

FACULTY OF CLASSICS

# NEWSLETTER

FACULTY OF  
CLASSICS



2024



## 100 YEARS OF BEAZLEY

“THERE ARE THOSE  
WHO PREFER  
PROPERTIUS”

ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
ARCHIVES OF  
THESSALY  
(1880-1960)

ATHENA SWAN  
BRONZE AWARD

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# LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

Dear Fellow-Classicists,

Welcome to the annual newsletter of the Faculty of Classics in Oxford!

There is a beautiful line of Virgil, one among many, that describes the passage of a year, *annuus exactis completur mensibus orbis*, "the annual circle, its months concluded, is over," where the Latin words are set out concentrically around the central verb, a poetic hailstone illustrating in its shape the circularity of the year.

This introduction to our Classics Faculty Newsletter will not be rising to the grace and elegance of the *Aeneid*, but then I haven't spent the previous year, as Aeneas has at this point in Book 5, living the high life in Carthage with Queen Dido. What I have been doing is the work of the Chair of the Faculty Board of Classics, and while I'll be waiting a long time for anyone to chronicle that in Latin hexameters, there have been some noteworthy events. Some of them you can read about on the pages that follow, but I shall pick out some highlights, necessarily selective, before encouraging you to read about more.

The arrival of a newly constituted Outreach team, Drs. Alison Pollard and Andrew Sillett, has transformed this very important window we present to the world. A clutch of engaging classically-themed competitions for schoolchildren and an increase in undergraduate applications in December give welcome evidence of the impact their fresh thinking has brought.

Conversely, the departure of Prof. Fiona Macintosh, Director of the Archive for the Performance of Greek and Roman Drama since 2010, and our colleague since 2000, is a melancholy development. But Fiona is as delighted as we are to hand on the APGRD to its longterm collaborator, Dr. Pantelis Michelakis, who was a Research Fellow at the Archive before joining the Classics Department at Bristol University for more than twenty years.

A particularly memorable moment in the past year was the appointment of a new Camden Professor of Ancient History, Nicholas Purcell having retired in 2023. Prof. Valentina Arena, a scholar of the political language and thought of the Late Republic, is a hugely welcome arrival from a professorship at UCL, and we offer our very warmest wishes for her future in Oxford. I cannot help but add that we are continuing to seek the means, being a Faculty that is in no sense financially well-off, to support our professorships. That might take the form of very, very generous donations, but legal historians would also be welcome who can explain how the Manor of Bexley which William Camden most generously bequeathed to Oxford University in the sixteenth century to fund this post (Prof. Arena is the first woman to occupy it in its 502-year history) has failed to leave any trace whatsoever.

The finances of the Classics Faculty are tight but sound here in the Faculty of Classics, and we owe that above all to the good sense of Hayley Merchant, our exceptional Head of Administration. But Aristotle in the *Politics* talks of state constitutions that tend in two extreme directions (and he may be thinking of Sparta and Carthage): either to stinginess (*gliskhrotes*, "stickiness," a great word) or at the other extreme to luxury (*truphe*). Classics is doing austerity and doing it determinedly and well, bearing stoically the metaphorical fox cubs stuffed up our moth-eaten sweaters. But can a chap not dream of a little Punic abundance?

Enough of my pipe dreams! Please enjoy reading about some exciting archaeological discoveries with Prof. Maria Stamatopoulou, seeing some lovely pots selected by Dr. Thomas Mannack on the centenary of John Beazley's appointment as Lincoln Professor of Classical Archaeology, sharing Dr. Andrew Sillett's experience of editing a beautiful and bestselling history of Ancient Rome, and much more.

And save the date for the alumni day, Saturday 15th March 2025.

With best wishes to you all:

**Prof. Llewelyn Morgan,**  
Chair, Faculty Board of Classics

FACULTY OF  
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## Save the Date

Faculty of Classics Alumni Day

Saturday 15th March 2025

More information and  
the full programme will  
follow in due course.

Please check Alumni Events on the  
Faculty of Classics website for  
details or contact Ellie Galloway  
[elena.galloway@classics.ox.ac.uk](mailto:elena.galloway@classics.ox.ac.uk)  
to register your interest.

# Q & A SESSION WITH OUR FACULTY BOARD CHAIR AND NEW CAMDEN PROFESSOR OF ANCIENT HISTORY

**Llewelyn Morgan, Classics Faculty Board Chair Welcomes Professor Valentina Arena**

## **1. Tell us about yourself, if you will, Prof. Arena. Where have you studied and worked before arriving in Oxford?**

I studied for my BA at the University of Florence with Guido Clemente and my PhD –which I completed in 2003 – at University College London with Michael Crawford and John North. The same year I took a permanent lectureship in Roman History at University College London, where I taught and researched for twenty years, until my appointment last year to the Camden Professorship at Oxford.

During my time at UCL, I was inspired by and benefited from its powerful scholarly tradition in ancient history, which was built by scholars such as Arnaldo Momigliano, Fergus Millar, Michael Crawford, John North, Tim Cornell, and Amélie Kurt, just to mention a few. My time at UCL, where Ancient History is based in the History Department, has deeply informed my approach to the study of the ancient world. I've come to believe in an approach that gives centrality to historical questions and rigorous analysis of the ancient context, alongside the full command of the technical skills necessary to handle ancient sources (of whatever nature they may be).

## **2. How would you describe your core interests as a Roman Historian?**

My research has two main trajectories: the study of ancient ideas and the study of the production of knowledge. I started my career by investigating the connections between the conceptualisation of the political idea of liberty and the practice of politics in the late Roman Republic. Since my principal concern there was to explore the dynamics of the relation between the ideal of liberty and associated rhetorical claims in political debates, a second branch of my work has focused on the relation between eloquence and political deliberation in both Roman practice and rhetorical theories. This research has developed with the exploration of other conceptualisations of liberty, both in Rome and in different historical contexts of the ancient world, with the aim of shedding light on rival understandings of liberty in antiquity, and on the role that these might play in current thinking about this concept. In this strand of my research, I have focused on the development of the notion of individual rights, the idea of popular sovereignty, and the global dimension of ancient democracy as well as its many meanings and forms in different historical contexts.

My second area of research concerns the production of knowledge, and more specifically how philosophical discourse informed the institutional structures that regulated the life of the community in antiquity. I have focused my attention on the so-called 'antiquarians', scholars who wrote down the previously unwritten political and religious rules and regulations of Republican Rome, at the time of most acute crisis of the Republic. I am leading an ERC project called *Ordering, Constructing, Empowering: the Fragments of the Roman Republican Antiquarians (FRRAnt for short)*, which aims to produce the first ever edition (both in print and digital format) of the fragments of the Roman Republican antiquarians. I am currently working on a monograph whose subject is closely linked to the reconstruction of antiquarian texts, entitled *Politics and the Production of Knowledge in the late Roman Republic: Constitutionalism in a New Perspective*. This will present a comprehensive analysis of the development of Roman constitutional thought and practice at the end of the Republic, the time of its formation and major development. Here I am moving away from the traditional study of the classical texts that deal with Roman constitutional arrangements, focusing instead on the works of the Republican antiquarians, who were also active politicians and generals of the time and recorded the rules and regulations concerning the institutional working of Rome as well as its religious framework. My main contention

is that the wide typology of antiquarian discourse that they formulated constitutes a distinctively Roman way of political thinking, rooted in epistemology and the philosophy of language, which differs substantially from the political-constitutional thinking of Platonic and Aristotelian ancestry that pervades the works of Cicero.

## **3. It's early days, but do you have any first impressions of Oxford as a place to work?**

Since I moved to Oxford, I have been truly amazed by its tremendous wealth, both in terms of resources and talents: in an ordinary day at Oxford, you can manage to browse the library and find the latest book you were looking for, make arrangements for an exciting new project, while having an enriching conversation with a colleague from another faculty, whose research may be in a completely different field but can inspire you to explore new approaches and methods.

What really energises me, in my new role, is to see the potential creativity of this place, the extraordinary ability to remain true to its centenary traditions, and, at the same time, be open to innovation and welcoming new ideas and new people from all over the world.

## **4. What do you see as the role of the Camden Professor within the subject in Oxford? Are there particular directions in which you would like to guide it?**

My aim is to build on the rich tradition of Oxford in the rigorous study of ancient sources and materials to find new answers to the intellectual challenges of our times. We live in a rapidly changing world, where the old paradigms that underpinned our society seem no longer valid, and we need to think with creativity about the directions we wish to pursue. The ancient Mediterranean societies, interconnected with one another, are endowed with an imaginative force that may support us in thinking again about what we might need to include or also exclude in conceptualising the world around us.

## **5. Dogs, cats, or neither?**

I like the loyalty of dogs (who could forget the death of old Argos after he recognises Odysseus back in Ithaca?), the independence of cats, and the cuddliness of both.

## **6. On a scale of 10 to 10, rate in quality the current head of department in Classics.**

'Practically perfect in every way' – like Mary Poppins!

**Professor Valentina Arena – Camden Professor of Ancient History**





# 100 YEARS OF BEAZLEY

2025 will be awash with British pottery-related centenaries: the inauguration of the British series of *Corpus Vasorum Antiquorum* (A.H. Smith, British Museum 1), the publication of Sir John Beazley's first list of attributions of almost 5,000 Athenian red-figure Vases to painters and potters (*Attische Vasenmaler des rotfigurigen Stils* (Tübingen, 1925)), and Beazley's ascension to the Lincoln professorship. Moreover, 2025 will see the 140th anniversary of Beazley's birthday. This is as good a reason to write about Beazley and pots as any.

Greek figure-decorated pottery was a late-comer to academic studies and received serious scholarly attention only after the publication of Sir William Hamilton's collections between 1766 and 1795. Interest increased hugely after the discovery of thousands of high-quality Greek pots in Vulci in Etruria. Vases were appreciated as original Greek art since Winckelmann and recognised as a source of information on ancient Greece and beyond second only to ancient literature, and one should not forget that they are also evidence for the juvenile humour of the Athenians, which potters catered for by providing cups with penis feet, trick vases, and shapes inspired by the breasts of women (**fig.1**).

At the end of the 19th century, German scholars instigated the study of individual artists relying on signatures and "masterpieces" (Klein, W., *Euphronios*, 1886; *Die griechischen Vasen mit Meistersignaturen*, 1887; Hartwig, P., *Die griechischen Meisterschalen*, 1893), a trend followed by the American scholar J.C. Hoppin (*Euthymides: a study in Attic vasepainting* (1896).

Beazley read Literae Humaniores at Oxford and received a double first in Greats in 1907. Thereafter, he travelled the world sketching rather small details of figures, ornaments, and shapes first in notebooks (**fig.2**) and later on loose sheaves. In 1908, the draughtsman Karl Reichhold taught Beazley the use of tracing paper, and from then on, his sketches were frequently augmented by details traced off vases (**fig.3**). His wife Marie took photographs which are now in the Beazley Archive mounted on CVA-sized brown cardboard mounts. In 1910, Beazley began to study the Kleophrades Painter (*JHS* 30), the following year the Berlin Painter (*JHS* 31) (**figs.4-5**), and the Pan Painter in 1912 (*JHS* 32), all the while examining as many vases as possible across Europe and later America regardless of their quality, attributing them to artists' hands by observing "a 'system of forms' - forms in shape, design, patterns, figures and execution of technique" (**figs.2, 6-7**). Two vases by the same hand are required to establish a painter. Since few vase-painters signed their vases, Beazley made up names based on the potters they worked with (Amasis and Kleophrades Painters), location of their best pieces (Berlin Painter), stylistic characteristics (Elbows Out, Worst Painter), favourite boys (Antimenes Painter), and similarities to later artists (Mannerists). His first list, *Attic red-figured Vases in American Museums*, 1918, was followed by the much terser 1925 German catalogue of 170 artists and groups, which proudly announced that its author was *Professor der Klassischen Archäologie in Oxford*.

*Vasenmaler* was vastly expanded in 1948 and again in 1963, with a list of black-figure vase-painters published in 1953. Final additions and corrections appeared one year after Beazley's death in *Paralipomena* (Oxford, 1971).

Beazley never set out his method in full in spite of "taking the reader by the hand" in articles on the Antimenes and Berlin Painters (*JHS* 27; 31). He probably based his method on the works of Bernard Berenson and Giovanni Morelli, who attributed unsigned Renaissance paintings to masters, although he never acknowledged them. As a student (fellow) and custos of the picture gallery of Christ Church he was as *au fait* with European paintings as with vases.

Beazley arranged his published lists by painter and shape, citing Museum, find-place, all publications with an illustration of the vase, brief descriptions of the figure-decoration, and signatures and kalos-names. His terse but efficient recording style proved ideal for computerisation later.

Beazley was the third Lincoln Professor after William Ramsay, who left for Aberdeen one year after his appointment in 1885 due to low pay, and Percy Gardner. Beazley's pay and pension seem to have been insufficient, because the Faculty of Classics bought his library and private archive of photographs and drawings in 1964 to alleviate his financial situation. After his death in 1970, the material was stored in the basement of the Ashmolean Museum's Cast Gallery and organised and made available to scholars by the first Beazley Archivist, Professor Donna Kurtz. Within a few years, the Beazley Archive became an essential destination for vase scholars from all over the world.

Beazley's lists and their indexes give easy access to the 34,000 vases attributed by him. At a conference in Basel, it was proposed to register all Athenian vases not recorded by Beazley and Professor Kurtz instigated the Beazley Archive Pottery Database in 1978 based on pots in publications received by the then Ashmolean Library and looked after by Ruth Glynn, Lucilla Burns, Tom Carpenter, Melanie Mendonça, Alastair Harden, Diana Rodriguez Perez, and Thomas Mannack over the last 45 years. Initially, it existed only on index cards. In 1979 the first records were entered into the database designed by Dr Lou Burnard at the Oxford Computing Services with the aid of Professors Kurtz and Boardman and financed by the Getty Trust. In 1982, it was decided to add Beazley's lists to the database. By the second half of the 1990s, image scanning had sufficiently advanced to digitise the Beazley Archive's collection of c. 100,000 mostly black and white images and add them to the database, which was made available on the internet in 1998 in a vastly improved database designed by Greg Parker.

Thanks to the database's international reputation, Henry Immerwahr entrusted it with the digital version of *Corpus of Athenian Vase Inscriptions*, a catalogue of 8,000 inscribed objects in 1999, and in 2000 the [Union Académique Internationale \(UAI\)](#) asked the Beazley Archive to digitise all out-of-print

volumes of *Corpus Vasorum Antiquorum*, a series of more than 400 catalogues of ancient pottery. This meant that the BAPD recorded non-Athenian vases for the first time. To date there are more than 100,500 Athenian, 5000 South Italian and 2,500 Corinthian figure-decorated vases, and around 27,000 pots of other wares database.

Beazley's titanic work created a lasting legacy: his method of cataloguing Athenian figure-decorated vases by artists is far more intuitive than the combination of letters and numbers employed by prehistorians, and teacher-pupil relationships create a fine relative chronology, shed light on workshop organisation, e.g. the Sabouroff Painter who "passed through" the workshop of the Achilles Painter (**fig. 8**) and the number of workers in a workshop: each of the gradations, *manner, circle, related, akin, compare, circle*, may be a sweaty little person in the pottery working away. This and the ability to count workshops active at the same time allow a rough estimate of the importance of the pottery industry in ancient Athens. Identifying painters reveals personal choices in addition to or rather than chronological changes, and allows a glimpse into the mysteries of the organisation of trade.

Beazley has his detractors. It has been said that his use of the structure of Renaissance workshops elevated vases far above their humble status in antiquity and enabled unscrupulous modern dealers to charge exorbitant sums for vases attributed to Beazley's painters; that the vague definition of his method makes verification of attributions difficult and leaves no room for off-days experienced by his great masters; and that he steered vase-scholarship towards attributions to the detriment of other approaches and questions. Moreover, the requirement of a second vessel by the same hand has left several thousand vases known to Beazley painterless and therefore uncatalogued, and his death removed the only scholar able to recognise minute differences in the personal styles of painters. While not completely unjustified, it is undeniable that Beazley's system has made Athenian vases accessible and is still used to catalogue newly excavated specimens or to fit vases into an art historical and chronological framework enabling the study of a huge variety of areas of scholarly interest. Vases were highly esteemed in antiquity from someone dwelling near Reading in the north to Meroe in the Sudan in the South, Portugal in the west, and Baghdad in the east. Broken pots were painstakingly and lovingly repaired by drilling holes across the break and clamping them together and using metal wire to reattach handles (**fig. 9**). Vases give more information on the lives of women, and research in this field is particularly lively (**fig. 10**). Scientific advance has made it possible to study the contents of Greek and related figure-decorated pots without damage, a project that will be partially based in Oxford, one hopes. There is still much to learn about trade, religion and the theatre and it is the author's hope that vase-studies will continue in Oxford for at least another 100 years.

**Dr Thomas Mannack**



**Fig. 1:** Athenian black-figure mastoid cup attributed to the Haimon Painter by Beazley. Young Herakles and the Cretan Bull, 490.



**Fig. 2:** Beazley's sketchbook no. 8. Characteristic details.



**Fig. 3:** Beazley sketch sheet with attached tracing, Rome, Villa Giulia.



**Fig. 4:** Amphora with Citharoedus, Berlin Painter, New York.



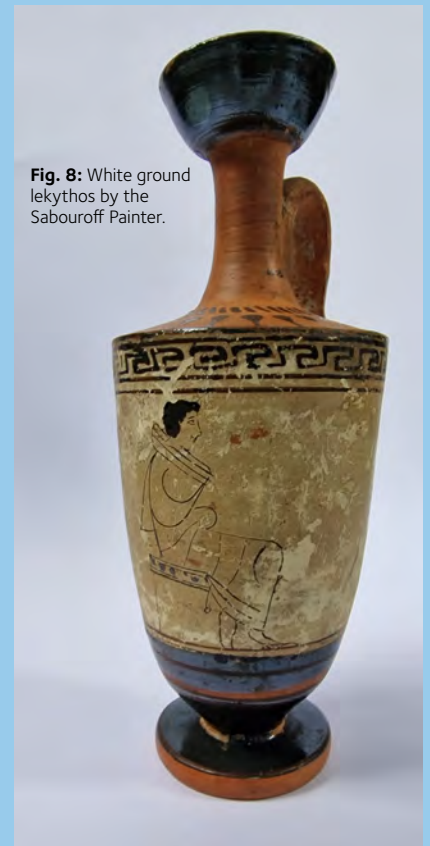
**Fig. 5:** Finished Beazley Drawing of the New York Amphora.



**Fig. 6:** Red-figure lekythos fragment, Achilles Painter, woman fleeing.



**Fig. 7:** Red-figure lekythos by the Achilles Painter, Zeus pursuing woman. Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, 01.8077.



**Fig. 8:** White ground lekythos by the Sabouroff Painter.



**Fig. 9:** Fragments of a cup with repairs in the manner of the Epeleios Painter.



**Fig. 10:** Alabastron by the Painter of the Yale Cup, woman at home with her father (we hope)



# CLASSICS FACULTY EDI NEWS (2023-24)

The broad aim of the EDI (Equality, Diversity, Inclusion) Committee is to make sure that the Classics Faculty at Oxford is as inclusive and welcoming as possible to all its people. We want to foster an environment which promotes equality, values diversity, and maintains a positive working, learning, and social culture so that the Faculty is supportive of all staff and students. We welcome also constructive engagement from our wider Alumni/ae community.

This is my final year as EDI Officer for the Classics Faculty, after starting the role in 2021 as its inaugural incumbent in the role. I have continued to benefit from the invaluable help of our EDI Committee, including input from our committed and enthusiastic student representatives. On a practical note, I run two 'EDI Office hours' each term, enabling people to come and talk about EDI-related issues. Once again, we have been organising a system of online language-related teaching support over the long summer vacation for some of our on-course students whose language acquisition has been particularly disrupted as a result of the pandemic. Work continues on all aspects of the Athena Swan Bronze Award, where we are especially lucky to have Dr Emma Greensmith as the lead. This is a framework used across the globe to support and transform gender equality within higher education and research.

This past academic year has been a busy and

productive one in delivering progress on many EDI-related issues in the Classics Faculty. Probably the highlight for me personally has been co-organising the Sub-Faculty seminar with Dr Sarah Cullinan Herring (then Hody Fellow in Classics and Dean, Wadham College, now at the Department of Classics, University of Kansas) in Michaelmas term on "Taboos and Transitions: Exploring Sexualities and Genders in the Ancient Tradition". This exciting interdisciplinary seminar explored representations of taboo sexualities and genders in the ancient world and their reception in modern literature and media, intersecting with disability studies, queer studies and critical race studies. Over the term, seventeen speakers came to Oxford from around the world to talk about a richly diverse range of topics from 'Pregnant gods, pregnant men: reproductive care, masculinity, and disability in Lucian of Samosata' to 'A Queer Catullus for the 2010s'. Talks involved carefully chosen paired topics, creating a lively dialogue between the speakers and the audience. The seminars attracted huge numbers of students whose participation and contributions to the debate made this a very special seminar for everyone involved.

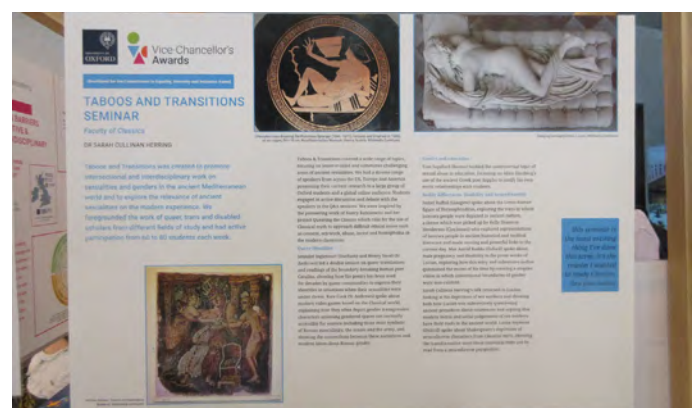
The icing on the cake came when the seminar series was shortlisted for the prestigious Vice-Chancellor's Awards 2024. These awards are billed as a University-wide celebration of outstanding people across the University. What was previously five separate groups of awards

became a single celebration in 2024, with eleven categories spanning strategically important areas. One of these is EDI, recognising colleagues who have served as role models for equality, diversity and inclusion through their work, and who have made a difference to EDI at Oxford. In 2024, there were 250 entries, with 1,500 individuals in the nominations, from all parts of the University and colleges. It was very exciting therefore that the Taboos and Transitions seminar was shortlisted for an award. A showcase of the shortlisted nominations took place at the Weston Library, and winners were announced at a special ceremony hosted by the Vice-Chancellor Professor Irene Tracey in the Sheldonian Theatre on Wednesday 8 May.

As I hand on the EDI role to my wonderful colleague [Dr Scott Scullion](#), I am happy to look back over the last three years and to see EDI now firmly embedded formally in our day-to-day activities. It has been a pleasure and a privilege to take on this work and hopefully to have helped the Faculty achieve its potential in this sphere.

**Professor Rhiannon Ash (EDI Officer),  
Merton College**

**Link to Vice-Chancellor's Awards 2024:**  
<https://hr.admin.ox.ac.uk/vice-chancellors-awards#collapse4813051>



# "THERE ARE THOSE WHO PREFER PROPERTIUS ..."



Stephen Heyworth with the editors of *The Limping Lady*, Jennifer Ingleheart and Tristan Franklino  
Photograph by Claire Harvey

This is how Quintilian speaks of the poet who told of his beloved Cynthia. The sentence belongs to a passage in which the author of the *Institutio oratoria* ('On the orator's education') notes that the Romans rival the Greeks in elegiac composition too (10.1.93): 'the elegist, Tibullus, in particular seems to me to be refined and elegant; there are those who prefer Propertius; Ovid is more playful than both of them, as Gallus is harsher' ([*elegia*] cuius mihi tersus atque elegans maxime uidetur auctor Tibullus. sunt qui Propertium malint. Ovidius utroque lasciuior, sicut durior Gallus). It has well been noted that Quintilian's remark on Propertius, while ostensibly positive, may have a teasing connotation: 'there are those who prefer Propertius', he says, while perhaps implying 'but I don't know why when we've got Tibullus who writes so well'. This imputation could be thought to gain some traction from the demanding style and, at times, challenging Latinity of Propertius' writing: his poetry is often thought – *mutatis mutandis* – to resemble that of the modernists in some respects, and he asks a lot of his readers, even in parsing the surface meaning of his verse.

The difficulty felt by many readers approaching his poetry today is exacerbated by the state of his poorly transmitted text and the subsequent scholarly debate about how radically to emend what is transmitted so as to create a readable and consistent edition that nonetheless maintains the characteristically challenging and fascinating nature of Propertian elegy. Indeed, in the preface to the 2007 *Oxford Classical Texts* edition of the poet whom some prefer, Stephen Heyworth notes, in relation to the necessarily varied responses to editing and reading the Propertian corpus, that *quot lectores, tot Propertii* ('there are as many Propertius-es as

there are readers'). This is true, of course, of all texts: they could be said to exist in as many ways as they are interpreted; yet, it is perhaps more true for the works of some writers than of others.

Readers of Propertius with an Oxford connection – even if they do not always prefer him – have been busy in 2024. In February, a collected volume made it onto the scene, as *Essays on Propertian and Ovidian Elegy: A Limping Lady* for Stephen Heyworth appeared, *non passibus aequis*, and was published. Fittingly for the number of feet in an elegiac couplet, eleven former students and mentees of Steve's contributed chapters in his honour about two authors on whom he has worked extensively. Propertius' use of the possessive adjective (e.g. *meus*) as a generic marker of amatory elegy is discussed by Dan Jolowicz and Matthew Robinson explores the

fascinating and suggestive intertextuality at play in 3.10, Propertius' birthday-poem for Cynthia; Donncha O'Rourke meanwhile writes exhaustively on the phenomenon of *hysteron proteron* throughout Propertius' corpus. Jennifer Ingleheart, as well as co-editing the volume, writes on sex in Ovid's *Amores*, while the *Fasti* and exile poetry are treated from a number of different perspectives ranging from the ecocritical to the metaliterary by Rebecca Armstrong, Tristan Franklino, Bruce Gibson, Gail Trimble, Krešimir Vuković, and Bobby Xinyue; Helen Dixon edits and discusses the interpretation of a witty and amusing Renaissance poem in the Ovidian tradition.

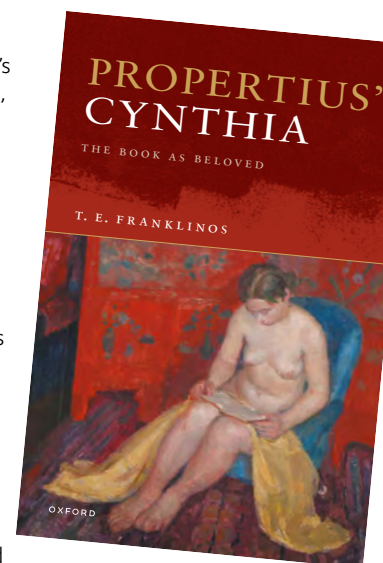
Each of the contributors has had the benefit of Steve's extraordinarily generous and humane teaching and mentorship; to quote from the preface to the Festschrift: 'Nobody who has had the experience of reading Latin with Steve will be able to forget it – he takes a mischievous delight in upsetting assumptions about literature and texts, as he encourages his students to read harder and express themselves more precisely, and has inspired us all with his ability to open up new meanings from texts by focusing on them in detail. Steve has always taken an engaged and serious interest in the lives of those who have benefitted from his academic oversight, and is to all of us a dear friend and colleague, as well as someone to whom each of us owes a considerable debt in relation to our respective intellectual formations. Reading and chewing over Latin literature with Steve in tutorials, supervisions, classes, and seminars – as well as in the King's Arms – has been an educative and eye-opening experience for each of us, and we have all learned a huge amount from him, while also having an awful lot of good-humoured fun.'

With his retirement in 2025 almost upon us, it is rather difficult to imagine the faculty in Oxford without him.

A second Propertian tome emerged from Oxford in November 2024 with the publication of *Propertius' Cynthia. The Book as Beloved*. This volume, largely discussing poems in Book 3, considers Propertius' commentary on his own poetic composition and the ways in which he insistently revisits and recalls earlier episodes from the relationship that he construes for himself with his beloved, Cynthia. It demonstrates that the account given by Propertius of his love – his amorous discourse – is constituted of a poetics of repetitiousness that is apt for the articulation of an elegiac relationship that, by its nature, cannot progress: indeed, the recollection of lexical and thematic aspects of earlier poems in later ones could be said to mirror the repetitive encounters between Propertius and Cynthia. Each poem provides a fragmentary glance at Propertius' relationship and, through repetition with variation, the elegist shapes his readers' kaleidoscopic understanding of his amatory discourse. Since, moreover, his beloved is the embodiment of his poetry (not merely a written girl but a text made flesh), it is argued that Propertius' account of his changing relationship with Cynthia allows him to articulate the transformations of his elegiac corpus. Such a reading becomes particularly important as the close of Book 3 appears to end their relationship and, through his attempts at escaping from the hermetically-sealed amatory discourse that he has construed, he signals the beginning of a radical experimentation with the generic bounds of elegy that is expanded in Book 4, where the protean figure of Vertumnus comes to embody the poet's work instead of Cynthia.

Propertius may not be everyone's preferred elegist, but he remains a fascinating poet and wordsmith, who exerted an enormous influence over Ovid throughout the latter's career, and has – thanks to the intense amatory and literary focus on a Cynthia-centred poetics in his earlier books – subsequently provided pabulum for the likes of Petrarch, Goethe, and Pound amongst others.

Tristan Franklino





# PARTYING WITH PETA

In September 2023, the faculty took the opportunity to honour and to celebrate our esteemed colleague and friend, Peta Fowler, who reached a significant birthday in that month. A couple of years before the two-day conference, we – Stephen Heyworth and Tristan Franklins – were taking a pandemic-regulation-permitted walk and, in the course of our nattering, the idea for this celebration began to take shape. Our conspiratorial and ambulatory conversation concluded thus:

SJH: She'll love it.

TEF: She'll hate it.

SJH (*with mischief*): Let's do it.

We settled upon a number of topics that we knew to be of interest to Peta, including Lucretius and didactic poetry, closure, intertextuality, and – perhaps, above all – gossip. Prevailing upon an international cast of Peta's friends and colleagues to speak was easy: all responded quickly and generously that they should love to contribute and to celebrate our inimitable honorand. The range of speakers, many of them former students of Peta, are indicative of her extraordinary breadth of interests and of her ability to make lasting friendships grounded in intellectual engagement and her liberal sense of fun. Papers were given by: Rhiannon Ash, Antony Augoustakis, Alessandro Barchiesi, Joseph Farrell, Stephanie Frampton, Philip Hardie, Stephen Harrison, Luuk Huitink, Jennifer Ingleheart, Daniel Jolowicz, Joy Littlewood, Kathrin Lüddecke, Donncha O'Rourke, Luke Pitcher, Alessandro Schiesaro, Barnaby Taylor, and Guy Westwood.

Peta came up to St Anne's as an undergraduate in 1972 to read for Mods and Greats, and subsequently completed a doctorate on Book 6 of Lucretius' *De rerum natura* under the supervision of Robin Nisbet and Margaret Hubbard. She has been part of the faculty ever since, as an invaluable tutor and lecturer, as a stalwart of graduate and professorial seminars, and as an unstintingly generous colleague, mentor, and friend. Her association with Oxford Classics is thus of more than half a century's standing, and still going strong *in saecula saeculorum*: should Peta ever choose to stop teaching, it is not immediately clear how the provision of Latin literature tutorial teaching across the university will be managed!

Many of Peta's former tutees were able to attend the conference and their presence was testimony to the devoted gratitude that generations of Oxford undergraduates feel toward her as a caring, vibrant, and learned tutor. Alongside her responsibilities at several

colleges, Peta has also lectured for the faculty on a range of topics, most notably Latin didactic authors and the poetic book. Her lecture handouts have not unreasonably been compared to gold-dust by some students: famously, an undergraduate came rushing into the auditorium five minutes into a colleague's lecture; initial delight on the lecturer's part at this student's enthusiasm was diminished when it became clear that they had missed the preceding lecture by Dr Fowler and wanted to ask whether any of her handouts had been left behind. She continues to be an assiduous attender of seminars, and through her lively contributions to these and her support of graduate students and postdocs, she has encouraged discussion and conversation and has helped to foster open-minded communication and to shape ideas.

*More Classical Constructions* seemed an appropriate name for a colloquium to celebrate Peta, recalling as it does the conference – and subsequent collection of papers – to honour her late husband, Don. Together they shared far more than a home, a bed, a daughter: Lucretius, engagement with philosophy and theory, openness of mind and heart, and a sense of fun – slightly different senses of fun, perhaps. And the two of them wrote together: do read their wonderful articles on tricky topics in third edition of the *Oxford Classical Dictionary* (from entries on 'Lucretius', 'Virgil', and 'vates' to 'literary theory and classical studies' and 'isagogic literature'). Peta's generosity has included being a wonderful supporter of many activities designed to commemorate Don: OUP's publication of his commentary on Lucretius 2; the annual Fowler Lecture; memorial conferences, including *Classical Constructions*, held just over twenty-four years ago, almost a year after his death. Our dear friend, Peta – an example to us as a kind teacher, as a generous colleague, and as a splendidly fun human being – keeps constructing, and continues to help many others do so too.

Photo by Dr Luuk Huitink



**Dr Tristan Franklins & Professor Stephen Heyworth**



Photo by Dr Luuk Huitink



# OLIVER TAPLIN *EMERITUS*

This year we marked two milestones in one for one of the Faculty's much-loved *emeriti*. It was Oliver Taplin's 80th birthday, but also the 50th anniversary of his appointment to the Lectureship and Tutorial Fellowship at Magdalen. Oliver will be known to many reading this as an expert on Greek drama, where perhaps his biggest contribution has been the emphasis he placed on understanding the plays as live performances, rather than texts to be studied on the page. No less important is his influence on the world of contemporary theatre, and his involvement with several of the major productions of Greek tragedy over the last forty years. It therefore seemed fitting to celebrate Oliver's contributions, not with a traditional academic event, but through a series of performances.

The afternoon opened in dramatic style with a performance of odes from Sophocles' *Antigone*, set to music by Classics DPhil student and acclaimed composer Alex Silverman. Alex skilfully integrated moments from two odes, the third stasimon to *Eros* and the famous first stasimon (the 'Ode to Man'), and combined some of Oliver's own translation of the play with the original Greek. The odes were performed by the Magdalen choir and accompanied by a string trio of student musicians.

Oliver's translations were a running theme of the afternoon, featuring in two more performances. First, we saw extracts from *Oedipus Tyrannus*, from a student production directed by two current Classics undergraduates, which opened the following week. The final performance of the day struck a very different tone, based on an as-yet unpublished translation of Aristophanes' *Peace*. Actors from Creation Theatre, directed by Classics and English alumna Helen Eastman, led the audience in a musical sing-along inspired by the play's finale, with the lyrics of the original adapted to the witty 'Goodnight Irene'.

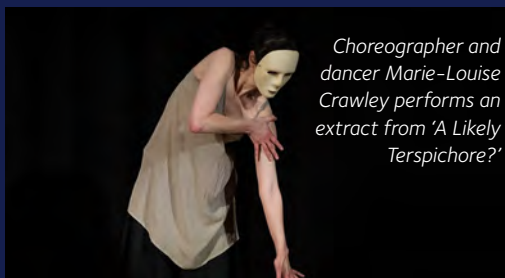
In between, other performers reflected the diversity of Oliver's influence on the arts. Marie Louise Crawley, a choreographer who studied Classics and French, performed extracts from her solo dance piece *Likely Terpsichore?* (*Fragments*). This was originally created for durational performance in the Ashmolean, and took its inspiration from the fragmented bodies of the statues held there, as well as from the formal principles of Roman pantomime (a solo, masked, and narrative dance form). Creation Theatre performed an interlude from Tony Harrison's *Trackers of Oxyrhynchus*, a play set in the midst of Grenfell and Hunt's excavations of Oxyrhynchus, which also tells the story of Sophocles' fragmentary satyr play *Ichneutai* (*Trackers*). The actors delighted us with the famous clog dance of the satyrs, perhaps the highlight of this extraordinary and imaginative play.

Amidst the performances were also some personal reflections: Fiona Macintosh spoke of Oliver's career, and in particular his legacy as one of the founders of the APGRD, now grown to become one of the leading research centres into classical reception and performance. Katherine Harloe, a Classics alumna and now Director of the Institute for Classical Studies, offered some thoughts to alumni on the changing landscape of Classics in the UK. Later in the evening, others of Oliver's former students shared some memories of their time at Oxford, from the 1970s to the 2010s.

While the afternoon was billed as a celebration of Oliver, what stood out from the performances was the creative vigour of the Oxford Classics community, past and present, and from current students to senior members. While Oliver was a pioneer in his interest in Classics in performance, his legacy has been thoroughly continued by those who followed in his footsteps.



Creation Theatre actors Guy Clarke, Charlotte Smith and Nat Speight perform the satyrs' clog dance from Tony Harrison's *Trackers of Oxyrhynchus*



Choreographer and dancer Marie-Louise Crawley performs an extract from 'A Likely Terpsichore?'



Oliver Taplin and his wife Beaty Rubens



## ATHENA SWAN BRONZE AWARD

After many years of hard work, the faculty is delighted to have been awarded the Athena Swan Bronze Award.

Athena Swan is a framework that supports and transforms gender equality within higher education and research. Achieving a bronze award is an acknowledgement of the dedication of the faculty of Classics to transforming gender equality within the largest Classics Faculty in the world.

A bronze award signifies the first step of the Athena Swan journey for the Faculty of Classics, and includes 60 clear actions that the Faculty will work to enable its transformation, including improving support for Early Career Researchers with childcare responsibilities, ensuring all jobs that are advertised are explicit in their encouragement of applications from women, non-binary and transgender individuals, and the organisation of

a 'Women in Classics' roundtable event, to name just a few.

*"We are delighted the faculty has been recognised for its dedication to equality across all areas of our work. This award gives us a clear plan of action to improve gender equality within the faculty."*

**Hayley Merchant**  
Faculty of Classics  
Head of Administration and Finance

More information on the Athena Swan charter in Higher Education can be found here [Athena Swan Charter | Advance HE](#)

# ARCHAEOLOGICAL ARCHIVES OF THESSALY, GREECE (1880–1960)

Archival archaeology is fast emerging as a vibrant strand of the discipline. The recent shift from “print-based” towards “digital” humanities has led to an increasing digitalisation of archival material and has resulted in a growing awareness of the potential and challenges of archaeological legacy data. Under-explored until recently by archaeologists, archives are now viewed both as tools that help recontextualize antiquities and as valuable historical sources in their own right.

Thessaly, in central Greece, is a region that is particularly reliant on archaeology legacy data. Important sites were investigated early in the twentieth century and remain unpublished, while most of the finds from these early explorations were dispersed between Athens and Thessaly, and often their provenance was forgotten or lost. The rediscovery of archival material from many early fieldwork projects in recent years, and my research in Greek museums together with the curators of the National Archaeological Museum at Athens and the regional Thessalian museums, has provided a welcome flow of previously unknown evidence that can become the platform for writing a new history of this poorly understood region in both antiquity and modern times.

With my former doctoral student, Dr Anna Blomley, we applied and were offered a generous grant by the Fell Fund of the University of Oxford, as initial support to a project that aims at unlocking the under-explored potential of this legacy data. We are focussing on three archives. They span the period from the annexation of Thessaly to the Greek state (1881) to the late 1950s, when the museums of the region were re-organised and Thessaly's natural environment began to change drastically due to major state-funded land reclamation projects and increasing industrialization.

We work in close collaboration with the Historical Archive of Antiquities and Restoration of the Hellenic Ministry of Culture, the curators of antiquities of the National Archaeological Museum at Athens and the departments of antiquities of Thessaly, and have profited from the generosity and hospitality of colleagues in Heidelberg (especially Joseph Maran), the German Archaeological Institute at Athens, the National Museum at Denmark and the French School of Archaeology at Athens.

The first two archives relate to the work of two of the pioneers of Thessalian archaeology, Apostolos Arvanitopoulos (1874–1942), first director of antiquities of Thessaly, and Friedrich Stählin (1874–1936); the third archive concerns the work of the German Mission active in Thessaly in the 1950s and is housed in the Institute of Pre- and Protohistory in the University of Heidelberg. Work this last year was mainly on the first two archives.

Arvanitopoulos, known for the discovery of the corpus of Hellenistic painted tombstones at Demetrias, excavated widely across Thessaly, especially sanctuaries and rich tomb groups, but the majority of his finds are unpublished. His archives are very rich (over 4,000 pages of documents and photographs), but highly dispersed; their study has enabled me to re-contextualize thousands of finds and has led to numerous research projects. Some of the recently studied artefacts are truly extraordinary, for example the three pairs of leather shoes, from a 2nd-century BCE tomb of two females at Demetrias. Sent to Athens in 1921, and preserved in fragments, they have elaborate decoration on their soles: vegetal scrolls and ivy leaves, or palmettes rendered in gold and highlighted with red pigment, or a polychrome decoration in gold foil, red and black. Such artefacts, and the representations of women wearing red-soled shoes on the painted tombstones from the same cemetery, offer us a glimpse into elite life in Demetrias and the circulation of luxury items in this cosmopolitan port city. **[See figs]**

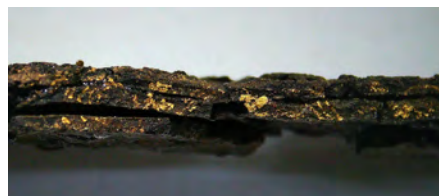
A contemporary of Arvanitopoulos, Friedrich Stählin (1874–1936) is famous for his seminal monograph, *Das hellenische Thessalien*, that remains unsurpassed. His work was based on extensive autopsy; he kept detailed diaries, which were recently donated to the Institute of Classical Archaeology of the Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg. They join an existing collection of more than 1,100 objects kept in Erlangen (mostly fragments of pottery, including many from Thessaly), which were collected or acquired during his travels. Anna Blomley has been working on this archive. She has created a detailed inventory of the documents and their contents and is currently examining how these documents relate to the objects in the Institute's collection, while preparing articles for publication.

The work of these two early Thessalian explorers coincides with and was shaped by critical periods in modern Greek history. Thus, alongside the re-contextualization of antiquities,

these archives can inform our knowledge about the impact of contemporary affairs and politics on archaeology during the turbulent period from Ottoman rule to the Greek Civil War and shed light on the involvement of academics in the antiquities trade, and ultimately, the history of Greek archaeology as a discipline.

During the first year of the project, we consulted archives in Greece and Germany. I gave invited lectures in Athens, Volos and Larisa, and worked in museum storerooms on the newly identified finds. In November together with Dr Olympia Bobou and Professor Rubina Raja of Aarhus University we organised the international conference, “Turning the Page: Archaeological Archives and Entangled Cultural Knowledge” (<https://projects.au.dk/archivearchaeology/events/2023/turning-the-page>), where twenty scholars discussed issues stemming from the study of archaeology legacy data that concern the eastern Mediterranean. (The proceedings for publication are in press with Brepols). For next year, we plan a photographic exhibition in Greece and Oxford, two conferences, many publications and outreach, as our goal is to increase collaboration and exchange of knowledge and ideas with colleagues outside the UK.

**Prof Maria Stamatopoulou**  
Professor in Classical Archaeology





# ANCIENT ROME: THE DEFINITIVE VISUAL HISTORY

# Glassware

### Practical and ornamental beauty

The Romans produced many different types of glass, ranging from decorative to more domestic, practical pieces. The industry developed rapidly during the 1st century CE, thanks to the discovery of glass-blowing techniques in the Hellenistic East. As glass became more common, artists grew more creative.



I have long believed that we never quite shake off our initial impression of the ancient world. However much intensive study we undertake, and however many years of our lives we dedicate to deepening our understanding of this world, we are perpetually making modifications to a building whose outline was sketched in our younger years. As such, it was with no little trepidation that, in January 2022, I accepted Dorling Kindersley's offer to create a new illustrated history of Ancient Rome. A book designed to allow the interested young reader to immerse themselves for the first time in this subject.

Dorling Kindersley's *Ancient Rome: the Definitive Visual History* is a volume comprised of approximately 150 lavishly illustrated double-page spreads, each providing an accessible but expert overview of its dedicated topic (be that a man, a woman, a place, a concept, or an object). Each of these chapters has been written to serve as a stand-alone piece, but we have also included enough connecting material to guide those who wish to traverse the book sequentially.

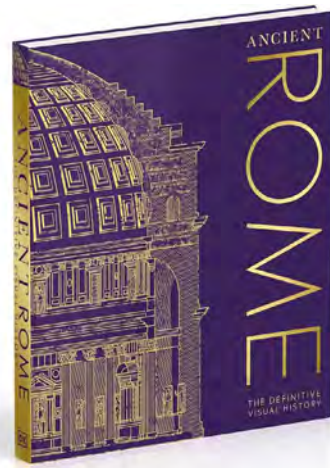
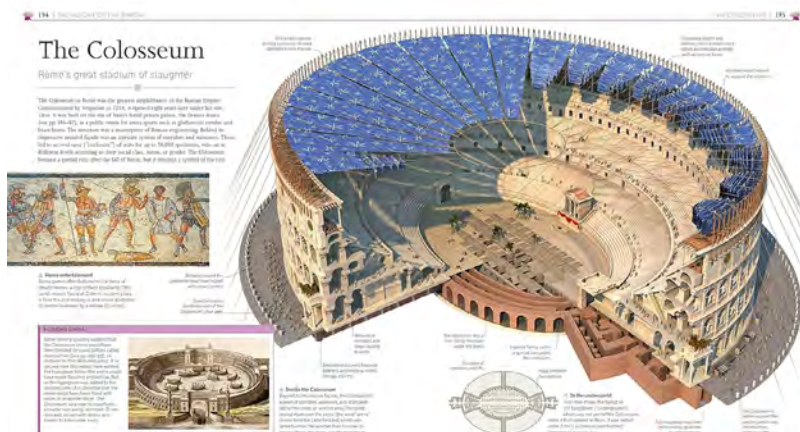
Our 150 chapters tell a story spanning a thousand years: from Roman pre-history, to the fall of the western empire. We cover events that took

place across three continents: from Byker in Newcastle, to Palmyra in Syria; from Pompeii on the Bay of Naples, to Cirta in Algeria. To ensure that these chapters were as informed, up-to-date and sparkling as possible, I assembled a team of contributors to research these topics and bring them to life. I was exceptionally lucky to be able to draw upon an address book of dynamic researchers and educators from our own Classics Faculty: Oxford alumni Laura Aitken-Burt, Alex Antoniou, Kevin Feeney and Olivia Thompson joined Jeremy Armstrong, Liz Gloyn and Kieren Johns to provide our book with its remarkable breadth and depth of knowledge and insight.

Utterly invaluable was the addition to our team of Professor Matthew Nicholls (St John's College, Oxford) as visual consultant. His expertise in the material culture of ancient Rome has allowed us to illustrate every page with the finest images of the subjects under discussion. Even more importantly than that, he granted us access to his very own state-of-the-art CGI reconstructions of imperial Rome, allowing us to bring to life architectural wonders such as the Roman Forum, the Palatine Hill and the Circus Maximus.

If sales figures are anything to go by, this book will provide many curious young people with their first introduction to ancient world and to Classics. I hope that plenty of them will go on to be readers of future editions of this newsletter.

**Dr Andrew Sillett**





# 14 YEARS AS APGRD DIRECTOR

I had the great privilege of acting as the APGRD Director from January 2010 to September 2024. I had already spent ten happy years working with the team, first in three rooms at the back of 68 St Giles' (roughly where CSAD is now located), then briefly at the Old Boys' School in George Street. And in 2007 we had returned to the magnificently reconstructed Ioannou Centre and to a newly refurbished APGRD Study Room situated in the Georgian part of the building. The Study Room, with its substantial library, is not only a place where visiting scholars from around the world come to conduct their research; it is also very much the APGRD's engine room, where scholarship meets practice, undergraduates first encounter classical reception studies, graduate students share work in progress, and, most importantly, research projects are hatched and developed.

opened numerous highly valued, international partnerships, which have established important networks for early career academics and seasoned scholars alike, and have resulted in significant publications: 1) We have enjoyed annual colloquia for over 15 years with Theatre Studies scholars at Paris-Nanterre; 2) Two projects with colleagues at the Institut für Theaterwissenschaft at Freie Universität Berlin have enabled us to make significant contributions to archive theory and theatre history and towards the creation of a shared Digital Ancient Theatre (DAT) platform; 3) With Magnet Theatre and Cape Town University, we have collaborated on the archiving of tragedy in Africa and the global south; 4) With colleagues at Grenoble-Alpes, we have been researching early modern translations of ancient drama; 5) We are also developing a 'Cold War Classics' project with scholars at the Czech Academy and Charles



*Filming with the Open University during the pandemic*

It is, perhaps, the changes within the discipline of Classics itself that have had the most impact on the APGRD during my time as Director. From its emergence in the mid-80s and well into the new millennium, Reception Studies resided on the periphery of Classics. But from 2010, the APGRD has had at least ten doctoral associates at any one time and numerous early career academics. Additionally, the prominence granted to both ancient and modern reception studies within the MSt/MPhil together with the consistently high uptake for the undergraduate Finals' Reception option have meant that APGRD team members now contribute significantly to teaching at undergraduate and graduate levels. And within the University context more broadly, it is widely acknowledged that the APGRD has been generating 'Impact' since its inception in 1996. But it was also, in many ways, a pioneer too in what is now known as Knowledge Exchange and Innovation through its longstanding commitment to the development of new work with the creative industries.

By 2010 the APGRD was becoming a major hub for Classical Reception Studies globally; and from the pandemic onwards, with its digital archive, live-streaming of lectures, seminars, conferences, workshops and masterclasses, it has routinely been invited to host discussions of topical concern both within and beyond the discipline. We have devel-

University. In addition to these international research initiatives, the APGRD's Leverhulme-funded 'Performing Epic' project (2011-2014) continues to attract funding to develop new work inspired by ancient epic traditions ('Penelope's Web', 'All-Night Epic', 'Songs of Solidarity').

It was with enormous pleasure that I was able to hand over the APGRD's newly updated database and website and its ongoing DAT@apgrd project to [Pantelis Michelakis](#).

For not only is my successor an outstanding scholar of Greek tragedy, Reception and Film Studies, he is also someone who remembers those early days in the three rooms at the back of 68 St Giles', and the tabula rasa that was then classical performance reception.

**Prof Fiona Macintosh**



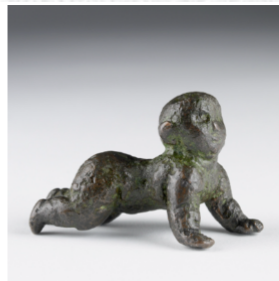


# OUTREACH NEWS

Dr Alison Pollard, Outreach Lead for the Faculty of Classics, writes:

## COMPETITIONS

We ran two brand new **outreach competitions** in 2024. The first was advertised in May and was organised in collaboration with our friends at the Ashmolean Museum. Four objects relating to the Greek and Roman worlds were chosen by curators and staff from the museum, and young people aged from 11 to 18 were challenged to submit a piece of **creative writing** inspired by one of them. We received over 300 entries and the winner of each age group (along with a parent/guardian) was invited to Oxford for a handling session with real ancient artefacts at the Ashmolean Museum. We'd like to thank Xa Sturgis, Claire Burton, Milena Melfi and Liam McNamara for choosing such inspiring objects and for helping us with the near-impossible feat of choosing the winners.



*The four objects chosen by curators at the Ashmolean Museum for our Creative Writing competition.*

Here are the winning entries:

### Age 11-13 category – Sophia

The child stared in guilty fascination as the funerary procession made its way down the street. As they passed, he caught a glimpse of two stunning portraits. It looked as though the faces of the two women inside had been flattened onto pieces of wood – incredible! His eyes lingered. His mother turned his head away, “Don’t stare. Respect the dead, my child,” she whispered. But he hadn’t seen a funeral before, and he was too interested to tear his eyes away, though he knew it wasn’t right.

Two beautiful women walked slowly behind the pall-bearers, wearing flowing white dresses. His mouth formed a tiny, perfect ‘o’ of amazement. He had never seen such pretty clothes – these women must have a lot of money! He tugged eagerly at his mother’s hand, eyes wide. “Mut! Look at those dresses! Would you like one of those?”. His mother was clearly embarrassed. Someone had died, and here he was, shouting to all and sundry about the attire of the chief mourners. She smiled, humouring him. “Yes, they are! You can’t talk about them though. You must stay quiet, for the dead women” (she made the sign against bad spirits) “may hear you, and wake from their sleep, because this is the day to remember them.”

The boy was scared into silence. He had seen these women at the market, but had only spoken to one of them. He had run up to her while his mother’s back was turned, just to say hello, because he had noticed her and her friend. They had very grand outfits, with a long, yellow dress he did not recognise worn over a tunic and, around their necks, surrounded by their carefully styled black curls, each wore the Roman bulla. This is what he could see on the portraits. They stood

out from the crowd, and he instantly knew that they were important. Instead of saying hello back, she had inched away, staring at his mucky clothes. She had told him to go away, and then, when he walked to his mother, had chastised her for letting her son run around like that, and so dirty, too! He pondered this. If she had been rude to him, why should they be paying their respects now?

Something dawned on him – if her family could afford to have her and her friend buried in this way, they must be very rich. Everyone he knew talked about the wealthy and important people from Rome, and how we should respect and look up to them. This must be part of that, he thought. From further away, the wailing and chanting broke his reverie. The procession was nearing the cemetery. This was their sign to leave – the burial was a private moment for the family to mourn their loss. The boy turned away, silenced by his mother’s words and the grim atmosphere that hung around them. Yet, inside, he was happy, for he knew that he had been walking with the dead...



## Age 14-16 category – Dani

For as long as I could remember, my kind had been vilified and feared by the humans who encroached upon our ancient domain. We were the last remnants of a once-proud lineage, forced to skulk in the shadows as they continued their relentless expansion, chipping away at the wild places we had called home since the beginning of time.

I remember the day when the muscular human hero, Hercules, first confronted me, his eyes filled with an ice cold determination that chilled me to the core. He saw me not as a sentient being, but as a monster to be conquered, a trophy to be won, a testament to his own strength and prowess. With each severed head, I felt a piece of my very essence slipping away, as if the essence of my being was being extinguished.

But I did not wish for conflict. I had no desire for the destruction that he so eagerly sought. All I wanted was to live in peace, to bask in the tranquility of my secluded lair, free from the prying eyes and grasping hands of those who would seek to subjugate and vilify both me and my kind.

As I watched him raise his club to deal the final blow, I felt a surge of desperation. This was not my war, not my fight. I had done nothing to provoke his aggression, yet I was expected to meekly submit to his whims. In that moment, I realized that my only crime was simply existing, a living testament to a world that the humans sought to tame and control.

With a most mighty roar, I lashed out, my serpentine heads striking with a speed that took even the human hero by surprise. I did not seek to kill, but to defend, to protect the fragile balance that had sustained my kind for generations. I was not like them but if they would not listen to reason, then perhaps they would heed the power of my fang and claws.

As I watched the hero retreat, battered and bruised, I knew that this was but a temporary respite. He and his savage kind would be back. Back to finish off what they had started. Back to finish me off. The humans would not rest until they had eradicated every last trace of my species, until the very memory of our existence had been erased from their collective consciousness. But I would not go gently into the night. I would fight, with every ounce of my strength and cunning, to preserve the legacy of my kind, and to reclaim the sanctity of the world that was rightfully ours. And in doing so, I would make them pay for the suffering they had inflicted upon us, one vengeful strike at a time. Hiding was no longer an option. Revenge was all that mattered at that point. I would be what they wanted me to be, what they saw me as.... A monster.

## Age 17-18 category – Megan

The artist cleared his throat loudly and attempted a bright smile. "I trust the piece is to your satisfaction, then?"

The old man made no reply, save to bring the portrait closer to his face. Uncomfortable seconds passed.

The artist's smile began to curdle, like milk left too long in the sun. "If you are not satisfied—"

"It will do," the old man interrupted, without looking up. His fingers traced the curves of the image. "It is a fitting immortalisation."

The artist relaxed. His smile this time was genuine. "I am glad."

"May I see it, Pater?" came a soft voice, and the old man's daughter stepped forward. She took the portrait and studied it with great intensity, then turned it over. On the other side, the rejected first attempt stared back at her, and the corner of her mouth turned down just slightly.

"I must confess to a preference for the first piece," she said, but even before she had finished, her father started shaking his head. "The first is more accurate—"

"Not now, Melite," her father said, gently, but leaving no room for argument.

She looked embarrassed. "Of course," she said. She handed the portrait back to the artist. "It is a wonderful piece of work, truly. I meant no insult."

And with that, they left, the father with one comforting arm around his daughter's waist.

When Melite returned to the artist's shop two days later, she was alone.

"I have come to settle the payment," she said to the artist, then hesitated and glanced over her shoulder, though the shop was empty. "And to make a small request."

The artist looked her over shrewdly. "You may ask."

She took a deep breath in. "Do not erase the first piece," she said, eyes wide and pleading.

The artist blinked. This had not been what he expected. "Your father preferred the second," he said. "And to speak truthfully, it is a more pleasing image. More flattering to your sister." He turned and reached to retrieve the portrait. "See here, I have shortened the nose, lowered the eyes."

"Yes," she said softly. "She looks perfect."

The artist spread his hands. "Well, then."

She looked up at him. "I do not want her to be immortalised as perfect," she said. There was an odd look in her eyes.

The artist frowned. "You disliked your sister?"

She looked at him coldly. "I loved my sister," she said. "That is why I wish for her to be immortalised as she was. Not as perfect."

"I cannot erase the second piece," the artist said. "

Then don't," she said simply. "Have both. Her as she was, and as we wish she could have been."

The artist looked at her closely. "I will not pretend to understand," he said. "But she was your sister."

She softened into a smile. "Thank you," she whispered, and handed over the payment. She traced her hand over her sister's imperfect face. "Goodbye," she whispered, and walked away





Dr Alison Pollard leads the winners' handling session at the Ashmolean Museum.

Thank you to the Department of Antiquities for all of their help with the competition.

The second competition was held in July and August. We challenged young people in teams of one to three to design a one-page **graphic novel** based on a Greek myth. Around 200 young people took part and two judges chose their favourites in each age category (a night-marishly difficult task). The top 30 entries have been turned into a hardback, graphic novel volume and each member of the winning teams have received a copy.

You can see all of the entries at <https://classoutreach.web.ox.ac.uk/graphic-novel-competition-2024>.

## CLASSICAL CONVERSATIONS

Our **Classical Conversations** programme resumed in November 2023. Schools get in touch throughout the year to request a virtual or in-person mini lecture, Q&A session or more general talk on a subject of their choice from an Oxford Classicist. These are a friendly and informal way for young people to explore a topic in detail with an expert to bounce ideas around with. Around 50 Classical Conversations took place during 2023-4 and the Outreach Team have delivered several on their own academic specialisms, including:

'Theory busting: the Greek sculptural revolution'  
'An idiot's guide to toppling a dictator'  
'Cancel culture? *Damnatio memoriae* in Roman art'  
'Who caused the fall of the Republic?'  
'The archaeology of Roman Britain'  
'Shakespeare, Brutus and Caesar'.

Our colleagues from the Faculty of Classics and the Oxford colleges have supported **Classical Conversations** by giving their own talks in a diverse range of subjects, including:

'Laughter in Greek Culture'  
'The Battle of Plataea: How to beat a Persian army'  
'Andromeda and Perseus' in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*  
'Plato on Love'  
'The World of the Hero'  
'Monsters in Homer and Virgil'

We'd like to extend our sincere thanks to the following for supporting the scheme: Laura Swift, Victoria Fendel, Gail Trimble, Llewelyn Morgan, Matthew Hosty, Alex Johnston, Roel Konijnendijk, Armand D'Angour, Luke Pitcher, Thomas Nelson, Emily Daly, Charles Crowther, Martina Astrid Rodda, Tim Smith, Emma Greensmith, Guy Westwood, Alexandra Hardwick, Adrian Kelly and Olivia Elder.

## ANCIENT SCHOOLROOM

### Dr Andrew Sillett writes:

The Romans warmed the cold winter months with the Saturnalia, a festival of anarchy and carnival. Last December, we at the Classics Faculty took a somewhat different approach. We opened our doors to the public and invited the pupils of primary and secondary schools in Oxfordshire to take a step back in time to an authentic recreation of an ancient Roman schoolroom.

Alongside and under the expert direction of our colleagues at the University of Reading, the faculty's graduate students donned the tunics of Roman *magistri* and *magistrae* and set about teaching their pupils the Roman way of mastering reading, writing and arithmetic. Gone were the desks, lesson plans and interactive whiteboards the children were accustomed to in their modern classrooms. Our Roman pupils were given wax tablets, styluses, ostraka, counting boards and tesserae, and were told to get on with learning. If they wanted help from their teachers they were told they had to go up and ask for it!

Some students immediately threw themselves into the challenge of figuring the exercises out for themselves, others availed themselves of the guidance on offer. By the end of their time in the classroom all the pupils had eventually found their feet. They could scratch poetry into wax, daub letters on shards of pottery, and even calculate compound interest with a handful of pebbles and a wooden board! All of our pupils had fun putting

themselves (quite literally) in the sandals of schoolchildren learning to read and write 2000 years ago in a Roman school.

We are very grateful to Professor Eleanor Dickey and her team at the University of Reading for bringing their school into our Outreach Room, and we thoroughly enjoyed meeting the students of St John Fisher, King Alfred's Academy, Cokethorpe, the choristers of St Giles' church, and all the members of the public who dropped in to enjoy the experience.



Local primary school children take part in the Reading Ancient Schoolroom at the Faculty of Classics in December 2023. © Matt Greetham, Undergraduate Admissions and Outreach

# OPEN DAYS

On Monday 18 March a team of faculty members and student ambassadors boarded an early morning bus to Cambridge, bound for the **Oxford & Cambridge Classics Open Day 2024**. Around 300 young people attended in person and 170 streamed the event, which comprised admissions talks, course summaries, taster lectures and Q&A sessions with academics and student ambassadors from both universities. Next year's event will be held in Oxford (on 24 March 2025) and details will be released at the beginning of the year.

In June and September we opened up the Ioannou Centre for the **University of Oxford Open Days**. Hundreds of young people and their parents and guardians came to chat with us about our degree courses, the admissions process and what it's like to learn an ancient language from scratch. Taster lectures on decorating Roman houses and Julius Caesar's take on Latin grammar were given by the Outreach Team, along with a comprehensive admissions talk by Dr Georgy Kantor. We were supported by our incredible team of student ambassadors (who we employ throughout the year) to share their individual experiences of student life Oxford, and to give out our exciting new range of Faculty of Classics merchandise!



*The student Q&A session at the Oxford and Cambridge Classics Open Day 2024*



The annual **UNIQ Ancient Greece, Rome and Classical Archaeology** residential programmes took place in June and July. Around 30 high-achieving young people from UK state schools spent three days in and around the Ioannou Centre learning all about the Classical World. The Outreach Team and the subject coordinators helped to bring together academics, museum curators, graduate assistants and student ambassadors to deliver lectures, tutorials, museum visits and object handling sessions – as well as all-important learning support – to the successful applicants.

**Michele Bianconi, head of the UNIQ Ancient Greece course writes:**

The UNIQ Ancient Greece summer school offered a range of lectures, classes and tutorials on a number of areas in the study of the ancient world. Students explored Greek literature and history, made squeezes out of real Greek inscriptions, learnt the basics of Ancient Greek language and philosophy, and handled fragments of Greek vases at the Beazley Archive. Making their own Linear B tablets from clay and having an introductory class of spoken Ancient Greek were particular highlights of the course. They wrote essays on love, monsters, the Spartans and Alexander the Great. It was a pleasure to see students so engaged with the topics.

Sophie Bocksberger, head of the UNIQ Rome course writes: During the Rome UNIQ summer school, students followed in the footsteps of a youth in Augustan Rome. They learnt about Roman religion with Dr Olivia Elder, the topography of Rome with Dr Ed Bispham, the *Aeneid* with Dr Gail Trimble, Cicero with Dr Andrew Sillett, and Lucretius with Dr Barnaby Taylor. They also had daily language classes with a wonderful team of graduate students as well as a tutorial and a close-reading session of Ovid *Amores* III 2. On one day they went to the Ashmolean Museum where Dr Penny Coombe and Dr Christina Kuhn told them about objects and epigraphy, and they even had a session at the Weston Library where they saw some extraordinary papyri, including a horoscope and a letter written by a boy to his father complaining about not being taken along on a trip to Alexandria and requesting a lyre! The students particularly enjoyed the wide range of activities they were offered and showed solid engagement and enthusiasm for the discipline through their active participation and the numerous questions they asked throughout the summer school.

**Georgy Kantor, co-head of the UNIQ Classical Archaeology course, writes:**

CAAH UNIQ summer school (coordinated by Dr Anna Blomley and Dr Georgy Kantor) was small but lively this year. The participants, as in the last few years, were treated to a diet of lectures and tutorials on the broad theme of 'Family and household in the ancient world'. They explored living in ancient Greek houses, (male) literary sources for ancient Athenian household such as Xenophon's *Oeconomicus* and Lysias' *On the Murder of Eratosthenes* – but also how to recover female voices from inscriptions and graffiti, learnt about the unexpected consequences of Augustan marriage laws and the impact of Christianity on the Roman family. In tutorial essays they dealt with houses at Pompeii and Olynthos, and with the ways in which social status and domestic religion are reflected in archaeology. A particular highlight of their time in Oxford was provided by the usual handling sessions: looking at ancient Greek vases at the Beazley Archive with Dr Thomas Mannack and at the coins celebrating the Roman imperial family at the Heberden Coin Room with Dr Jerome Mairat.

**OxLAT scheme coordinator Emma Searle writes:**

The OxLAT programme recently welcomed its latest cohort of eager pupils from local state schools who are all enthusiastic to learn Latin with us over the next two years. The students have made an excellent start and are particularly enjoying their preliminary work on Vergil's *Aeneid*. It is lovely to see them as fascinated by the text as I was at their age, and I can't wait to start tackling the brilliantly noisy and tumultuous section of book 1 where Aeolus unleashes the winds on Aeneas' ships with them in Latin. As in previous years the programme was significantly over-subscribed, and we received twice the number of applications as we had places available (meaning we regretfully had to disappoint many). There is clearly a keen interest in and demand for Latin in the Oxfordshire area and in the next few years the outreach team will be working to make the opportunities offered by OxLAT available to many more students by helping local schools offer Latin as part of their own curriculum.

The 2022–2024 cohort completed their GCSEs in June and most pupils achieved a Grade 7–9: an excellent achievement which reflects their dedication and hard work despite the difficulties of doing an additional GCSE on a reduced timetable! Several students, including Thomas Wheeler (Willink School) and Florence Reeves (Cherwell School), even achieved full marks in particular papers! We celebrated with a tea party hosted by Dr Gail Trimble and Dr Katherine Backler at Trinity College at the end of a 'taster day' which introduced them to other areas of Classical study (Greek epic, ancient history, and archaeology) after so long spent on Latin literature. As before, a good number of previous OxLAT participants are planning on applying for Classical subjects at university (including at Oxford) and several are even teaching themselves A-Level Latin in

preparation. Once again my colleagues and I have been thoroughly impressed by the enthusiasm and work ethic of the students on the programme and we wish them all the best for their future learning.



A group of students from the 2022–4 OxLAT cohort with OxLAT instructor Elena Vacca

## SCHOOL VISITS

Our primary mission as the Outreach Team is to bring the Classical World to young people – especially those who might not have the chance to learn about it at school. For those who do, we aim to show that there are lots of fascinating aspects of Greek and Roman life to explore beyond what's on the school syllabus. Although many of our outreach offerings are aimed at those who are starting to think about university applications, we hope to get children interested in Classics from the earliest stages of their school life. Since the new Outreach Team started work in October 2023 we've visited a number of schools around the UK, giving our own interactive lectures on different aspects of the ancient world and answering questions about studying Classics at Oxford.



Dr Alison Pollard gives a talk on *Damnatio Memoriae* in Roman Art to GCSE and A-Level students at Queen Mary's College in Basingstoke

We're fortunate that the Faculty of Classics puts serious resources into outreach: there are two of us working full time in the team and we're supported by our Schools Liaison

Officer for 2023–5, Georgy Kantor, our Faculty Chair, Llewelyn Morgan, and our indomitable Head of Administration and Finance, Hayley Merchant. We have a budget that allows us to put on free activities in the faculty and to travel around the UK talking to Classics clubs, Classics hubs and schools that are looking to introduce (or reintroduce) Classical subjects on to their curriculum.

Please sign up to our social media channels and get in touch if you'd like to take part in any of our existing activities, or know someone that might.

Website: [www.classics.ox.ac.uk/outreach](http://www.classics.ox.ac.uk/outreach)

Email: [outreach@classics.ox.ac.uk](mailto:outreach@classics.ox.ac.uk)

Instagram: [oxfordclassicsoutreach](https://www.instagram.com/oxfordclassicsoutreach)

Facebook: Faculty of Classics, University of Oxford

X: @oxfordclassics



# MEET THE NEW OUTREACH TEAM!

**Dr Alison Pollard** is a Classical Archaeologist who was born in Accrington in Lancashire. She has taught several graduate and undergraduate courses in Greek and Roman art and archaeology at the University of Oxford since 2012, specialising in Greek and Roman sculpture and the ways that Romans decorate their houses and villas, especially when scenes from mythology and epic turn up on the walls. Alison was also a curator at the Ashmolean Museum for many years, working with the Roman, Greek and Arundel Collections. More recently she has been identifying and cataloguing a range of archaeological material excavated from the Roman fort and neighbouring village at Binchester (ancient *Vinovia*) in County Durham.

As Outreach Officer, Alison is the first point of contact for outreach-related enquiries for the Faculty of Classics. She is one of the designated Safeguarding Leads for the faculty and also manages the OxLAT GCSE Latin teaching scheme.



**Dr Andrew Sillett** is a Romanist through and through. He has spent the last ten years at Oxford teaching and researching both Latin literature and Roman history. In this time, he has convinced his literature colleagues that he is an expert in history, and his history colleagues that he is an expert in literature. He hopes that they will continue not comparing notes. He is a product of our own Faculty of Classics Course 2 programme, arriving as an undergraduate from a comprehensive school with no provision for Classics teaching, let alone ancient languages. Latching onto a fellow *novus*, Andrew wrote his doctorate on Cicero and has been ploughing that furrow ever since.

Andrew is the Senior Researcher in Classics Education and one of the Designated Safeguarding Leads for the faculty. He works with Alison to direct the faculty's strategic direction for outreach and widening participation. He will also be carrying out research to help the faculty provide teaching that is suited to the needs and expectations of all our undergraduate students.

## **Dr Georgy Kantor is the Schools Liaison Officer.**

Georgy is the senior member of the Faculty working with the Outreach team and helps to plan and deliver the access and outreach initiatives for schools, colleges and prospective applicants. He is a Roman historian and teaches ancient history at St John's College. He is always keen to talk to applicants or teachers (or to give a talk on Roman history).

The Outreach Committee develops and makes decisions about the outreach programme. For 2023–4 its members are: Llewelyn Morgan, Hayley Merchant, Tristan Franklins, Georgy Kantor, Alison Pollard, Andrew Sillett, Olivia Elder, Dan Jolowicz, Elijah Munem and Megan Bowler.

We'd all like to say a big thank you to Edith Johnson, Arlene Holmes-Henderson and Gail Trimble who were the outgoing team for 2022–3 and who have left big shoes for us to fill!

