



UNIVERSITY OF
LEICESTER



The Mosaic: December 2025

In This Issue

Welcome to this edition of the **School of Heritage and Culture's** newsletter '*The Mosaic*'!

This electronic newsletter is published quarterly for staff, students, alumni and the public alike to engage with news, events and updates from across the School of Heritage and Culture community.

Read [previous editions of *The Mosaic* here!](#)

Navigate quickly to the different sections below by clicking on the icon in the bottom right.

To read through in full simply scroll down!

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Next issue: March 2026

Museum Studies at Leicester | 60 Years of Global Impact

1966 -2026: Museum Studies at Leicester turns 60

Since 1966, we've shaped museum practice and research worldwide. Join us as we celebrate six decades of innovation and community.

[Visit our website for updates and activities in 2026!](#)



Museum Studies at Leicester

60 Years of Global Impact

Research News

Research, Enterprise and Impact Committee Dates

- *February 11th, 2026*
 - *April 8th, 2026*
 - *June 10th, 2026*
-

[Unearthing Lydney Park's Roman treasures](#)

Article by Dr Philippa Walton, Lecturer in Roman Archaeology

Overlooking the Severn Estuary, Lydney Park has long been recognised as one of Britain's most intriguing archaeological landscapes. Once home to an Iron Age hill fort, a Roman mining operation, and later an extensive Roman temple complex, the site has fascinated archaeologists for over two centuries. Early excavations began in 1805 under Charles Bathurst, followed by Mortimer and Tessa Wheeler's landmark investigations in 1928–29, and a re-dating of the site by John Casey and Birgitta Hoffmann in 1980–81.

Today, the remarkable finds from Lydney Park are preserved in a small, privately run museum on the Lydney Estate, curated by volunteers led by Chris Sullivan. Despite its significance, the collection has never been fully catalogued, and many artefacts remain only partially documented.

This autumn, a three-week project funded by the Roman Research Trust and the Roman Society, and supported by Viscount Bledisloe, set out to change this. Small finds specialists including SHAC's Dr Philippa Walton, University of Reading's Dr Carolina Rangel de Lima and Prof. Hella Eckardt, worked alongside numismatists Sam Moorhead and Graham Barker to catalogue more than 3,000 coins and small finds, fully recording 570 of them in a new digital database.

This assessment marks a vital step toward unlocking the research potential of the Lydney collection and preserving it for future generations.

This work has already increased our understanding of the site: while confirming the temple's late Roman focus, the assemblage also includes many 2nd–3rd century finds which were overlooked in previous investigations. Detailed study of the huge number of bracelets, finger rings, spoons and military equipment promises to shed light on the identities of the worshippers, many of whom appear to have strong links with the Roman army, and their ritual practice.

This assessment marks a vital step toward unlocking the research potential of the Lydney collection and preserving it for future generations. A grant proposal, led by Dr Philippa Walton and Prof Hella Eckardt, will now build on these foundations to explore the rich material culture of Romano-British temple sites.



1 - A copper-alloy candlestick in the form of a cockerel, an attribute of the god Mercury



2 - An applique of a dog with a human face, perhaps part of a votive plaque from the temple.

[Museums and Mental Health: Mapping Connections Across Europe](#)

Article by Dr Nuala Morse, Associate Professor in Museum Studies

On **1 December 2025**, the online symposium *Museums and Mental Health: Mapping Connections in Europe* brought together researchers, practitioners, and policymakers to explore how museums can play a transformative role in mental wellbeing. Organized by **Dr Nuala Morse (University of Leicester)** and **Dr Margareta von Oswald (Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin)**, the event responded to a pressing global challenge: by 2030, mental health conditions are projected to be the leading cause of morbidity worldwide.

Three thematic sessions structured the day. The first examined **policy landscapes**, with WHO **Regional Office for Europe**'s Nils Fietje calling for cross-sectoral strategies and Dr Katerina Mavromichali presenting evidence from Greece's Art-on-Prescription program,. Speakers examined frameworks that enable museums to work alongside health services and community organizations.

the event responded to a pressing global challenge: by 2030, mental health conditions are projected to be the leading cause of morbidity worldwide



The second session focused on **inclusion and stigma**, featuring innovative practices such as Museum Dr. Guislain's (Belgium) *PsychoJazz Festival* and French initiatives intertwining art and care from 3bisf (Marseille). Speakers explored how museums can challenge exclusion and create spaces of solidarity.

Finally, the third session addressed **care work and ethics**, with Wellcome Collection advocating for dignity and safety as foundations for mental health practice, and presentations reflecting on the ethical dimensions of historical collections of mental health.

The symposium featured case studies from **Germany, the UK, Spain, Belgium, the Netherlands, Greece, and France**, with representatives from leading institutions **Mucem**

(France), l'ETNO (Spain) and L'Institut du Monde Arabe (France) also contributing to the dialogue.

This event underscored the need for shared knowledge and collaboration to ensure museums can continue to support mental health.

This event forms part of Dr Morse's ongoing research in the role of museums in promoting public health. It was supported the Maison des Sciences Humaines et Sociales Paris Nord. A report will be made available in the new year.

[Celebrating the Publication of an Edited Volume, Dedicated to Professor Simon James](#) **Article by Dr Anna Walas, Honorary Visiting Fellow**

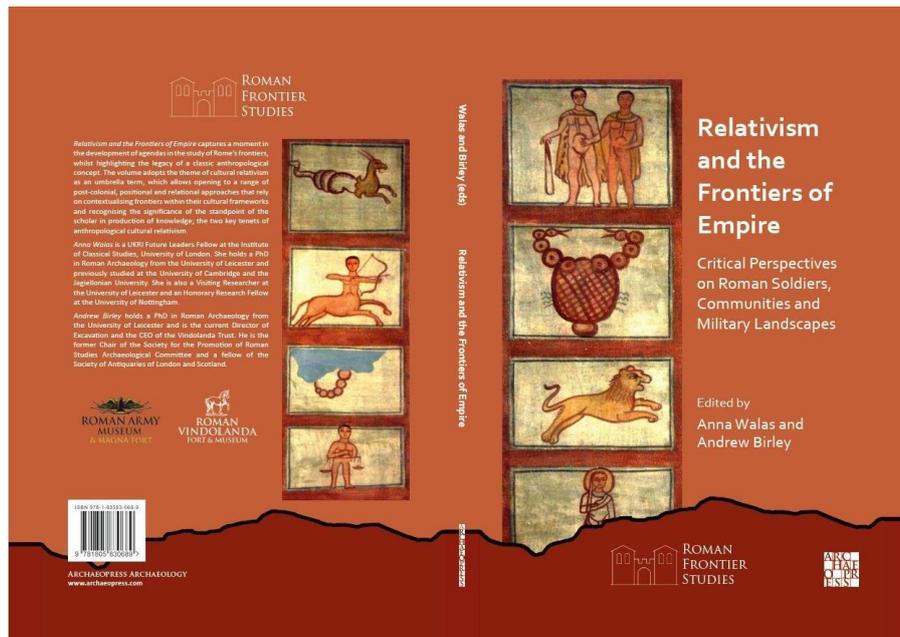
On **31 October**, colleagues, alumni, and friends of the School gathered to celebrate the publication of *Relativism and the Frontiers of Empire*, an edited volume to celebrate Simon's retirement. The event was a warm and collegial celebration of Simon's scholarship and the academic community he has shaped over more than twenty years.

The volume is edited by **Dr Anna Walas** and **Dr Andrew Birley**, both former PhD students of Simon. The volume brings together twenty-one international scholars, with roughly third of them being current or former Leicester staff or postgraduate researchers. Thanks to the **generosity of the Vindolanda Trust**, the volume has been published in **open access**, making its scholarship freely available to readers worldwide

Simon James joined the **School of Archaeology and Ancient History** in **2000**, became **Senior Lecturer in 2002**, **Reader in 2005**, and **Professor of Archaeology in 2012**. Over two decades, he played a transformative role in the School.. Simon also made outstanding contributions to the University's **research culture** through his leadership in military-heritage collaborations, including Operation Nightingale, Wings to the Past, the Ermine Street Guard, and the Ancient Akrotiri Project.

The 31 October launch, accompanied by wine, soft drinks, and informal remarks, offered colleagues the chance to share memories of fieldwork, supervision, teaching, and Simon's characteristic blend of humour, rigour, and generosity. The book stands as both a scholarly contribution and a heartfelt tribute to Simon's lasting influence on Roman frontier studies and on generations of researchers who have passed through Leicester under his mentorship.

Relativism and the Frontiers of Empire is [Available to purchase or download as PDF \(Open Access\) Via Archaeopress](#)



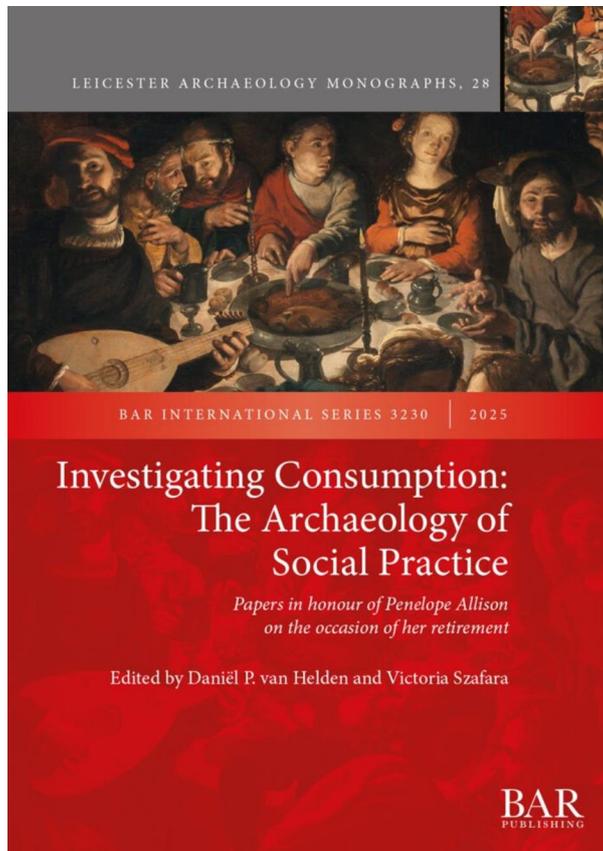
**Celebrating Prof Pim Allison with a new Leicester Archaeology Monograph
Article by Victoria Szafara (PhD student) and Daan van Helden (Honorary Visiting Fellow)**

It was a more innocent time when Victoria approached Daan in 2019. She had just started her PhD, he was about to submit his thesis, they were both working on the Arch-I-Scan Project, and Corona was still only a beer. She suggested the idea of putting together a Festschrift for Pim to celebrate her upcoming retirement and Daan agreed it would be a fun task to work on over the next two years or so. So we optimistically sent out emails to potential contributors and the process began...

Fast forward six years: the Arch-I-Scan Project has finished, the world has already forgotten the lessons of the pandemic, and Pim, who has been retired for two years, is now in Australia operating a cattle and avocado farm with her partner. But we finally managed to get this albatross delivered. We even organised a secret (mostly) online meeting in late September where we presented the Festschrift to Pim! In classic fashion the hybrid book launch party was beset by technical difficulties, ranging from sound not working for some people to presentations not running from certain computers (you'd think that after COVID, we'd mastered online meetings!), and even managing to lose Pim for the first fifteen minutes of the meeting! All in all though, it was agreed that it was a great meeting and 'very Pim'.



3 - Victoria and Ruth celebrate the launch of *Investigating Consumption* in September



If you are interested in archaeological approaches to the study of consumption, there is now a brand-new book on the subject available from BAR in the Leicester Archaeology Monographs series: *Investigating Consumption: The Archaeology of Social Practice. Papers in Honour of Penelope Allison on the Occasion of her Retirement* ([purchase on BAR Website](#)). It is dedicated to Pim, who worked hard to promote this area of research and inspired many along the way, and contains papers by past students and collaborators, including many familiar faces to the School and ULAS.

[Tobacco, Health and History Project](#)

Article by Dr Sarah Inskip, UKRI Future Leaders Fellow

The Tobacco, Health and History Project has come to its official end in November. We celebrated all the achievements of the project with an end of project seminar which drew in the major collaborators from across the University and external partners. This included dentists from the University of Newcastle, Historic England, York Archaeological service, The Museum of London, MOLA, and folk from the Universities of Cambridge, Zurich, Basel, Keele, York, UCLAN and London. Each project member presented their own research showcasing the impact the project has had on Bioarchaeology, History, Dentistry, Palaeopathology and Metabolomics. We discussed important issues going forward and how as a field we can further undertake research with greater modern impact. It was a real highlight to showcase everything that we have done so far and all the work by a group of extremely talented early career researchers.

This was then topped off with a shortlisting for the THEaward Research Project of the Year (Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences) which were to be given out on the 13th of November at Edinburgh International conference centre. Anna and Sarah went up and were delighted to receive the award in a category of six projects, all of which were worthy winners. The judges comments included:

‘There were many things to admire about this project. Most commendable was its innovative interdisciplinary approach. It provided new knowledge about historical tobacco use and an appreciation of its implications for modern as well as past health issues.’

‘Imaginatively conceived, it is an excellent example of how diverse techniques from distant fields reinforce each other. Both past and present are illuminated.’



4 - Dr Sarah Inskip with the Times Higher Education award



5 - L-R: Ed Byrne (British Comedian), Dr Sarah Inskip, Dr Anna Davies-Barrett, and Liz Jolly (Chief Librarian of the British Library).

Sarah also gave multiple talks this term. One to the CBA (East Midlands) held at Leicester. This focused on the work of the THH, especially Honorary Fellow Taylor Peacock, on the analysis of the post-medieval remains excavated from Leicester Cathedral by ULAS. After this, Sarah headed off to Reading to give an evening seminar talk on the overall results of the THH. Finally, Sarah and Anna presented on the Oro-dental index developed by the THH as part of CiFAs Osteobites evening talks. This covered the development of the method as well as the benefits and future potential of the method when applied more widely in bioarchaeology.

While we await a number of publications from the project in 2026, Sarah, in collaboration with Jason Hughes in Sociology is in the final stages of the preparation of her new edited volume *Tobacco through time: Interdisciplinary Perspectives* with Bloomsbury publishing. Even though the project is officially over, there is so much more to come.

BILNAS

Article by Anne Marie Williamson, BILNAS Archivist

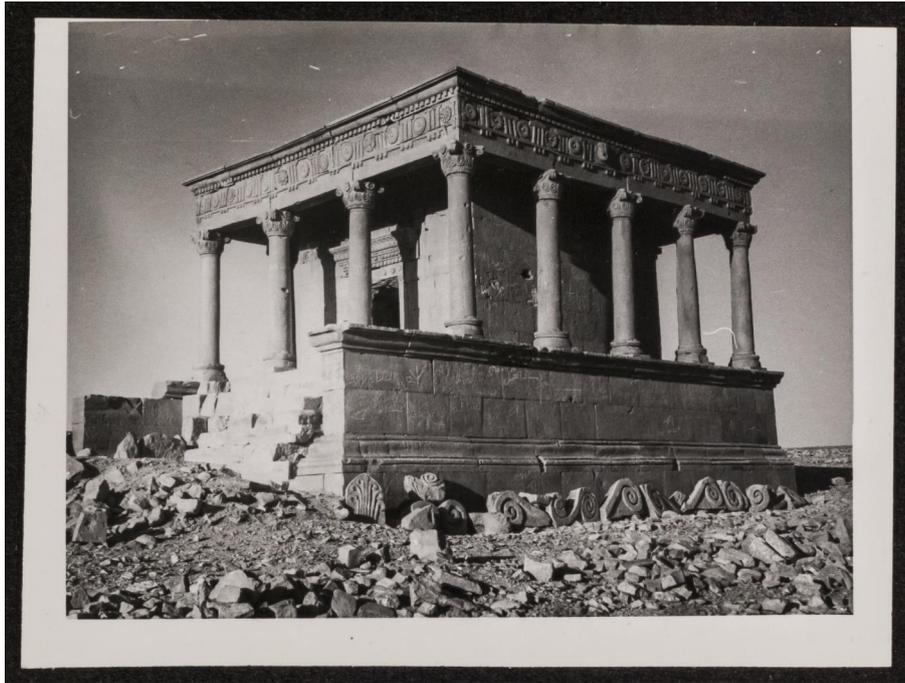
We thrilled to announce the latest collection from the British Institute for Libyan and Northern African Studies (BILNAS) Archive has been fully digitised and is now available to all (open access) via the Archaeology Data Service.

This collection contains digitised correspondence, field notes, drawings, publication drafts, reports, maps, plans and photographic material relating to David J. Smith and Olwen Brogan's work at the Romano-Libyan settlement of Ghirza, 1953-1987.

The data provides extensive insight into an extensive survey and selective excavations of Ghirza, located 250 km (150 miles) south-east of Tripoli, Libya, and approximately 130 km (80 miles) inland from the Gulf of Sidra. These collections also include data relevant to other sites and locations in pre-desert Tripolitania gathered during the same expeditions.

Check out the gallery below for a sneak peek into this fascinating collection (click for captions in grey box, top left of each image):-

Access and explore the full digitised collection [here](#).



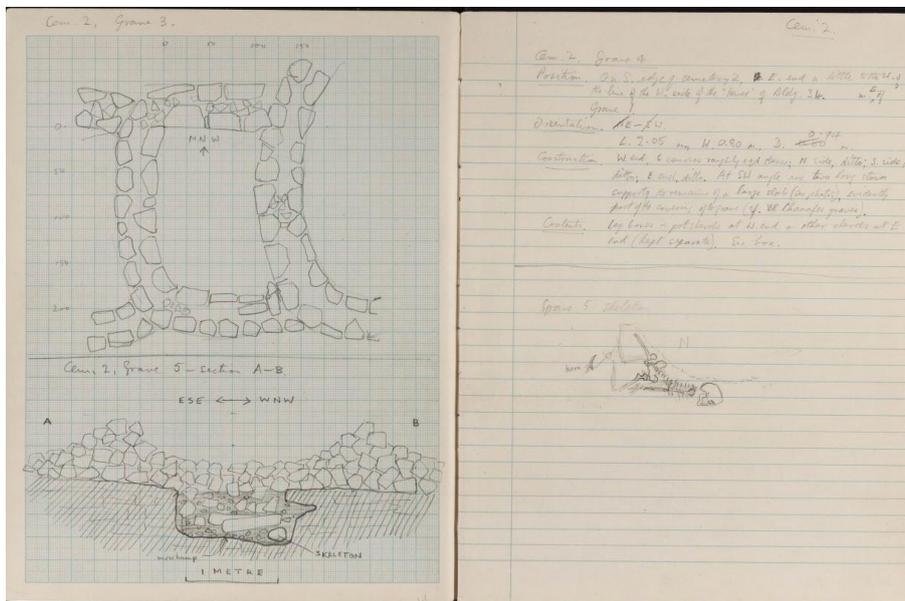
6 - D1/11/1/3/1/6: Tomb North A: General view of tomb, Ghirza (1950-1970)



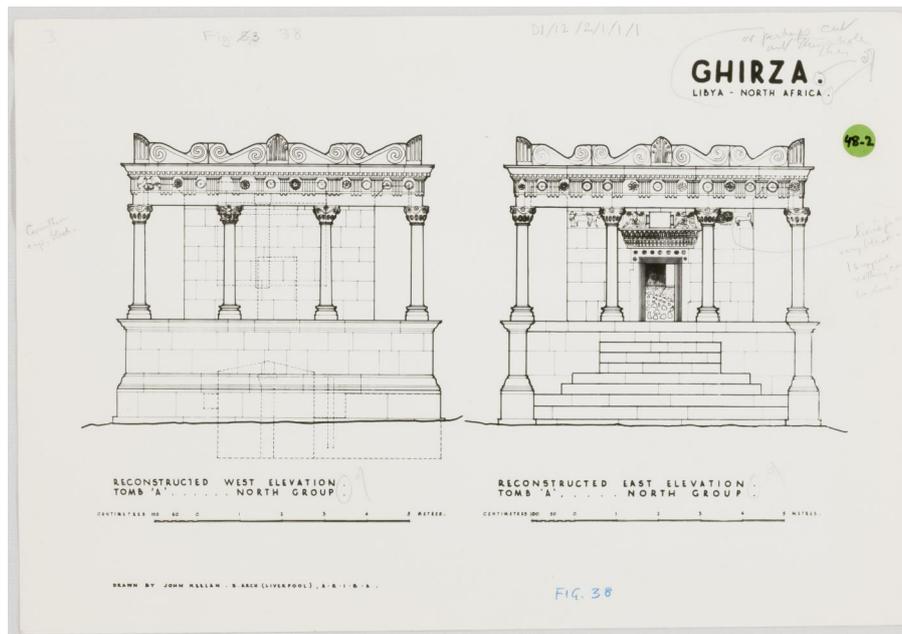
7 - D41/2/7/1/1/9: Building 1: Entrance, Ghirza (1971)



8 - D41/2/7/10/10: Catchment wall in the Wadi Ghirza, Ghirza (1954)



9 - D1/1/2/1/1/1: Notebook; plans and notes on Ghirza and expedition diary, Ghirza (01 January 1953)



10 - D1/12/2/1/1/1: Tomb North A: East and West Elevations, Ghirza (1950-1970)

Kom al-Ahmer and Kom Wasit in Context: Exploring the Dynamics of Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt Conference

Article by Dr Mohamed Kenawi, Research Associate (EAMENA Project)

From the 12th to the 14th of November, the University of Leicester was delighted to host the International Conference: *Kom al-Ahmer and Kom Wasit in Context: Exploring the Dynamics of Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt*. The three-day event was held in collaboration with the University of Padua, Italy, bringing together a diverse group of specialists, including archaeologists, historians, ceramicists, Coptic period experts, Egyptologists, archivists and scholars of North African archaeology. Participants engaged in lively dialogue and exchanged the latest information on the heritage and archaeology of Alexandria and its hinterland. This successful conference was supported by the EAMENA Project and Aps Marea.

Organised by Mohamed Kenawi (EAMENA) and Anne Marie Williamson (BILNAS)



11 - Man speaking at a lecturn in front of a projected presentation





[EAMENA Fieldwork](#)

Article by Dr Mohamed Kenawi, Research Associate (EAMENA Project)

This year, the team continued to investigate the Late Dynastic contexts of Kom Wasit, gaining insight into the many activities that took place within its urban environment. They uncovered evidence of structures associated with the production of statues and amulets as well as fish processing, likely related to temple goods. In one room alone, 9,700 fish bones and spines were found. This sector is not yet fully excavated, and we plan to continue next year.

At the same site, investigations focused on the Roman cemetery, resulting in the excavation of 15 burials. Analyses were carried out in the laboratories in Cairo on the human remains.

Dr Mohamed Kenawi who works on the EAMENA (Endangered Archaeology in the Middle East and North Africa) Project, has completed the 16th season of fieldwork at Kom al-Ahmer and Kom Wasit (Egypt) that took place in September and October. The project is co-directed with Dr Cristina Mondin and Dr Michele Asolati of the University of Padua, Italy.

Captions for the slideshow of images are in the grey box, top left corner of each image.



12 - The team in September 2025



13 - Golden earring: hoop earring with globular inverted pyramid pendants, perhaps a bunch of grapes, 2-3 centuries AD.



14 - Limestone plaque figurine of a nude female figure with her left arm crossing her torso, 5th century BC.



15 - Egyptian spindle-shaped amphorae (Roman period), recovered from one burial



16 - Egyptian spindle-shaped amphorae in situ covering a sarcophagus



17 - Team member, Agnese di Stefano cleaning the amphorae in situ



18 - Team member, Viviana Civitella working on the site.



19 - Team members sieving the soil



20 - Large faience partial amulet: wadjet eye, 5th century BC

RCMG Awarded Major Funding

Article by Dr Sarah Plumb

£1.49million funding to address inequalities in who attends museums – and who benefits from them

The [Research Centre for Museums and Galleries](#) (RCMG) has been awarded a major research grant by AHRC to undertake a 4-year research partnership with Birmingham Museums Trust, University of Birmingham, UCL and a range of partner organisations, exploring how museums can reduce inequalities in who benefits from museums and deepen their contribution to society.

Nationally and internationally, museum visiting continues to reflect wider social inequalities. Despite decades of effort, most people who participate in state-sponsored cultural forms, including museums, continue to be more highly educated and more economically

advantaged. Population-level studies in the epidemiology of culture show that simply visiting a museum may have positive health benefits, which emphasises what is at stake in this unfair distribution of cultural resources.

the project will explore the practical implications of the fact that the most significant predictor of museum visiting is level of educational attainment

The funding will support a major survey of what is already known about ‘what works’ to open museums up to audiences that are more representative of the UK population as a whole. It will enable the research team to test out new, research-led approaches to implementing and evaluating innovations in public programming in situ at Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery. In particular the project will explore the practical implications of the fact that the most significant predictor of museum visiting is level of educational attainment - visiting increases at each educational level, with the most significant jump at degree level.

Building on [earlier AHRC-funded research](#) the project will combine expertise from Museum Studies, Sociology, Implementation Science and leading-edge museum practice to build the key output from the project - a new Research and Implementation Framework which will support museums to work in ways that close the attendance and benefit gap and further the role of culture in nurturing reflective individuals and engaged citizens.



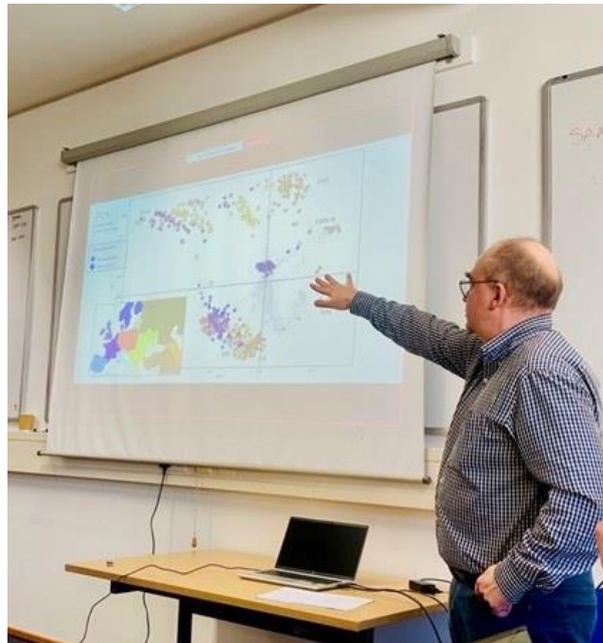
21 - Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery Opening Event, 30th April 2022. Image credit © Birmingham Museums Trust

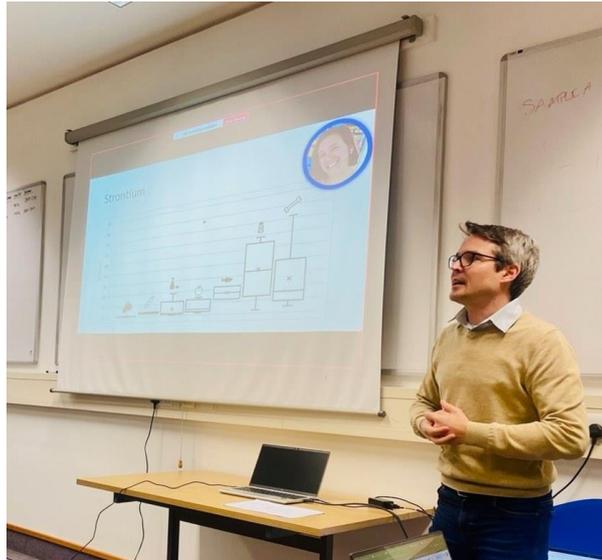
Body-Politics | Project Update

Article by Dr Veronica Tamorri and Dr Alexander Wilson

It's been a busy few months for the Body-Politics project, with plenty of ongoing research, as well as two new faces. In Leicester, Dr. Brian Costello – a former Teaching Fellow and member of the History of Tobacco project – has joined us as a burials expert to work on the final analysis of our large, complex archaeological dataset. And at the National Museum of Denmark, we've welcomed our MA student assistant Tilde Yding Abrahamsen, who is working for the project on social media and publication preparation.

We're approaching the final stages of the project, so it's all hands on deck to put together our final results and publication. In October, PI Prof. Marianne Hem Eriksen gave a guest lecture at the University of Oslo, summarising our intriguing findings. And in December, we hosted a fantastic biomolecular workshop, organised by Dr. Veronica Tamarri, to bring together our expert collaborators (Toomas Kivisild, Sam Leggett, and Christophe Snoeck) to discuss their fascinating results from our dataset. Our archaeological material is idiosyncratic and inspiring to work with – watch this space for the next publications we have lined up! See the below images of The Body-Politics Biomolecular workshop.





Speaking of publications, Marianne, PGR researchers Brad Marshall and Elisabeth Aslesen, and friend of the project Dr. Christina Tsoraki published their paper on [Viking bodymaking](#) with *Antiquity*, discussing how microwear and RTI analysis can help rethink the lives of miniature Viking Age figurines. The [data](#) for this article has been published Open Access in the *Journal of Open Archaeology Data* – why not take a look? Marianne and Brian have also published a chapter on the [intoxicated bodies](#) of the Viking Age, which discusses the use of psychoactives in Viking ritual practice. Finally, PGR researchers Brad and Emma Thompson will be guests on the *Nordic Mythology Podcast* discussing so-called 'deviant burials' to be released in a few weeks, you will be able to [listen to it here after it is released!](#)

Publication News

Prof. Graham Shipley

Ancient Greek observations of T Coronae Borealis? Data and methodologies

Published in *Journal for the History of Astronomy*. [Read via Open Access here](#)

Dr Laura Basell

Article summaries provided by Dr Laura Basell

- **Resolving the Late Pleistocene (MIS3-1) Sedimentary Sequence from Doniford, UK: Implications for British-Irish Ice Sheet extent, megafaunal history and hominin occupation**, *Quaternary Science Reviews* 109509. Basell, L.S., Toms, P.S., Norman, C., Hosfield, R., Tanner, P., Brown, A.G. (2025).

This paper provides the first dates and detailed multiproxy geoarchaeological study of a striking gravel exposure on Doniford beach in Somerset UK. The location is interesting because it has yielded evidence of extinct fauna like woolly mammoth as well as evidence of early human activities. The results refine our understanding of the extent of the last ice sheet and the relationship between shifting environments, vegetation, fauna, and human presence over time. A new bout coupé hand axe extends the regional record of Neanderthal presence, and supports cold climate adaptation. On a personal note, this has been one of the most challenging pieces of research of my career. The graphics alone took an exceptional amount of work and Figure 5 nearly finished me. However it was (I think) worth it in the end!

[Read the article online here](#)

- **Assessing the impact of Nile water level fluctuations on the structural stability of the Philae Temples in Aswan, Egypt.** *Journal of Archaeological Science* 106278. Fahmy, A., Domínguez-Bella, S., Molina-Piernas, E. and Basell, L.S. (2025)

Some SHAC staff may remember Abdelrhamen Fahmy (the lead author) who was a recent visiting researcher with us in SAAH and the Institute of Environmental Futures. This paper derives in part from that visit. It focusses on the ancient temples of Philae in Aswan, Egypt. Fluctuating water levels linked to the Aswan Dam, are accelerating the decay of the temples' stonework. Using satellite data, historical research, fieldwork, and advanced materials analysis, this study identifies the most vulnerable areas and shows how human-driven changes to the Nile's hydrology are reshaping the site's future. The findings underscore the urgent need for long-term, climate-aware conservation strategies both at Philae and at other World Heritage sites facing similar environmental pressures.

[Read the article online here](#)

- **A multi-scalar palynological investigation of plant and land-use at a Mesolithic occupation site,** *Vegetation History and Archaeobotany*. Perkins, J., Plunkett, G., Basell, L.S. and Stuijts, (2025).

This paper derives from the AHRC funded doctoral research of one of Laura Basell's former students, Dr James Perkins. It is important because it uses multiple sources of evidence to explore the impact people had on altering their surrounding environment (e.g. clearing woodland) during prehistory. There is evidence from elsewhere in Europe to suggest Mesolithic hunter gatherers were actively shaping woodland environments. Our findings raise questions about the scale of woodland disturbances needed to be perceptible in pollen records and highlight the limitations of pollen records from woodland settings to explore Mesolithic vegetation impacts.

[Read as online PDF here](#)

School Education Committee Dates

- *January 21st, 2026*
 - *March 4th, 2026*
 - *April 15th, 2026*
 - *May 20th, 2026*
-

Our Campus-based learners

Meet your Campus Based Rep (AAH)!

Isabel Higham ih152@student.le.ac.uk

School Rep - Archaeology and Ancient History UG

Hey to everyone ! I started my journey here at UoL as an UG doing Archaeology and Ancient History. I am your current School Rep and also a member of two societies debate club and AHAS. This term i have been working on getting more careers advice for students and also looking at fieldwork.



22 - Isabel Higham

→Your News Here ←

Are you a campus-based learner eager to share your journey?

We want to hear from you! Submit your experiences, photos and events to celebrate your achievements in upcoming editions of *The Mosaic*. Your experience can help inspire others and build connections with fellow distance learners and more!

How can you get involved? Simple! Reach out to Isabel Higham (email ih152@student.le.ac.uk) , your dedicated campus-based learning representative.

Student-Staff Committee (AAH CB UG) Dates

- *January 28th, 2026*
 - *March 25th, 2026*
 - *May 6th, 2026*
-

Student-Staff Committee (MS CB PGT) Dates

- *January 22nd, 2026*
 - *February 19th, 2026*
 - *March 19th, 2026*
 - *May 7th, 2026*
-

Our Distance Learners

Update on Your Distance Learning Rep

Thank you to **Natalie Hayward** for all of her work as our Distance Learning Representative, and special thanks for the huge contributions Natalie has made to *The Mosaic* having been involved with the newsletter since it launched in April 2024!

Natalie will be stepping down and a new DL representative is due to be appointed for semester 2.

→Your News Here ←

Are you a distance learner eager to share your journey?

We want to hear from you! Submit your experiences, photos and events to celebrate your achievements in upcoming editions of *The Mosaic*. Your experience can help inspire others and build connections with fellow distance learners and more!

How can you get involved? Simple! Reach out to us via shac@le.ac.uk

Postgraduate Student News

Viva Successes ✨

Giulia Bison

Congratulations to Giulia Bison for successfully defending their thesis *Metals, Craft Products and Urban Economy in Late Antique Rome*. This is a huge achievement, well done from everyone in the School!

Weilun Sun

Congratulations to Weilin Sun for successfully defending their thesis *Production of Museum Space in Contemporary China: Investigating Local Museum-Making through the Case of Suzhou*. External examiner, Prof. Jonathan Hale commented that the thesis 'constitutes an ambitious application of philosophical principles to a well-chosen and in-depth case study [Chinese American architect I. M. Pei's design for the Suzhou Museum] based on a significant amount of archival research, participant observation and semi-structured interviews with museum staff'. Well done Weilin!

Hannah Curry

Congratulations to Hannah Curry, for a brilliant defence of her MPhil thesis *Hollow and mound: landscapes of tin extraction in Bronze Age Cornwall*. Examiners expressed they were in awe (!) of Hannah's creative take on Bronze Age archaeology. She is currently working on a PhD in the School. Well done and good luck with your PhD!

Michael Curtis

Congratulations to Michael Curtis for successfully defending their thesis entitled *The Imperial ports and harbours of Crete: characterising a provincial maritime and coastal landscape (late 1st century BCE – 3rd century CE)*. Well done from everyone in the School! Michael continues his association with the School as an Honorary Visiting Fellow.

Emma Stockley

Congratulations to Emma Stockley for successfully defending their thesis, with no corrections, '*Predicting and Protecting Lithic Landscapes*'. This is a huge achievement, well done from everyone in the School!

[Bringing Neuroinclusivity and Accessibility to VR, AR, and Mixed Reality Digital Culture Experiences](#)

Article by Shelby Navone

The final phase of my PhD fieldwork titled '[Creating accessible digital culture experiences and research practises with and for autistic adults](#)' is now complete! Over 50 participants joined me to test Virtual Reality (VR), Augmented Reality (AR) and mixed reality (MR) experiences in three case studies over the last year. The first case study tested VR technology here in Leicester and at Pinc College for neurodivergent young adults in Leeds. Users tried out [MBDs](#) virtual gallery app [Paint to Pixel](#) where they explored a virtual museum gallery in a fully immersive environment. The second study tested an AR experience called '[Visions of Nature](#)' at the Natural History Museum in London. The Microsoft Hololens gave participants a mixed reality experiences where virtual animals were projected into real life museum installations. The third and final case study tested a mixed reality experience at the [Jewry Wall Museum](#) here in Leicester. Participants were immersed in a 360 film at the start of their visit, then tried out a variety of interactive displays and digital games while engaged with virtual avatars projected throughout the museum exhibition.

To increase predictability for participants ahead of their experience, I created accessible preparation materials, including multiple [video guides](#), [Easy Read guides](#), and [visual stories](#). These materials were designed iteratively and in collaboration with a focus group of autistic adults. Feedback was collected through a variety of accessibly designed means and all participants were paid for their time and valuable input.

To increase predictability for participants ahead of their experience, I created accessible preparation materials, including multiple video guides, Easy Read guides, and visual stories.

I've begun preliminary data analysis and I'm already seeing very clearly the voices of my participants uniting on various areas of need, improvement, and enjoyment for neuroinclusivity in digital culture design and programming. I'm looking forward to what I uncover as I continue to work through coding and analysing feedback during my upcoming writeup year.













[Article Publication: Mobility of populations in the transition from Muslim world to Portuguese Kingdom in the Algarve, South Portugal, 11th-13th centuries](#)

Article by Judith López

This recently published article presents part of the research Alvaro Ortega and Judith López developed during their master's studies, as well as work that followed the submission of their theses, within the FCT/MCTES project TRANSCULTURAL.

The study investigates patterns of human mobility during the transition from Muslim to Christian rule in the Algarve, southern Portugal (11th–13th centuries). This was a period of significant social and cultural change, as new populations settled in the region following the Christian conquest. To explore how these transformations shaped local communities, multi-isotope and ancient DNA analyses were applied to skeletal remains from Muslim and

Christian burial sites in Loulé and Cacela-a-Velha, as well as to contemporary animal and plant samples.

By combining strontium, oxygen, and sulphur isotope data with environmental baselines and isoscape models generated through machine learning, it was possible to identify individuals who were local to the Algarve and those who had migrated from other regions. The results revealed contrasting mobility patterns: most individuals under Muslim rule were local, while nearly half of the population under Christian rule came from elsewhere, including areas along the Guadiana River and northeastern Iberia.

This article illustrates how isotopic and genetic methods can help us reconstruct past population dynamics.

You can [read the full article here](#).

[Beyond Collapsology: from Contemporary Negativity to Affirmation](#)

Article by Brodhie Molloy

Over summer, Brodhie Molloy (Archaeology) attended the Rosi Braidotti Summer School "Beyond Collapsology: from Contemporary Negativity to Affirmation". The week-long intensive school focused on the theme of affirmative ethics and creative alternatives to the issues that shape our contemporary worlds. It aimed to deepen engagement with Braidotti's theory of Posthuman Feminism and hear about how other scholars implement theoretical ethics into their practical projects. This was a great opportunity for Brodhie to have conversations with the theorist whose much of her PhD work focuses on, as well as forge interdisciplinary connections in the field of Posthuman Feminism. She really recommends anyone who has the opportunity to attend future renditions to do so!



23 - Group picture with Braidotti



24 - Poster (with the group's feet!)

Talking Archaeologies Pilot Project

Project delivered by Brodhie Molloy (Archaeology), Joel Santos (Archaeology) and Chris Jeavons (Museum Studies).

Article by Brodhie Molloy

The Talking Archaeologies project, conceived by three SHAC students, aims to utilise archaeology as a vehicle for promoting and fostering the well-being of NHS Talking Therapy practitioners. A programme of three workshops, the team aim to utilise engagement with archaeological objects from the Northamptonshire Archaeological Resource Centre (ARC) to develop tools and practice for coping with high-stress environment jobs. The first workshop, led by Joel, explored practices of emotional literacy and expression. The second workshop, led by Chris, developed a practice of mindfulness and understanding of emotional regulation systems. By the time of publishing, the third workshop related to embodied engagement with archaeology and grounding practices, led by Brodhie, will have been delivered concluding the pilot series. It is hoped the team will secure funding to continue with multiple future iterations of the project to deliver to the entirety of the Talking Therapies Northamptonshire NHS Trust.



25 - L-R: Chris Jeavons, Joel Santos, Brodhie Molloy



26 - L-R: Joel Santos, Chris Jeavons



27 - Brodhi Molloy presenting

Excavating a Hermitage in Serra da Ossa Portugal
Article by Joel Rodrigues Dos Santos

In October, for two weeks, Joel and three other Portuguese archaeologists participated in an excavation in Serra da Ossa, Portugal, where a community of hermits lived and dwelled between the 14th and 16th centuries. This excavation aimed to determine whether the Monte da Virgem Hermitage was contemporary with the hermits and how this hermitage and the landscape in which it is located could be connected to the solitude the hermits sought. This work is included in Joel's PhD, *The Archaeology of Loneliness*.







[CHAT Botxo Bilbao 2025 - Contemporary and Historical Archaeology in Theory Conference](#)

Article by Brodhie Molloy

In November, Brodhie and Joel (Archaeology) travelled to Bilbao to present on some of the side projects they have been working on in the field of contemporary archaeology at the Contemporary and Historical Archaeology in Theory Conference. This year's theme was 'Botxo' (holes) and looked at how archaeology can fill the holes in our knowledges and practices, both physically and metaphorically. Brodhie and Joel presented the initial findings of their project Talking Archaeologies. Joel also presented two other projects he has worked on related to Hostile Architecture and Bambooscapes. It was a great time for conversations around the current holes archaeology is filling in our contemporary world, with a major spotlight on the relationship with art in these endeavours!

Click through the stack of images taken at the Contemporary and Historical Archaeology in Theory Conference.





Dartmoor Fieldwork

Article by Beth Frangleton

I started as a new PhD student in SHaC this September on an AHRC funded Collaborative Doctoral Award with Dartmoor National Park Authority (DNPA). My project is titled 'Set in

Stone: Understanding Ancient Farming Communities through Dartmoor's Prehistoric Monuments'. I will be applying new techniques to the stone monuments to discover how they were sourced, quarried, moved and modified. My supervisory team are Dr Laura Basell (SHAC), Dr Andrew Miles (GGE) and Dr Lee Bray (DNPA). I grew up on Dartmoor and have spent many hours walking across it, so I feel very lucky to have this opportunity to look at it in a new light and add to our understanding.

This month I conducted some fieldwork on Dartmoor to refine my field methodologies. We visited Haytor Rocks, Corndon Tor and Cox Tor to study the geology, noting defining characteristics of the areas. We then began exploring some of the prehistoric stone monuments paying particular attention to the geology. Though the weather was bracing, we recorded some fascinating patterns including evidence for multiple sources in a single monument – things that have never previously been noticed. This was really exciting, and I cannot wait to develop the methodology and apply it in other locations.



28 - L-R: Beth, Lee and Laura in front of Cox Tor

[Scoping Fieldwork - Investigating the Transformation of Semi-nomadic Yörük Textiles](#) **Article by Tara Aysha Panesar**

Hi! I am Tara Aysha Panesar, and I am a Postgraduate Researcher in Museum Studies, supervised by Professor Sandra Dudley. My research project investigates how semi-nomadic Yörük textiles are transformed — materially, ontologically, and epistemologically — as they move across distinct spatial regimes from mountains to museums. And furthermore, what these transformations reveal about broader tensions between mobility and sedentarisation, ecological knowledge and museum knowledge, and the heritage politics of semi-nomadic communities?

In May of this year, I travelled to Muğla in Türkiye to conduct some scoping fieldwork and met numerous friends and contacts. A particular highlight was visiting three semi-nomadic Yörük families and joining them on a short migration through the Taurus mountains.

Keep an eye out for photos of Tara's trip in the next edition of *The Mosaic!*

Wednesday Research Seminars Series 2025-26

Our regular research seminar series will continue in semester 2 in 2026. Join us for hot drinks and cake in the foyer of the Kathleen Kenyon building from 16:00 before each seminar, which start at 16:30 and are hybrid. More details to follow in future editions of *The Mosaic*.

Professional Services Updates

School Meeting Dates

- *February 4th 2026*
 - *May 13th 2026*
-

Congratulations to Amy Bentley! 🎉

Amy Bentley, our fantastic Business Administration Supervisor, had her baby girl on Saturday 29th November 2025, weighing 8lbs 12oz. Both Amy and baby doing well, wish all best wishes from the School of Heritage and Culture Community!

Amy extends thanks to everyone for the well wishes and gifts before she went on maternity leave.

Meet Your PST

As the newly merged School of Heritage and Culture we have the fantastic opportunity to re-introduce the School's Professional Services Team to staff, students and alumni. Read about who everyone is and how they support the School in their individual profiles below!



29 - Andy (in the glasses....) with 'Wrocy'

Dr Andy Tams - Operations Manager

What I do: I oversee all administration in the School including health and safety and overseas travel. I works across both the School of Heritage and Culture, and the School of History, Politics and International Relations.

Fun Fact: As shown in the accompanying picture, I won this large stuffed animal Christmas fayre in Wroclaw 'Wrocy', for my wife during a recent trip to Poland (and had to carry him around the city the city for the last day then on the plane!)

Look our for further PST people profiles in the next edition of *The Mosaic!*

ULAS

Article by Dr Gavin Speed

We have been - and continue to be - incredibly busy over the winter with a large proportion of our team on an excavation in central Leicester at the Market Place where we've uncovered Roman buildings, and medieval market surfaces and structures, including a 'vile

dungeon' that has hit the headlines. Elsewhere we have some fab post-medieval buildings uncovered in Chesterfield, and medieval structures in the village of Hose, along with various other trial trench evaluations and historic building surveys.



30 - Leicester Market - Medieval Building



31 - ULAS staff at Jewry Wall Museum

We've been nominated for an award! Please vote for the Glenfield Iron Age cauldron project here: [Archaeology Awards Voting - Current Archaeology](#)

Congratulations to Rachel Small who has a new paper in *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society*, entitled: *Diet During Times of Illness and Recovery - A Study of the Bradgate Household Account Book 1678-1681*. The journal also contains a round-up of all the fieldwork undertaken in Leicestershire and Rutland in 2023, edited by Gavin Speed <https://lahs.org.uk/publications/transactions> (Volume 98, 2024).

Congratulations to Jen Browning and John Thomas who have co-authored (with Jane Masségia and Jeremy Taylor) a new paper for *Britannia*, entitled: *Troy Story: The Ketton Mosaic, Aeschylus, and Greek Mythography in Late Roman Britain*. A great collaborative piece with colleagues at SHAC, looking at the Ketton Mosaic and its surprising twist on the Trojan War legend.

To discover more on the work of ULAS, please visit the [Winter 2025 edition of ULAS News](#), as well as more detailed stories in [ULASNews.com](#) blog.

Sustainability

This is recurring section of *The Mosaic* to raise awareness of climate change, sustainability and suggest actions everyone can take towards achieving zero carbon.

Staff can make a positive impact with Carbon Literacy Training

Carbon Literacy Training, supported by the Carbon Literacy Project, provides colleagues with the motivation and knowledge to enable meaningful action on the climate crisis in their personal lives, at work and in the community. [Find out more information and book your staff training.](#)

One Action - Festive Edition! 🎄

There are *so many ways* that your actions can help promote a more sustainable future during this festive period.

Below, we've highlighted one of the numerous tips from the WWF's [Top Tips for a Sustainable Christmas](#).

Make your own decorations: Save yourself some money by upcycling old decorations. Or make your own using spare material found around the house, like turning old paper into paperchains, or old clothing into decorations. The cycle of replacing old plastic decorations with new (non-recycled) plastic decorations can contribute to the plastic waste that is swamping the oceans, which when weighed, according to [this article in the Science](#) journal, amounts to **8 millions tonnes of plastic waste!** Plastic can take up to, and beyond, 500 years to degrade (Source: [weforum.org](#)). Meanwhile, plastics break down into micro-plastics that fish and other sea-life ingest; we humans go on to eat these fish and thereby microplastics are introduced the human body.



32 - Image Credit: Ingrid Dyson

Our Alumni - Where are they now?

[The Ghosts of Planning Past: Morphological Regions in Pompeii and Ostia](#)

Article by Dr Matthew Selheimer, Honorary Visiting Fellow

Matthew Selheimer, honorary visiting fellow and University of Leicester PhD (2024), recently presented at the annual meeting of the American Anthropological Association (AAA), the world's largest gathering of anthropologists annually (typically featuring 5,000 to 7,000 attendees). Matt presented on select aspects of his PhD research which focuses on spatial analysis of Roman urban environments and, specifically, at street intersections. The theme of the AAA annual meeting, held in New Orleans, was aptly chosen as "Ghosts".

In his paper, "The Ghosts of Planning Past: Morphological Regions in Pompeii and Ostia", Matt discussed how morphological regions can be viewed as "ghosts" or residues of past urban planning efforts. Matt discussed the development of both urban environments, his approach to ascribing morphological regions for each, and how morphological regions can be treated as a variable in descriptive statistics along with linear and logistic regression analysis. **Matt regularly speaks at the Archaeological Institute of America's annual meeting, and the purpose of his involvement in the AAA annual meeting was to broaden awareness of his research and the University of Leicester.**



Alumni Awards

The University of Leicester Alumni Awards are an annual celebration of special achievements made by alumni from the University of Leicester.

There are seven award categories:

- Alumni Association Graduating Student of the Year Award
- Outstanding Achievement Award
- Dr Mark Sims Memorial Award for Public Service
- Future Leader Award
- Lifetime Achievement Award
- Mary Attenborough Volunteer of the Year Award
- Rhoda Bennett Philanthropy Award

Of the awards above, the following are open to external nominations:

- Outstanding Achievement Award
- Dr Mark Sims Memorial Award for Public Service

- Future Leader Award

The other four awards are open to internal nominations only. [Read more about the Alumni Awards here.](#)

Nominations for the Alumni Awards 2026 are now open, [you can submit your vote here!](#) Nominations will close on Sunday 8 February 2026.

Share Your Journey, Shape Their Future

As alumni, your journey and expertise hold immense value for our students. You've walked the path they aspire to follow, and your insights can make a lasting difference. By volunteering with our Careers & Employability initiatives, you can empower the next generation to achieve their dreams while strengthening our alumni-student connection.

Here are some impactful ways you can contribute:

1. 🗣️ Inspirational Career Talks (ICT)

Join a panel of professionals to share your journey, answer student questions, and provide invaluable career tips. Your story could be the spark that inspires a student to take their next big step.

2. 💡 'In Residence' Sessions

Dedicate an hour or two, online or in person, to meet one-on-one with students. Share advice about your role, sector, and career insights, helping students navigate their aspirations.

3. 📷 Share a Profile or Video

Create a brief profile or video message about your career journey that can be featured on the Careers & Employability Blackboard site. It's a simple yet powerful way to reach students at their convenience.

4. 👤👩 Become a Mentor

Guide one or more students over a set period, providing mentorship and personalized advice to help them succeed.

These are just a few of the many ways you can give back. If you have other ideas for how you'd like to support, we'd love to hear them! **Your involvement doesn't just benefit students—it enriches our community.** Together, we can create opportunities and inspire confidence in our future leaders. To learn more or express your interest, please contact School Administrator, Ingrid Dyson shac@le.ac.uk

Our Community

2024-2025 Prize Winners

Click through this stack to see who in Museum Studies have been awarded prizes at the winter board of examiners - very well deserved, congratulations to all! 🌟

Jim Roberts Prize

Niamh Peters & Katherine Tan

Awarded for outstanding research project relating to museums and social justice, or positive social change.

Professor Eilean Hooper-Greenhill Prize

Trina Kwan

Awarded for outstanding research project relating to museum learning, communication or visitor studies.

Professor Susan Pearce Prize

Isbosi McGee

Awarded for the dissertation relating to Museum and Gallery objects and collections with the highest mark.

Community Leadership Prize - Museum Studies

Jason Lok Kin Long

Awarded to the student, as judged by their peers, has made the most significant and positive impact on the cohort.

Museum Studies Flexible Learning Prize

Rose Brayne Patterson & Yasmin Gledhill

Awarded to the flexible learning student with the highest module mark on the taught part of the programme

Conquering Mount Kilimanjaro



Article by Dr Rachel Crellin, Associate Professor of Archaeology

Climbing Mount Kilimanjaro has been on my bucket list for years. After copious research, and freaking myself out watching videos of people with mountain sickness on youtube, we decided to go for it and climb the mountain during my study leave this semester! We took the 7day Lemosho route which involved 5 days of gradual climb to base camp, passing through different ecological zones with amazing plant life. On day 6 we got up at midnight to attempt the summit in time for sunrise. The first 5 days had been easy enough but the summit night was very different. My hydration pouch (which was 50% filled with boiling water) froze within 20mins of leaving the base camp. Around 4am I entered the 'dark-night-of-the-soul' as the unrelentingly steep hike began to wear me down. The summit was nowhere to be seen and above me I could just see a trail of headtorches. Some particularly cruel person was playing "[How am I gonna breath with no air](#)" from their phone at 5am as I gasped for every breath. Then, from nowhere, we could see the top, the first light of morning was beginning to appear and it suddenly seemed possible - we were going to make the it! We reached the rim of the volcano in time for me to cry at the sight of sunrise and we trekked a further 40mins to the official summit, Uhuru, in time for some more tears. Stood 5895m above sea level in the bright blue sky of the new day all the training and preparation was worthwhile. Now back to writing the next book with visions of Kili dancing in my head.

[AWSAM 2025: Ancient World Students Annual Meeting](#)

Article by Janie Masségia, Associate Professor of Ancient History

We welcomed 80 students with their teachers, from 3 schools: Wigston Academy, King Edward IV Nuneaton and WQE. It was a busy afternoon in the Sir Bob Burgess Building, with each school taking in part in 2 teaching sessions related to the Classics curriculum, and 1 session related to Ancient History- and Archaeology-related careers. The written feedback was exceptionally positive across the board this year - every session was named as someone's favourite part of the day - and many students explicitly named Leicester as a university they would apply to. We've got plans in place to nurture these school links through *Classics for All* and further events with SHAC.

This couldn't have been done without the generosity of colleagues who gave up their time to make this a success: to Jan Haywood, Jack Lennon and Jane Ainsworth for teaching sessions (Herodotus, Roman Religion and Inscriptions respectively); to Rachel Armitage, Dani De Carle and Carmen Ting for special tours of the MAB Labs and demos of our kit; to Jen Browning and John Thomas from ULAS for a hands-on session about different archaeology careers; to Ingrid Dyson for securing the many spaces we needed; and Jo Appleby who stepped in at short notice to meet a school group off the coach. From these individual contributions, we crafted a great success. ***Thank you, everyone.***

[25th Annual Buchan Memorial Lecture](#)

Article by Dr Jan Haywood, Associate Professor of Ancient History

We were thrilled to welcome former Leicester colleague Naoise Mac Sweeney, Professor of Classical Archaeology at the Institute of Classical Archaeology in Vienna, for the 25th Dorothy and Alan Buchan Memorial Lecture. In front of 90 attendees either in person or online, Naoise delivered a splendid lecture on the topic 'Ancient Greek Origin Myths: Horrible heroes, pugnacious prophets and deviant daughters'. The talk was followed by a drinks reception which brought together our speaker, the Vice-Chancellor, members of the Buchan family, former and present colleagues, former and present students, and members of the public. In-person attendees also received a complimentary copy of *Buchan Memories*, edited by Graham Shipley.

This event would not have been possible without the generous contributions by various members of our SHAC community: Ingrid Dyson and PST colleagues for support with room bookings and refreshments; Judith Lopez Aceves for technical support in the lecture hall and on MS Teams; Amy Arden for assistance before and during the drinks reception; Graham Shipley for his pitch perfect introduction to the lecture; Leicester graduates, Damjan Krsmanovic and Nate Richardson, for helping to clear up after the reception; and Janie Masségliá for her organisational knowhow and inspiring leadership.

Click through the below stack of images, taken during and after the lecture.











Follow our Social Media!

You can keep you to date with SHAC news and events in between editions of *The Mosaic* by following us on social media. Check out our handles below

📷 Instagram: [ArchAncHistLeic](#)

📷 Instagram: [uolmuseumstudies](#)

📘 LinkedIn: [Museum Studies at Leicester](#)

🦋 Bluesky: [@archanchistleic.bsky.social](#)

📘 Facebook: [School of Archaeology and Ancient History, University of Leicester](#)

Unboxed: What was in the box?

Readers of the [October 2025 edition](#) of *The Mosaic* were invited to guess what was in Tim Edward's (Distance Learning Support Officer) mystery box.

Tim writes, Thank you to all those that participated in guessing the content of the box in the last edition of *The Mosaic*.

We had some very entertaining guesses but surprisingly no one got it right. The panel of judges (my two 12 year olds) decided that no one was close enough to win the chocolates, however some of their favourites were “a hand of glory” (extra points for knowing Whitby folk law), “a figure of Dracula eating fish and chips”, a severed head – seven style”, “bubble wrap” (technically correct but not the answer we were looking for) and “a Phrenology skull”

So, what was in the box? Rory - **A barbarian mouse riding a steam punk dinosaur.** Its obvious once you know!

Yes, *obviously*, Tim...!



[Leicester Archaeology Monographs](#)

Did you know monographs written by AAH and ULAS staff are available to purchase through the online University shop? These would make great gifts for lovers of archaeology or ancient history and there are several that focus on local discoveries such as *Life in Roman* and *Medieval Leicester: Excavations in the town's north-east quarter*, *Roman Leicester* and *Richard III - the King under the Car Park*.

Now available via shop@le!

[Browse and purchase our publications](#)

Events and Important Dates

- **University Closure Days:**
 - Christmas period (24th December - 4th January)

Next Edition: March 2026

