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Members receive the Journal *IRAQ*, the Annual Report and Accounts, two Newsletters per annum and are entitled to a 20% discount on all School publications. All publications other than the Journal *IRAQ* are available through OXBOW Books (www.oxbowbooks.com). Members receive invitations to at least three lectures a year, held in London. Associate members are entitled to all the same benefits, except receipt of the Journal *IRAQ* and the right to vote at the AGM.

To: The Secretary, British School of Archaeology in Iraq
 10, Carlton House Terrace, London SW1Y 5AH, United Kingdom
 e-mail: bsai@britac.ac.uk Fax: +44 (0) 20 7969 5401

- Please renew my Membership of the British School of Archaeology in Iraq
 - Please enrol me for Membership of the British School of Archaeology in Iraq for the 2006 membership year and the Journal, *IRAQ* Vol. LXVIII
 - Please enrol me for Associate Membership of the British School of Archaeology in Iraq
 - I wish to order *IRAQ* Vol. LXVII (2005) and/or *IRAQ* Vol. LXVI (2004) for £30 each and have included this amount with my membership payment (please specify.....).
- Please contact the Secretary for orders of back issues of Iraq from Vol. LI ff. Earlier issues and Vol. LVI-LVIII are now available from Schmidt Periodicals GmbH and Periodicals Service Company psc@periodicals.com or www.periodicals.com (previously from Swets Backsets).

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**BRITISH SCHOOL OF ARCHAEOLOGY
IN IRAQ**

NEWSLETTER NO. 17

May 2006



BRITISH SCHOOL OF ARCHAEOLOGY IN IRAQ
(GERTRUDE BELL MEMORIAL)

REGISTERED CHARITY NO. 219948

**BRITISH SCHOOL OF ARCHAEOLOGY IN IRAQ
10, CARLTON HOUSE TERRACE
LONDON SW1Y 5AH**

**E-mail: bsai@britac.ac.uk
Web-site <http://www.britac.ac.uk/institutes/iraq/>**

The next BSAI Newsletter will be published in November 2006 and brief contributions are welcomed on recent research, publications and events. All contributions should be sent to the British School of Archaeology in Iraq, 10 Carlton House Terrace, London SW1Y 5AH, United Kingdom or via e-mail to: bsai@britac.ac.uk or fax 44+(0)20 7969 5401 to arrive by October 15, 2006.

Joan Porter MacIver edits the BSAI Newsletter.

BSAI RESEARCH GRANTS

The School considers applications for individual research and travel grants twice a year, in spring and autumn, and all applications must be received by 15th April or 15th October in any given year. Grants are available to support research into the archaeology, history or languages of Iraq and neighbouring countries, and the Gulf, from the earliest times. Awards will normally fall within a limit of £1,000, though more substantial awards may be made in exceptional cases. Grantees will be required to provide a written report of their work, and abstracts from grantee's reports will be published in future issues of the BSAI Newsletter (published May & November). Grantees must provide a statement of accounts with supporting documents/receipts, as soon as possible and in any case within six months of the work for which the grant was awarded being completed.

Applicants must be residents of the UK or Commonwealth citizens and will be informed of the decision of Council concerning their grant application by early July and early January respectively. The BSAI Fieldwork & Research Committee can be contacted via the Secretary.

N.B. Individuals may not apply to the BSAI and the British Academy for the same research projects under current British Academy guidelines. Application forms are available from the Secretary or on the BSAI Web-site: <http://www.britac.ac.uk/institutes/iraq/>
Tel. + 44 (0) 1440 785 244 & + 44 (0) 20 7969 5274
Fax. + 44 (0) 1440 785 723 & + 44 (0) 20 7969 5401
e-mail: bsai@britac.ac.uk

Cover Drawings: Sumerian cylinder seal impression and Nimrud ivory drawn by Tessa Rickards. The objects are shown in the catalogue 'Treasures of the Iraq Museum', published by the Directorate General of Antiquities 1976.

**BRITISH SCHOOL OF ARCHAEOLOGY IN IRAQ
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Co-opted member of Publications Committee: Professor Andrew George

Co-opted members of Development Committee: Dr Lamia Al-Gailani Werr & Sir Stephen Egerton KCMG

BSAI Committee Abbreviations:

D = Member of Development Committee

F = Member of Finance Committee

P = Member of Publications Committee

R = Member of Fieldwork and Research Committee

BSAI EMAIL ADDRESS: The Secretary's home office email <TheBSAI@aol.com> will not longer work after June 2006. The BSAI's permanent email <bsai@britac.ac.uk> should be used. However, if there are any problems with sending emails to this address, please use <bsai.jpm@gmail.com> as a back up.

MESOPOTAMIA '06 STUDY DAY

The British School of Archaeology in Iraq and Birkbeck FCE Archaeology

THE ASSYRIANS: ANCIENT SPLENDOUR IN NORTHERN IRAQ

SATURDAY 18 NOVEMBER 2006

10.00 am - 5.00 pm

Room B34, Birkbeck College, Malet Street, London WC1

Organised and chaired by Dr Frances Reynolds, University of Oxford

- Queens and Treasures: The Nimrud Tombs
Dr Dominique Collon, British Museum
- Keep Taking the Tablets: King Ashurbanipal and His Library
Professor Andrew George, SOAS, University of London
- Memories of Nimrud: The 1950s Excavations
Dr Joan Oates, University of Cambridge
- "The Wolf on the Fold": The Assyrian Military in Images and Texts
Professor Nicholas Postgate, University of Cambridge
- Two Stories and a Song from Ashurbanipal's Library
ZIPANG: Fran Hazelton, Storyteller. Tara Jaff, Harpist

Tea and coffee are provided during the morning and afternoon breaks.
Enrolment opens on 3 July 2006. Places are limited so early enrolment is advised.

To enrol (full fee only) or to ask about concessions ring 0207 631 6651. For an FCE 2006 Prospectus ring 0845 601 0174.

Other enquiries to: archaeology@fce.bbk.ac.uk FCE Archaeology, 26 Russell Square, London WC1B 5DQ 020 7631 6627.

Course code: FFAR105NACS. Fee: £35 (£15 concessions).

JSTOR & The JOURNAL IRAQ.

The BSAI Council has signed up to have the back issues of the Journal IRAQ available on **JSTOR** (www.jstor.org). We have donated volumes LI – LXVII and a few odd earlier volumes to JSTOR. They are now in the process of obtaining earlier issues. If you have any interest in selling or donating your older Journals, please contact Jason Glover, JSTOR Issue Acquisition, 301 E. Liberty, Suite 310, Ann Arbor, MI 48104-1162 USA; tel. 001 734 7741 & fax. 001 734 998 6547 and email: Jason.Glover@jstor.org

The **BSAI** is looking for **IRAQ XXXII part two (1970) and IRAQ XVI part two (1979)** to complete its **London** set, if anyone should have duplicate copies to donate.

The Appeal has been progressing well since our last newsletter and we are delighted to report that the British Council has generously agreed to fund two fellowships to bring Iraqi scholars over to this country in the autumn of this year. An Islamic specialist and one of the librarians at the National Museum have been selected by the State Board to take up these awards and we now await formal permission from the Minister for them to come. We have interesting programmes arranged for both of them and would like to express our warmest thanks to the Council and especially to its director in Baghdad Rajiv Bendre for their support. We hope that an archaeological chemist from the museum in Sulaymaniyah will also be joining us for a short visit supported by funds from our appeal. He will visit laboratories in Nottingham, Oxford and Cambridge. In addition, attempts are currently being made to contact the museum in Kirkuk to offer them help.

We are grateful for a grant of £500 from the Foreign Office to buy books for museums and libraries in Iraq and hope to ship out another parcel in the near future. Dr Donny George, the Chairman of the State board, has also requested that we purchase a powerful digital camera for the Museum to assist them in preparing their publications. This too has been bought and we hope to send it out soon. A request was also received from Mosul University with a long list of publications and equipment they need. Much more money is needed to supply essential 'tools' of this kind.

Dr Lamia Al Gailani gave a very moving lecture in March on 'The Destruction of the Heritage of Iraq, a bitter legacy' at an event hosted jointly by the Harvard Club of the United Kingdom and the BSAI. The event, which was sold out, raised over £300 for the appeal fund. We invited our major appeal donors to express our gratitude for their support. The School is extremely grateful to Dr al Gailani for her unstinting support and kindness and to our Secretary for arranging the event.

In spite of these generous contributions the Appeal Fund is still well below our target figure so we are especially pleased that John Simpson, the BBC's distinguished world affairs correspondent, has kindly offered to give a lecture to raise further funds. This will be an all ticket occasion, to be held in October, and there will be a buffet supper afterwards to give the guests an opportunity to meet him. Mr Michael Wood has also agreed to give a lecture on September 14th at the British Museum in aid of the appeal. We thank them both for their generous support of work. (More details will follow – by post and on our website.)

Nearer to home our outreach and publications programmes continue to flourish. The School is extremely grateful to Dr Frances Reynolds who, in conjunction with Birkbeck College's Faculty of Continuing Education, organised an excellent day school in January, 'The Babylonians: Life in Ancient Southern Iraq', which was fully booked. Birkbeck was so pleased with the success of the day that they have asked Dr Reynolds to arrange a further series of similar

events and the first of these on the Assyrians will be held in November (see notice on page 14). Dr Dominique Collon gave an interesting lecture in March on "Survival and revival of some Mesopotamian motifs". Many of those attending this talk, including the lecturer, dashed afterwards to the Italian Cultural Institute to attend a presentation on the 'Baghdad Virtual Museum – a project for the 21st Century' to which our members were cordially invited.

Thanks to a generous grant from the Charlotte Bonham-Carter Charitable Trust and permission to publish from the British Academy (the original publisher in 1968), we have been able to re-print David Oates's *Studies in the ancient history of Northern Iraq*, complete with a new preface by Joan Oates, as a fitting tribute to his achievements. We were also delighted to be able to launch the first in the series of Alastair Northedge's monumental volumes on the ancient city of Samarra. This handsome volume on the historical topography of the city was published with the help of a generous subvention from the Fondation Max van Berchem and will be an invaluable tool for scholars. In his talk, given to mark its publication, Professor Northedge showed satellite images of the present state of the site and noted with sadness the damage being caused by the intensification of agriculture around the city and by defensive works built by the American army.

Harriet Crawford

BSAI Grant Reports

The Nimrud Ivory Project

More than 150 years since the first ivories were discovered at Nimrud by Henry Layard real progress is being made in the study of this unique material, which provides an opportunity to reconstruct the arts of many minor Levantine states of the early first millennium. Thanks to the initiative of Christoph Uehlinger, no less than four symposia, workshops or colloquia have taken place since 1997 dedicated to the late second and early first millennia. The first two, held at the University of Fribourg in 1997 and 2001, have been published, *Images as media, sources for the cultural history of the Near East and the Eastern Mediterranean (1st millennium BCE)*, edited by Christoph Uehlinger (Fribourg, 2000) and *Crafts and Images in Contact, Studies on eastern Mediterranean art of the first millennium BCE*, edited by Claudia Suter and Christoph Uehlinger (Fribourg, 2005), while the papers of the third workshop held at the University of Pisa in 2004 are in press. A fourth colloquium, 'Ägypten und Levante: Kulturkontakt im Spiegel der Kleinkunst vom späten 2. bis zum frühen 1. Jt. v. Chr.', was held at the Institut für Ägyptologie und Altorientalistik in the Johannes Gutenberg University, Mainz, in November, 2005. These colloquia, attended by senior scholars and students, have been enjoyable and instructive and have encouraged students to become aware of the potential posed by ivory

BSAI LECTURES & FUTURE EVENTS

15 June 2006 – BSAI Bonham Carter Lecture by **Dr Irving Finkel** 'Babylonian ghosts - welcome and unwelcome' at the British Academy, 10 Carlton House Terrace, London SW1. There will be an open forum at 5 p.m. before the lecture which will commence by 5.30 p.m. Members of the public welcome.

14 September 2007 – Illustrated Lecture by **Michael Wood** 'Iraq: the cradle of civilisation', in aid of the British School of Archaeology in Iraq Appeal in conjunction with the Department of the Ancient Near East, the British Museum, at the British Museum. (Full details to be confirmed.)

26 October 2007 – Talk by **John Simpson, BBC World Correspondent** and Buffet Supper in aid of the BSAI Appeal (Full details to be confirmed.)

18 November 2006 – BSAI & Birkbeck College Archaeology Study Day

THE ASSYRIANS: ANCIENT SPLENDOUR IN NORTHERN IRAQ – See following page for details.

14 December 2006 – BSAI AGM & Lecture by **Prof. M. Van De Mieroop** - title tbc

27 January 2007 – BSAI & University of Birmingham, The Centre for Lifelong Learning Joint Study Day 'Writing in the Near East' at the University of Birmingham.

The earliest writing and the first alphabets are found in the near east. Speakers will discuss writing from its origin as pictographs, through the many forms and uses of cuneiform and alphabetic scripts. The impact of recent events in Iraq will also be covered. There will be a display of Arabic illuminated manuscripts, and students will have the opportunity to handle museum objects and write their own cuneiform inscription.
Cost: £35 (lunch and refreshments included)

Contact: Dr Malcolm Dick. The Centre for Lifelong Learning, University of Birmingham. (0121) 415 8253. m.m.dick@bham.ac.uk

28 March 2007 – BSAI Lecture by Dr Eleanor Robson - title tbc

NON-BSAI AFFILIATED EVENTS

31 May 2006 ZIPANG at the KUFA GALLERY, 26 Westbourne Grove, W2. 7-9 (doors open 6.30) *Lugalbanda and the Anzud Bird* and *The Epic of Gilgamesh* with harp accompaniment and Sumerian and Akkadian songs. Admission free.

tale tells of an extraordinary journey, of a magical bird, of a battle that wouldn't end, and of wisdom gained. It is the story of Lugalbanda, a boy in a time of war.

Etched on clay tablets in cuneiform, lost underground for thousands of years, and rediscovered just 150 years ago, this account of the epic adventures of a loyal, resourceful boy is renarrated in lyrical prose by Kathy Henderson and set against Jane Ray's glorious images glinting with gold.

Found in Iraq and older than the Bible, the Koran, or the Torah, this stirring epic - the world's oldest written story - now becomes available to a general readership for the very first time.

KATHY HENDERSON is an artist, printmaker, and illustrator as well as an award-winning children's author. She first came across the story of Lugalbanda in 2003, just before the invasion of Iraq. "The timing was extraordinary. Here was a story that was incredibly old, powerful, and mysterious, from a civilization I'd barely heard of, and yet it spoke straight to the present. Just as extraordinary was that almost nobody knew about it. All through the process of making the book, I've felt hugely privileged to be able to play even a small part in bringing this story back to life." Kathy Henderson lives in London.

JANE RAY is an acclaimed illustrator whose distinctive artwork for children's books is recognized round the world. She has won the Smarties Book Prize and has been nominated four times for the Kate Greenaway Medal. While illustrating LUGALBANDA, she enjoyed studying an array of ancient Sumerian artifacts in the British Museum. "This is the first time I've really had to research a particular historical period for a book, and I found it completely fascinating. It was wonderful to have the chance to explore the skill, beauty, and sophistication of this ancient culture - an added pleasure in illustrating the story." Jane Ray lives in London.

**British Council – BSAI & Christie-Mallowan Fellows and Scholars
– Autumn 2006**

Dr Crawford has arranged an interesting programme for three Iraqi colleagues to spend time in Edinburgh, Glasgow, Oxford, Cambridge, London, and Nottingham. The BSAI will be setting up housing for them in the various places, where they will be training. If any members are interested in hosting them for weekend visits or dinner from time to time, to ensure they get to know England better through our hospitality, feel free to contact the Secretary on email bsai@britac.ac.uk or telephone 01440 785 244. We don't know how busy they may be but it would be nice to have a list of volunteers to offer extra hospitality!

From: Joan Porter MacIver

research. Students are working on or have completed PhDs in Munster, Pisa, Bologna and Turin.

Other important ivory initiatives are underway. The University of Turin is engaged on publishing the many ivory fragments found by the 1980s Turin expedition to Nimrud, while Claudia Suter is engaged on a painstaking review of all the thousands of tiny fragments found in the 1930s at Samaria: these will be crucial to help establish the range of material found at that important site. The University of Mainz has set up a dedicated research programme, the Sonderforschungsbereich 295, with three researchers, Dirk Wicke, Angela Busch and Erika Fischer, directed by Professor Dr. Braun-Holzinger: this is engaged in studying contacts between Egypt and the Levant.

Much of this work is based on the ivories found by Max Mallowan in the palaces of the acropolis and by David Oates and Jeffrey Orchard in Fort Shalmaneser from 1949-1963, many of which have been published in the first five catalogues in the *Ivories from Nimrud* series. A useful aid to such studies is the scanned archive, *The Published Ivories from Fort Shalmaneser, Nimrud*, by Georgina Herrmann, Helena Coffey and Stuart Laidlaw, published by the School in 2004. Work is currently in progress on two further catalogues, see below, and there is one further planned for the future on the ivories found in the large storeroom, SW11/12 in the Fort.

Ivories from Nimrud VI, Ivories from the North West Palace

The catalogue includes not only those ivories excavated by the BSAI but those excavated in the 19th century by Layard and Rassam, and the superb pieces found in Well AJ by the Iraqi Department of Antiquities, as well as an interesting collection of ivory and bone tubes found by Muzahim Mahmud, the discoverer of the Royal Tombs, in Well 4. These ivories are of exceptional importance with superb examples from all the different ivory traditions and many complete pieces. The catalogue of some 400 pieces, arranged according to provenance, is essentially complete, and work is now underway on the much more interesting task of preparing the commentary.

A recent visit to the Aleppo region with Lamia al Gailani, Dominique Collon and others has been exceptionally helpful, actually seeing the geography on the ground and the distribution of sites ancient and modern. Additionally, it was a beautiful time of year, the sun shone and Ugarit was a vision with a mass of wild flowers and soaked with the scent of orange blossom. It seems possible that there were four principal cultural regions. As is generally accepted, one series of ivory groups belong to the North Syrian world from Tell Halaf to Aleppo and Zinjirli, areas long under Hittite control; another Syrian series was probably located further south around Damascus and extending into Palestine; another series are typically Phoenician, while the fourth combines Syrian and Levantine aspects, following Wicke's recent revised terminology, may be called Syro-Levantine.

While locations have been proposed for some North Syrian style-groups of ivories, thanks to recent research on Phoenician stone sculptures by Eric Gubel, it may even be possible to propose locations for some of the Phoenician and Syro-Levantine schools of ivory carving. Identifying their places of production has been a long-term aim of the project, for only when we know where the ivories were carved can we suggest the probable time of carving, which must reflect the time of the site's greatest prosperity. *IN. VI* is scheduled to be ready for press later this year.

Ivories from Nimrud VII, Ivories from the Burnt Palace

W.K. Loftus brought back a 'horseload of ivories' from the South East Palace, later identified by Mallowan, who also found ivories in what he then termed the Burnt Palace. For the last 16 months Catherine Thomas has been preparing a database from both excavations and turning the material into catalogue format. The entire ivory collection numbers 1,908 and of this number 1,447 (+/-50) can be accounted for today. They have been photographed, recorded and are currently being organised into catalogue format through analysis of style groupings in preparation for commentary. The excavations of the 19th and 20th centuries, have revealed two analogous groups of material and, whilst examining these groups, similarities are being found to those at other ivory rich sites such as Hasanlu and Samaria. Developments are currently underway to start comparing these ivories with those from the other palaces in Nimrud. However like each of the buildings, the Burnt Palace seems to have a unique corpus of material which is more varied from the other collections, and represents a range of workshops and styles revolving around similar themes. The majority appear to come from North Syrian centres, with comparisons in both metal and stonework. The Burnt Palace ivories live up to their name and are for the most part very small and heavily damaged. Whilst not as beautifully preserved as those from Fort Shalmaneser or the NW Palace they still provide useful clues helping us to match them with other sites and perhaps in the long run compliment the aim of the North-West Palace in establishing ivory workshops.

A cautionary tale

Modern technology is truly wonderful: indeed it is hard to remember the days of literally cutting, pasting and endlessly retyping, although one great advantage was that it made for brevity. The scanned archive, for instance, makes available quality images of the ivories to facilitate research. To this large archive of black and white images, we will in due course be adding scanned versions of colour slides, initially scanned thanks to Dirk Wicke and his student, Guido Schnell, at Mainz, who spent many patient hours inputting data. However, all this material needs safe storage. Our initial hard drive bought in the '90s was no longer usable because of changes in cabling. Catherine Thomas therefore purchased a new hard drive for the School, and the data was safely transferred, the scanned archive and all the material on which we are currently working, the ivories from the North West, Central and Burnt Palaces.

Studies in the Ancient History of Northern Iraq

by David Oates

This is a facsimile reprint of the trail-blazing book by David Oates which has been out-of-print for far too long. It is primarily the report of his survey and excavation of sites in northern Iraq between 1954 and 1958. But it is at the same time a memorial to the great explorer, Sir Aurel Stein, whose pioneer fieldwork on the Roman frontiers in Iraq in 1938-39 provided the initial stimulus.

There have been no changes to the text or images (including a Foreword by Sir Mortimer Wheeler) and the pagination has remained the same. David's widow and long-time collaborator, Dr Joan Oates, has added a preface illustrated by a photograph from the author's collection.

HB 192pp + 16pp plates. Hardback with jacket.

Reprint published by the BSAI 2005 (originally published by the British Academy 1968). ISBN 0 903472 19 8 PB £30

All BSAI publications, except the Journal *Iraq* are available from **Oxbow Books**, Park End Place, Oxford, OX1 1HN, United Kingdom
Phone: +44 (0)1865 241 249 Fax: +44 (0)1865 794 449

Email: oxbow@oxbowbooks.com **Web:** <http://www.oxbowbooks.com>

Customers in North America can order from the OXBOW branch office:
The David Brown Book Company, PO Box 511, Oakville, CT, 06779 USA
Phone: 860-945-9329 Fax 860-945-9468 & Toll free 1-800-791-935
Email: david.brown.bk.co@snet.net (20% discount on BSAI Publications).

Nineveh: papers of the XLIXe Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale, London.
ISBN 090347218X 2 Volume set (2005) (\$140) is available from
www.eisenbrauns.com. (These proceedings were also printed as IRAQ Vol. LXVII and IRAQ Vol. LXVIII Part One.)

NON BSAI Publications

Lugalbanda: The Boy Who Was Caught Up in a War: An Epic Tale from Ancient Iraq by Kathy Henderson and illustrated by Jane Ray \$16.99;

ISBN #: 0763627828 age range: 8 yrs and up

A tale of childhood and courage, thousands of years old - yet remarkably relevant today Lugalbanda woke with a jolt. He opened his eyes and what did he see but the terrible Anzu bird beating its wings in its nest high above. . . . Did he quake? Did he quail? No. Lugalbanda the Brave sat and stared, and into his head came a brilliant idea.

Before the Bible and the Koran, before even the Greek and Roman myths, there came a story from the land we now call Iraq. Speaking across five thousand years, in a voice so fresh and timeless it could have been written yesterday, this

NEW BSAI PUBLICATIONS

The Historical Topography of Samarra, Samarra Studies I by Alastair Northedge

Samarra, the glory of the Abbasid Caliphs

Samarra, 125 km north of Baghdad on the Tigris, is today the subject of intense international interest, following the bombing of the Askari Shrine on February 22nd, 2006. It has been one of the centres of the Sunni insurgency since the invasion of March 2003. It is also a small town with a long history surrounded by kilometres of ruins.

In a new book, Alastair Northedge, Professor of Islamic Art and Archaeology at Université de Paris I (Panthéon-Sorbonne), and an expert on Samarra, looks anew at the Islamic heritage in Iraq. The work is devoted to the remains of the capital of the Abbasid caliphs at Samarra in the ninth century, a city resonant in history as the monument of Caliphal power, and the home of many of the finest Arab poets.

Professor Northedge elaborates the history and layout of the city – also one of the largest archaeological sites in the world, where all the different elements of an ancient capital are preserved – mosques, palaces, military cantonments, industrial areas, markets, racecourses, hunting parks, etc.

The architecture is on a huge scale – the famous spiral minaret 52 m high, one of the largest ancient mosques in the world, monumental avenues 100 m wide, the palace of the Caliphs 1300 m long, racetracks 10 km long, and kilometres of houses.

This work is the first synthesis in more than fifty years on the glories of ancient Samarra.

The Arab and Islamic heritage in Iraq, long overshadowed by the heritage of ancient Mesopotamia, plays an important role in bringing together ancient and modern. It will have an important function in reuniting Iraq, after the trials of the present crisis.

*Alastair Northedge, The Historical Topography of Samarra, Samarra Studies I, 426 pages; 91 plates; 116 figs. A4 size.
Hardback with jacket.
ISBN 0-903472-17-1
PB Price £50*

On one horrible day in March our beautiful new drive crashed. Nobody had ever warned us that hard drives were fallible! Afterwards we were told – ‘oh yes, you should always have two’. It was a long, hard, time-consuming and expensive road to retrieve the data, which Catherine has achieved. Now we are backing up in every way we can – but this is just a warning to those equally innocent to back up their data, and back it up and back it up again – and of course to update.

Georgina Herrmann & Catherine Thomas

Measure for measure: pedagogical functions of metrological lists and tables from Old Babylonian Nippur

Metrological texts — lists and tables of weights and measures — are apparently amongst the most boring and repetitive of cuneiform tablets. It is certainly true that, at one level, they are all the same: metrological lists comprise, in a standardised order, the correct writings of the units of capacity, weight, area, and length, in many hundreds of entries. In an apparently minor variation, metrological tables take the same list and add to it the correct equivalent writings in the sexagesimal place value system (rather like a conversion table between imperial and metric units). Thus, in terms of information about the values between weights and measures in use, one tablet is much like another. So once Neugebauer and Sachs successfully set out the basic relationships between the various units of measure and weight in *Mathematical Cuneiform Texts* (1945), the study of Old Babylonian metrology went into a swift and apparently terminal decline as there was seemingly nothing interesting left to say about them. Recently there have been some excellent archaeological studies on the material culture and social context of weighing practices (e.g., Ascalone and Peyronel 2001; Peyronel 2000), but the textual evidence has remained neglected. In the late 1990s a new wave of research on Old Babylonian education demonstrated that the lists and tables were written by young scribes in the context of their elementary training (Veldhuis 1997: 54–59; Robson 1999: 174–179). In a recent study on education at a school-house in Old Babylonian Nippur (Robson 2002) I drew some preliminary conclusions about the central ideological and pedagogical role of metrology in elementary scribal education. However, I was unable to make a detailed analysis because of the paucity of relevant sources available to me: only 14/1400 tablets from the house I was studying could be identified as metrological lists or tables, and most of those were inaccessible in Baghdad. It was still unclear why both lists and tables were needed; what their relationships were with other texts on the same tablets; and whether they had any function beyond the simply practical teaching of weights and measures.

To build on that preliminary work, in 2005 I started a two-year collaboration with Dr Ignacio Marquez Rowe of the Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, Madrid to explore the pedagogical function of metrological lists and tables in Old Babylonian Nippur more generally (not solely House F), based on

the tablets found by the Hilprecht expedition to Nippur in the late 19th century. On research trips over the last five years I have compiled a database and set of digital photographs of all 200-odd relevant tablets housed in the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology in Philadelphia. Dr Christine Proust of the CNRS has generously provided us with her photos of their 175 counterparts in Istanbul and Jena. Dr Rowe and I visited the University Museum together last December to initiate his edition of the Philadelphia tablets, which he will continue this summer. Meanwhile I have been focusing on the images of weighing and measuring presented in curricular Sumerian literature — compositions which the Nippur scribes learned after the elementary phase of their education was over. Much to my surprise, I discovered that the literary owners of measuring and weighing equipment are overwhelmingly goddesses, who use them (amongst other purposes) to ensure that kings rule justly and fairly. Thus the trainee scribes learned to associate accurate metrology not simply with the day to day business of institutional transactions but at a deeper level with the divinely ordained upkeep of fair and equitable kingship. I will be presenting a summary of my findings at the Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale in Münster this summer. A more detailed version will appear in a collection of quantitative studies on Sumerian literature for the Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature (Cunningham and Ebeling forthcoming).

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Report on the Ubaid Conference, Durham, 20-22 April 2006

An international conference on the Ubaid horizon was held at Grey College, Durham University, from 20/04/06 to 22/04/06, entitled *The Ubaid Expansion? Cultural meaning, identity and integration in the lead-up to urbanism*. This was enabled by a generous grant of £1000 from the British School of Archaeology in Iraq. The British Academy and the CBRL also contributed by paying the expenses of certain overseas delegates. The BSAI grant helped cover venue hire, equipment, conference packs, small subventions for two postgraduate helpers, and meals for the delegates, including a conference dinner.

Forty six established scholars and students attended, from the UK, USA, Japan, Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, France, Denmark, Italy, Iran and Syria. The aims were to address practical and theoretical problems surrounding the analysis of a cultural phenomenon which covered a vast geographical area and around two millennia in duration, and to integrate the abundance of new data that have arisen since the last major meeting on the subject (at Elsinor in 1988).

The keynote speaker was Gil Stein, who underlined the theoretical questions surrounding the Ubaid and outlined the current state of knowledge. Professor Stein proposed that the concept of Interaction Spheres could be revived and modified to help resolve the tension between contextual perspectives and cultural-historical approaches. In total, 24 papers and 5 posters were presented, addressing issues of production, chronology, architecture, cultural transmission, identity and environmental change, and covering developments in Iraq, Syria, Turkey, the Levant, Iran and the Persian Gulf region. Fundamental questions regarding the nature of the Ubaid and of cultural horizons themselves were considered. At the end of the conference, Susanne Kerner (Copenhagen University) delivered a proposal to set up a website dedicated to Chalcolithic studies, which would act as a forum for debate and a data exchange. The Ubaid Conference website itself is still running, and gives the programme and a list of abstracts: <http://www.dur.ac.uk/ubaid.conference/Ubaid%20conference/>

The proceedings will be published and edited by Robert Carter and Graham Philip. The papers will be externally refereed to ensure the highest academic standard. The resulting volume will both inform future research on the Chalcolithic of the Middle East, and be directly relevant to the study of prehistoric societies and interactions in other branches of archaeology and anthropology.

Thanks are due to the sponsors, especially the BSAI; to the co-organisers, Graham Philip and Derek Kennet; to our two postgraduate helpers, Matt Whincop and Liam Cooney; and to Joyce Dover of Grey College who oversaw the event with patience and expertise.

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