

THE ORIENT EXPRESS

The Newsletter of the Friends of the Oriental Museum

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48

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NOTES FROM THE CHAIR

Anne Bothwell

HORA FUGIT; indeed it does. The past three years have flown by and it is time for me to step down as Chairman. However, according to custom, I will still serve for a further year as Vice-Chair.

Nominations are still open for the position of Chairman and I hope there will be a volunteer from the membership.

I hope you will understand the necessity for a somewhat abbreviated edition of the Orient Express online. As stated in a previous message, hard copies will be provided for those members without access to the Internet.

Prior to lockdown we had a successful series of presentations; comprehensively covered under Last Season's Lectures. I am pleased to report that the lecture scheduled for May but cancelled due to Covid will now take place in November of this year.

We now know that the Museum will remain closed until 2021. This means that our usual venue will also be closed. As no

physical space is available the Council have decided to follow the lead of NEAESOC and stream presentations online. I appreciate that this method will not accommodate all members but in these difficult times it does provide a degree of continuity.

You will have seen in the email from Rachel that the exhibition of Japanese Silk Prints has now been held over until next year. A Catalogue to accompany the Exhibition is planned and the Council have agreed to sponsor the publication. Our sponsorship of 'The Pleasures and Pains of Collecting' was a success and the book generated an ongoing financial return for Museum funds. Hopefully, the Catalogue will do the same.

I would like to thank Rachel and the University for their support and the use of rooms for our meetings. My thanks also to Teikyo University for the use of their car park (in normal times) and to Sue and Ralph and the Council members for all their dedication.

And finally

a very warm 'thank you' to all the membership for your continuing support for the Friends. Stay safe until Covid is a distant memory.

Best wishes

Anne

Last Season's Lectures

Our programme for 2019/2020 was virtually unaffected by Covid-19.

We started with our usual joint session in October 2019 with NEAESOC (the North East Ancient Egypt Society) with a talk from the Curator of the Egypt Centre, Swansea University. It is interesting to find out about museums at other universities. In November 2019 we had a 'Show and Tell' event with Friends bringing along their favourite objects to share with others. This worked really well and people were keen to do this again (circumstances allowing). In December 2019 Rachel Barclay, the Curator, told us of the Museum's plans for the new Silk Roads gallery. In January 2020 David Rosier gave another of his excellent talks, looking at the Necropolis of China's First Emperor. David provided clear coverage and insights on this fascinating topic. In February 2020 Dr Garrett discussed the complex interplay between religion, land ownership and administration in early medieval Japan. Dr Wilson, in March 2020, looked at medieval itineraries and ports in North Egypt. It gave a different outlook on Egypt, so focused as we usually are on the pharaonic period. Pictures of their travels by 'punt' through reed beds demonstrated the challenges facing the archaeologist. The only lecture that had to be cancelled because of Covid was that by Dr Narinskaya in May 2020. Happily, she has agreed to speak to us in November 2020.

NOTICES

Subscriptions

Despite the challenges of running a voluntary group within Covid 19 restrictions we are still hoping to provide a programme in the coming year, e.g. by conducting lectures via Zoom. Additionally, we continue to provide financial support to the Museum for specific initiatives and events. The Council of the Friends have therefore decided to request subscriptions for the 2020/21 year. We greatly appreciate your support and commitment to the Friends and to the Museum and hope this is acceptable.

Subscriptions are due by 1st October 2020.

Family – £25

Individual – £15

Concession (individual) – £10

Subscriptions will be conducted via email and online documents, and via the post for people without an email address. Re membership cards: for the time being last year's membership card will remain current.

Notice of the Annual General Meeting

Sunday 29th November 2020, 3pm, via Zoom with email and postal contact. Fuller details will be sent out nearer to the date.

Matters for discussion should be submitted to the Chair on fomdurham@fastmail.co.uk, or by post, to be received 14 days before the meeting.

Agenda will comprise:

- Minutes of the previous meeting, and matters arising
- Chair's Report
- Treasurer's Report, independently examined accounts, and appointment of independent examiner
- Secretary's Report
- Museum Curator's report

- Election of Officers and Members of the Council
- Submitted discussion topic(s)
- Any other business

Current Members of the Council

Chair – Anne Bothwell

Co-Vice Chairs – Ralph Austin and Sue Childs

Hon. Treasurer – Brian Straughan

Hon. Secretary – Jane Manley

Members – Ruth Crofton, Lyn Gatland, Keith Pratt, Charlotte Spink, Ian Stewart, Malcolm Walker, Penny Wilson, Dorothy Wolfendale

John Ruffle has had to stand down because of illness. John has been a long standing and valued Friend. A number of you will have enjoyed going on his organised trips abroad. We're very sad to hear this news and send our best wishes to Jenny and his family.

Annual Dinner

The annual dinner will be held on 14 April 2021 (Covid restrictions allowing) at 6.30pm for 7pm at Ramside Hall Hotel.

Mahjong Group

Meetings cancelled until further notice. If you want any further details or information contact Sue Childs at:

fomdurham@fastmail.co.uk

Free Drinks Offer

On Mondays 2–5pm, Friends can enjoy a free hot drink from the Museum café. (Proof of membership required.). Please note that the Museum is currently closed to the public until 2021 (opening date to be announced).

Free Entry

Reciprocal free entry for Friends at the Museum of East Asian Art in Bath. (Proof of membership required.)

FRIENDS LECTURE PROGRAMME 2020 to 2021

Normally lectures are held in Lecture Room 009, Elvet Hill House (next door to the Oriental Museum) on Wednesday evenings at 7.30pm, unless otherwise stated.

While Covid restrictions are in place lectures will be provided on Zoom.

Invites will be sent out a short while before each lecture. Information on how to use Zoom and on how the lectures will be conducted over Zoom will be placed on the Friends website:

<https://www.dur.ac.uk/oriental.museum/support/friends/>

As soon as face-to-face lectures can resume we will let you know.

If you have any queries please contact Sue Childs at:

fomdurham@fastmail.co.uk

Saturday 10th October 2020, 2pm to 4pm by Zoom

Joint session with NEAESOC (North East Ancient Egypt Society)

Dr Ross Thomas, British Museum

'Function of Terracotta and Other Figurines of the Ptolemaic and Roman Periods in Egypt'

Wednesday 25th November 2020, 7.30pm by Zoom

Dr Elena Narinskaya, Faculty of Theology and Religion, University of Oxford

'Eastern Orthodox Christianity'

Sunday 29th November 2020, 3pm by Zoom with email and postal contact AGM

Wednesday 13th January 2021, 7.30pm by Zoom

Rachel Barclay, Curator, Oriental Museum
'A rough diamond: the Oriental Museum's 60th anniversary year and plans for the future'

***Wednesday 3rd February 2021, 7.30pm
by Zoom***

Prof Paul Luft, Honorary Fellow, Durham University
'Persian Rock Reliefs of the 19th Century'

***March 2021
by Zoom***

Anna-Rose Shack, PhD Candidate, University of Amsterdam
'Japanese gardens'
Further details to be announced

***Wednesday 14th April 2021, 6.30pm for
7pm Annual dinner***
Ramside Hall Hotel

April 2021

Craig Barclay, Head of Museums, Galleries and Exhibitions, Durham University
'Coin handling session'
Further details to be announced

May 2021

Further details to be announced

ORIENTAL MUSEUM ANNUAL REPORT 2019 to 2020

Rachel Barclay, Curator

This has been a year unlike any other in the Oriental Museum's history.

Between the beginning of August 2019 and the end of February 2020 we welcomed 18,820 visitors, roughly the same number as the previous year. Our exhibition and events programme was in full swing and we were building up towards major celebrations for the 60th anniversary of the Museum at the end of May 2020.

The first real sign of trouble was the University's decision to cancel the annual Holi festival in early March due to concerns regarding large crowds and the potential for the spread of the new

coronavirus. Next, other smaller events were cancelled, then school visits, at the same time university teaching moved online with two weeks left of the term and by 18th March the museum was closed completely to everyone. A week later all staff were working from home. That is where we have remained for the rest of the academic year.

The museum was not abandoned. A small number of staff have taken it in turns to come on site every day during the Covid-19 lock down to carry out environmental monitoring and security checks. It was a strange experience to walk through the empty galleries day after day while the squirrels, rabbits and birds reclaimed ownership of the carpark and grounds. The world is such a different place today that it is hard to think back to summer 2019 when the museum was packed with visitors but I shall attempt to do just that and review the past year.

Our school holiday, weekend family activity programme and Little Dragons, our weekly Under 5s club, continued to be popular with local families and visitors alike through the first half of the year. At the same time our dementia-friendly programme was gathering strength with a number of programmes and clubs running regularly. Much of this work continued to be focused on hands-on sessions using the museum collections, with 242 objects being used for community sessions between August and the last session in early March.

Our major events programme had become a victim of its own success in 2018/19, when visitors had to be turned away from late night openings for Diwali and Lunar New Year because the museum was too full. To avoid visitors having to queue for long periods and prevent overcrowding we introduced advance online ticket sales for

these events beginning with Diwali in autumn 2019.

This proved to be very successful. 337 people joined us for Diwali. The overall number of visitors was lower than the year before but the feedback on the quality of the experience was extremely positive. The new ticketing system also allowed us to introduce a new enhanced food offer for the evening in response to requests from the Hindu community. This also proved very popular with the majority of visitors.

The temporary exhibition programme for the year focused on contemporary art. At the end of September 2019, we opened *Interface Arts presents: East meets West*. Interface Arts is a network for artists in County Durham and the surrounding areas. The exhibition showcased works influenced by both the Oriental Museum's collections and Durham University's contemporary Western Art Collection.

In order to create their artworks, Interface Arts members explored Durham University's Western Art collection focusing on the themes of Pop Art and British Modernism. The group also took part in a number of workshops at the Oriental Museum exploring objects from the Ancient Egyptian, Japanese, Chinese and South Asian collections in detail and the rich stories behind the objects. The complex interplay of influences from East and West, materials and techniques - as well as members own interests - combined to make a stimulating and thought-provoking exhibition.

This exhibition was followed in February 2020 by the opening of the British Museum touring exhibition *Pushing Paper: contemporary drawing from 1970 to now*. This focused on the diversity of contemporary drawing over the last 50 years.

For the first time the British Museum co-curated an exhibition with partner museums from around the UK. In a new way of working for the British Museum, curatorial staff from the partner museums collaborated with the British Museum curators to decide on the themes within the exhibition and to research and select the works as well as contributing chapters to the catalogue. These partner curators included Alix Collingwood-Swinburn, Curator of Western Art at Durham University.

For the exhibition in Durham works from the British Museum's collections were shown alongside pieces from the Oriental Museum and Durham University Art collection. Artists featured included David Hockney, Rachel Whiteread, Sol LeWitt, Anish Kapoor, Tracey Emin and Grayson Perry. Alongside works by these famous artists were works created by students from Durham Sixth Form College and the Oriental Museum's Creative Age group. Being forced to close this wonderful exhibition to the public so shortly after it had opened was particularly difficult.

Between these two exhibitions working with external partners, we also created an exhibition focused on Lunar New Year. This was created in-house using only our own collections. This exhibition had a very specific core purpose – to support teaching of school groups on this very popular topic while the usual permanent displays were unavailable due to our major new Silk Roads gallery development project.

Silk Roads represents the final stage in the programme to redisplay and redevelop all of the Oriental Museum's permanent galleries which we began back in 2008. In autumn 2019 the *Marvels of China* gallery and West Asia galleries were closed and the collections moved into storage. These galleries will be replaced with a new Silk Roads gallery designed to provide an

introduction to the whole museum. The displays will bring together works from across the museum's collections to tell stories of trade, travel and exchange across the whole continent of Asia and into Europe, all the way to Durham. Silk, ceramics and spices have travelled these trade routes for centuries. At the same time people have exchanged knowledge, learned about other faiths and been influenced by new artistic styles. The new gallery will include visitor favourites such as the Chinese bed displayed alongside new acquisitions and objects from the stores that have never been displayed before.

A key strand of this project has been engagement with local Muslim, Jewish and Asian Christian community members. The material culture of these faiths is rich and diverse and a gallery such as this can only scratch the surface. We are keen to ensure that local members of these communities help us to shape the stories being told in the gallery. We have been overwhelmed by the generosity of community members who have given their time, shared their knowledge and even donated new objects to the collections.

Away from the Museum, we have worked closely with colleagues from Tullie House Museum and Art Gallery in Carlisle on their exhibition *Treasures of China: splendour, status and symbolism*. This major new exhibition has brought together rarely seen objects from the Chinese collections at Tullie House with loans from the Oriental Museum to create an exhibition that reveals the dynastic history of China and the splendour of the imperial court together with stories tracing the journey of tea, silks, porcelain and artworks from China all the way to Carlisle. The timing of the exhibition coinciding with the Silk Roads project could not have been better. The closure of the *Marvels of China* gallery made it

possible for us to include important imperial pieces within the loan which would normally not travel outside Durham.

When the loans return from Carlisle in the autumn, key pieces from the *Marvels of China* displays will either go into the developing Silk Roads displays or move down to the *MacDonald Gallery of China* on the lowest level of the Museum. The Silk Roads project has provided the opportunity to refresh this gallery. The ceramics displays which form the backbone of the gallery will remain largely unchanged but the other sections of the gallery will be updated to reflect changes to our teaching at both schools and university level and to include more recently acquired pieces. We are also taking the opportunity to increase the light levels where possible.

Both school and university teaching was heavily disrupted by the need to close the museum. It was particularly sad to have to cancel the annual MA Museum and Artefact Studies student summer exhibition, which took the theme of Diamonds as part of the celebration of the Museum's Diamond Anniversary.

However, rather than being cancelled the majority of university teaching has gone ahead over the last few months as it has moved online. There has been a great deal of trial and error and both staff and students are still learning how teaching and learning differ in this new medium. For example, we have learned that online teaching is better with two staff members rather than one. This means that one person can engage verbally with the students while the other answers questions in the chat or deals with any other IT issues in the background. Scheduling live sessions can also be a challenge, especially when students in a single class are spread through time zones from the USA to

China. It can be very strange talking to a screen of black squares if students have their cameras turned off and you are sitting on your own at home.

It can also be really enjoyable and rewarding. It is much easier for students to share their work with the group by sharing their screen. Students who might be too shy to speak in class also may be more likely to type a question in an online chat.

It has been particularly important throughout the summer to support students whose course requires them to do a placement of fieldwork. Physical placements have been impossible and many organisations who would normally take Durham students furloughed their staff and were unable to offer an online alternative. As a result, we have stepped in to try to provide as many virtual placement opportunities as we can. This has been hard work for staff but also really worthwhile and the feedback from students has been overwhelmingly positive.

We have also continued to provide as much support as possible to academic researchers during lock down. While we have been unable to support physical visits to the collections, we have shared images and as much information as possible. With our paper archives out of reach, we have had to rely on staff knowledge, expertise and memory much of the time. Over the year we have supported 107 researchers from across the UK and around the world including Australia, Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Denmark, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Israel, Japan, Pakistan, PRC (Hong Kong), Spain, Taiwan and USA.

The Oriental Museum team has continued to work with academics across the University to promote the profile of Durham University overseas. In September 2019 I returned to Malaysia to lead a

second workshop at the National Museum in Kuala Lumpur. With the support of the University's International Office, University Library and the UNESCO Chair in Archaeological Ethics and Practice in Cultural Heritage, our team of six worked with more than 50 museum professionals from across the country. The workshop split into two groups, one focusing on collections management and conservation, the other on schools and community engagement.

During the course of the visit, agreement was reached to undertake a number of collaborative projects. Key to these plans is the agreement to sign a Memorandum of Understanding between Durham University and University of Malaya, Malaysia's highest ranking university. Progress has been slowed temporarily by Covid-19 but we hope to get plans back on track before too long.

In October 2019, Head of Museums, Galleries and Exhibitions, Dr Craig Barclay, travelled to Myanmar to install an exhibition, *In the Footsteps of the Buddha*. This exhibition was a further collaboration between Durham University's UNESCO Chair in Archaeological Ethics and Practice in Cultural Heritage and the Oriental Museum working with the Lumbini Development Trust of Nepal. It was created at the request of the Nepali Embassy in Myanmar to mark the state visit of the President of Nepal, the Right Honourable Bidhya Devi Bhandari.

The location of the exhibition was the most sacred Buddhist site in Myanmar, the Shwedagon Pagoda in Yangon. The 112 metre high pagoda is considered to be the oldest in Myanmar and contains sacred relics of the Gautama Buddha and his three immediate predecessors. Covered in gold plate and lead worth some USD1.4 million, it is visited by over 600,000 overseas visitors each year.

The exhibition highlighted the ongoing work of Durham University archaeologists and our museum curators to contribute towards the protection and preservation of the range of important sites in Nepal associated with the birth of the Buddha, promoting sustainable pilgrimage and tourism and supporting local communities living around the sites. President Bhandari opened the exhibition on 19 October 2019 and a month later it transferred to the National Museum in Yangon.

During the first half of the year the Museum continued to benefit from the generosity of a range of donors to the collections. I have already mentioned the generosity of members of local faith communities who donated a range of items. Particular thanks is due to a members of the Darlington Reform Community for a generous donation of more than 50 items relating to Judaism, transforming our holdings on this faith. Other notable donations included a substantial donation of ephemera relating to the democracy protests in Hong Kong, donated anonymously, and a collection of contemporary Indian miniatures gifted by Dr Simon Fleming.

Dr Fleming's donation provides a fascinating glimpse into the way that painters of traditional Indian miniatures have responded to the changes of recent times and particularly the impact of tourism on the art form. When the donation was made, we had hoped to create an exhibition centred on this fascinating group of paintings in 2022. Covid has forced us to rethink our entire exhibition programme. As such, this exhibition is likely to be delayed by a year.

Last year I reported on the donation of a major new collection of Japanese prints by Mr J P Scott. An exhibition focused on these prints, created in conjunction with our colleagues at the National Museum of

Japanese History, had been planned to be at the heart of our 60th anniversary celebrations over summer 2020. The Friends of the Oriental Museum had pledged significant support for this project. A key driver for delaying some of our other planned exhibitions is that we are determined to see this project come to fruition during 2021. We could not do this without the continued support of the Friends.

This seems a very appropriate note upon which to finish. These have been 'interesting times' as the saying goes. Although the Museum has been closed we have greatly valued the continued support of the Friends. In particular, this year I must thank all of the members of the Friends Committee who have continued to work so hard on behalf of all of the Friends and to provide so much support to the Museum team. We look forward to seeing you all again in person, but in the meantime we greatly value all of the ideas, feedback and comments we continue to receive via email, phone or social media. Thank you all.

ORIENTAL MUSEUM PROGRAMME from August 2020 onwards

Rachel Barclay, Curator

The university has made the decision to keep all museums, galleries and the Botanic Garden closed until early 2021.

The health and safety of both staff and visitors is the top priority and so the Oriental Museum will only reopen when we're sure we have all the necessary safety measures in place. However, that doesn't mean that nothing is happening at the museum.

Staff began to return to the museum in early August. Our first priority has been to work with academic colleagues to create digital resources based on the collections

to support university teaching online. It is vital that we prepare for a blended approach to teaching from October onwards with a mixture of online and face-to-face teaching in small groups.

At the same time, all of the staff have begun to learn how to use the technology that will allow us to live stream video classes from the museum galleries. We will use this for some university teaching. We are also offering this service to schools. Our learning team will be live streaming sessions from one hour to a full day into schools across the region from early September. This will allow the children to interact with our team, ask questions and experience as much of the museum and collections as possible under the current conditions.

Getting back onto site has also restored access to all of the written archives that have been unavailable to researchers for many months. We are now accepting pre-booked research visits from individual researchers and we are scanning materials and sending them to overseas researchers who are unable to visit the museum in person.

We have been able to offer a number of virtual summer placements for students who have missed opportunities for archaeological fieldwork or placements in museums or cultural institutions because of Covid. Much of the focus for these placements has been summarising recent research into the collections so that it can be added to our online database and made available to everyone.

We are using the closed period to carry out improvements at all our sites. At the Oriental Museum this includes essential work on the ventilation and fire detection systems that would be impossible to carry out safely when the museum was open. Once this work is completed, we will be

returning to the installation of the new Silk Roads permanent gallery on the ground floor of the museum and the installation of our next special exhibition *Lu Xun's Legacy: Print Making in Modern China*, celebrating the impact of Lu Xun (1881-1936) arguably the most important cultural figure of twentieth century China.

We are very grateful to the Friends for your understanding and all of the messages of support we have received. The museum feels very empty without you and we look forward to welcoming you back when it is possible.

Silk Roads – new permanent gallery
Provisional opening date 13th January 2021

This major new gallery will transform the ground floor of the Oriental Museum.

Silk Roads will be an introductory gallery for the whole museum, bringing together works from across our collections to tell stories of trade, travel and exchange across the continent of Asia and into Europe, all the way to Durham.

Silk, ceramics and spices have travelled these trade routes for centuries. At the same time people have exchanged knowledge, learned about other faiths and been influenced by new artistic styles.

The new gallery will feature visitor favourites such as our magnificent Chinese bed alongside objects never seen before.

Lu Xun's Legacy: Print Making in Modern China
Provisional opening dates 13th January 2021 to 16th May 2021

Lu Xun (1881-1936) is the pen name of the revolutionary Chinese writer Zhou Shuren. Arguably one of the most important cultural figures of 20th century

China, Lu Xun was a leading left-wing writer and print-maker and a passionate critic of the cultural and political conditions in early 20th century China.

Lu Xun transformed the neglected art of woodblock printing, invented in China more than 1000 years earlier, making the woodblock print a weapon for social change and national resistance.

This retrospective includes fifty-three prints drawn from the collections of the Muban Educational Trust, chosen from every decade since Lu Xun founded the Modern Woodcut Movement in the 1930s. The exhibition explores artistic trends, political conflict and technical innovations. Its four sections aim to connect history with the contemporary and message with style and technique.

Lu Xun's Legacy: Print Making in Modern China celebrates the extraordinary range and versatility of style, technique and aesthetic expression in modern Chinese prints.

Marshall Photographic Collection (title to be confirmed)

June to October 2020

Sir John Marshall (1876-1958) is one of the most significant figures in the history of archaeology in South Asia. Appointed Director-General of the Archaeological Survey of India by Viceroy Lord Curzon in 1902 at the age of only 26, he remained in post until 1928 and continued to work for the ASI until 1934.

Between 1902 and 1928 he oversaw seminal excavations at 49 sites across South Asia from Taxila in modern day Pakistan to Sanchi and Sarnath in India and Bagan in today's Myanmar. An early advocate of site museums, he is perhaps most famous for his excavation of Mohenjo-Daro, one of the centres of the ancient Indus Valley civilisation.

Sir John's collection of 4,910 photographs is now held in the Oriental Museum and covers the whole of his time as Director-General. It is an enormously important resource for researchers interested in a range of fields as the photographs illustrate sites and objects that have been subsequently lost, damaged, conserved or altered over the last century.

This exhibition, developed in collaboration with the Government of Pakistan's Department of Archaeology and Museums and Durham University's UNESCO Chair in Archaeological Ethics and Practice in Cultural Heritage places Marshall's historic images alongside contemporary photography of the same sites in modern day Pakistan and artefacts held within Pakistani museums. A fascinating picture emerges of discovery, preservation, dissemination and loss.

To check the start and end date of exhibitions before you visit consult the Museum's website

<https://www.dur.ac.uk/oriental.museum/whatson/>

or ring the Museum on 0191 334 5694