompeii and Herculaneum, as well as further afield in the Middle East, and Egypt, yielded many examples of Roman glass. Amid growing demand for products influenced by past periods as well as a desire to reinvigorate their flagging industry, manufacturers found inspiration in Roman antiquity and broad new production quickly followed.

Modern glassmakers first sought to replicate ancient techniques, and attempted to reproduce Roman masterpieces. As they grew more familiar with the forms, the glassmakers began to reinterpret the masterpieces with their own designs and shapes, resulting in the growth of commercial production in areas inspired by the ancient objects, from cameo and gold glass, to mosaic and iridescent glass. The manufacturing techniques and designs developed during this period continue to influence glassmakers today.



Cave discovery something to howl about [Abridged.]

22 November 2007, by Ariel David

http://www.nzherald.co.nz/section/2/story.cfm?c_id=2&objectid=10477604&ref=watchmorning [For full article.]

Italian archaeologists have unveiled the underground grotto believed to have been worshipped by ancient Romans as the place where a wolf nursed the city's legendary founder Romulus and his twin brother Remus.

Decorated with seashells and coloured marble, the vaulted sanctuary lies buried 16m inside the Palatine hill, the palatial centre of power in imperial Rome, archaeologists said.



Over the past two years experts have been probing the space using endoscopes and laser scanners, fearing that the fragile grotto, already partially caved-in, would not survive a full-scale dig, said Giorgio Croci, an engineer who worked on the site.

Ancient texts say the grotto known as the "Lupercale" - from "lupa," Latin for she-wolf - was near the palace of Rome's first emperor Augustus, who was said to have restored it, and was decorated with a white eagle. That symbol of the Roman Empire was found atop the sanctuary's vault, which lies just below the ruins of the palace built by Augustus, said Irene Iacopi, the archaeologist in charge of the Palatine and the Roman Forum.

Augustus, who ruled from the late 1st century BC to his death in the year 14, was keen on being close to the places of Rome's mythical foundation and used the city's religious traditions to bolster his hold on power, Iacopi said.

Andrea Carandini, a professor of archaeology at Rome's La Sapienza University and an expert on the Palatine, said the grotto was almost certainly the "Lupercale".

"The chances that it's not are minimal," said Carandini, who did not take part in the dig. "It's one of the greatest discoveries ever made."

Most of the sanctuary is filled with earth, but laser scans allowed experts to estimate that the circular structure has a height of 8m and a diameter of 7.5m, said Croci.

Iacopi said a new dig would start soon to find the grotto's original entrance at the bottom of the hill.

The Palatine is honeycombed with palaces and other ancient monuments, from the 8th-century BC remains of Rome's first fledgling huts to a medieval fortress and Renaissance villas. But the remains are fragile and plagued by collapses, leaving more than half of the hill, including Augustus' palace, closed to the public.

Inner sanctum of first Roman emperor to go on show

11 December 2007

http://www.nzherald.co.nz/section/6/story.cfm?c_id=6&objectid=10481702&ref=watchafternoon

Four frescoed rooms in the eastern wing of the house of Augustus, where he lived before becoming Rome's first emperor, will open to the public for the first time next year after three decades of restorations.

Italian archaeologists said yesterday the rooms dated from around 30 B.C. and had been buried - which may explain why some of the paintings are so well preserved - after Augustus moved to another residence on a higher level of the Palatine Hill.

The tiny rooms, first discovered in the late 1970s, are mostly painted in vivid red, blue and ochre.

They include a cubicle on an upper floor known as the "studiolo," or small studio, where Augustus was thought to withdraw for privacy.

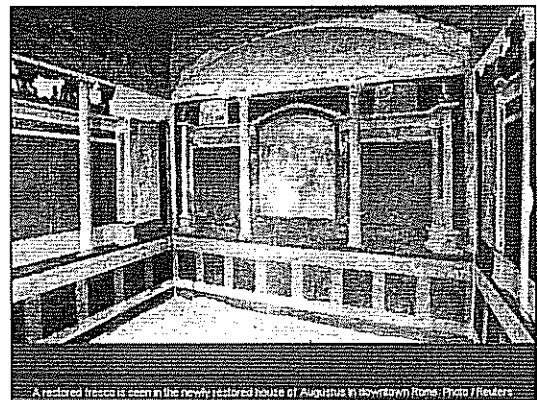
The decorations on the walls and vaulted ceilings were found almost intact in some parts of the building, while in others they had to be pieced back together from a myriad of fragments.

"The level of preservation of the frescoes and the colors is extraordinary," said Rome's Mayor Walter Veltroni during a presentation of the rooms to journalists.

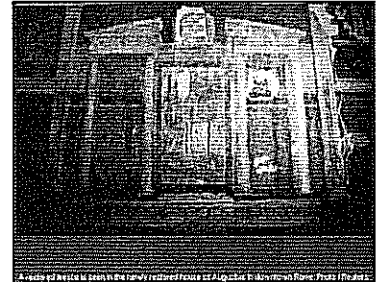
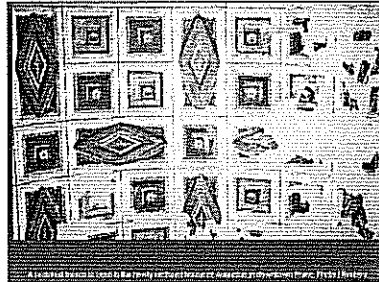
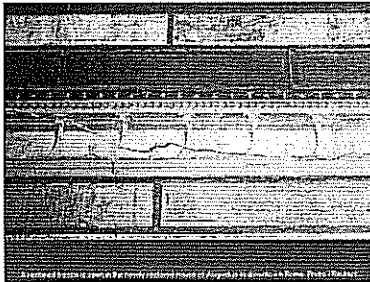
"It bears witness to the wonders of a city which is like a box of hidden treasures," he said.

The rooms will open to the public on March 2 together with the house of Livia, Augustus' wife, but visitors will only be allowed to enter in small groups to avoid damaging the delicate frescoes.

Excavations on the Palatine in recent decades have turned up a steady stream of precious archaeological finds, but preserving the ruins of ancient Rome is costly.



Culture Minister Francesco Rutelli said some 12 million euros would be devoted to the conservation of the site, an amount that some experts say is a third of what is needed every year.

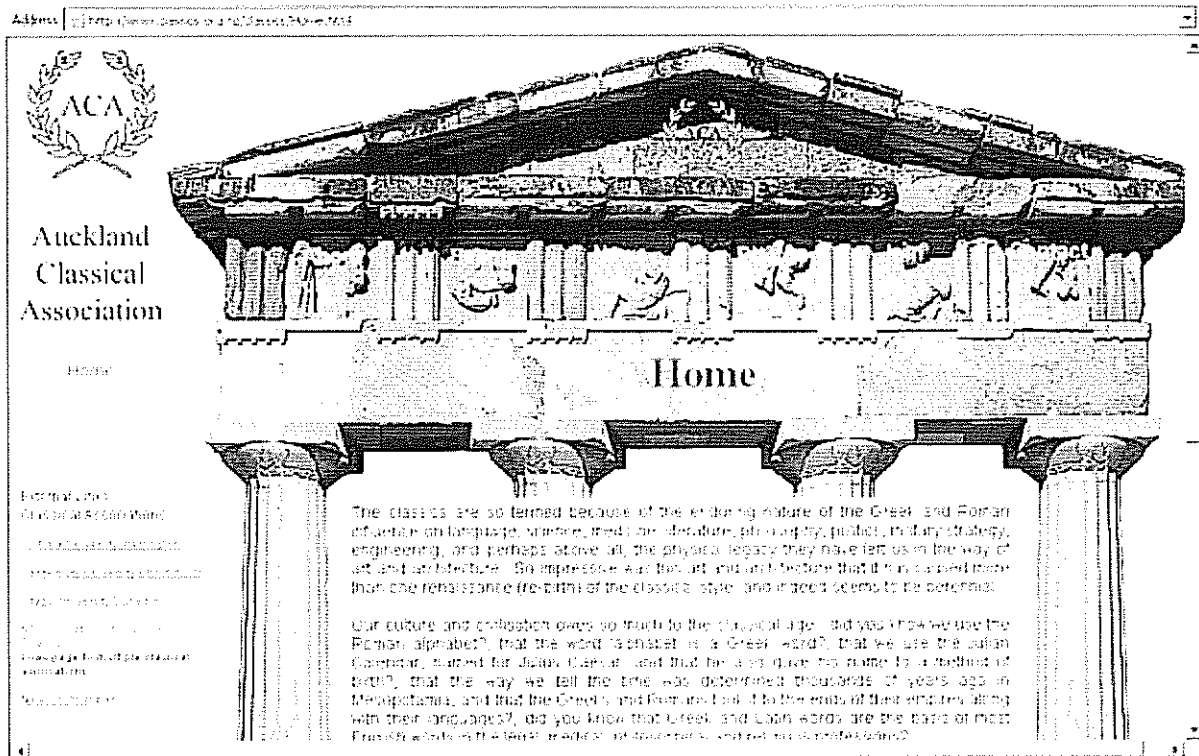


4. ACA WEBSITE

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. socrates@internet.co.nz



5. 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.

Please make cheques payable to 'Auckland Classical Association'.

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