



Classics News

Autumn 2012



It's a great pleasure for the School of Classics to share some of its news with all its former students. The articles below will give you the flavour of a few of the most interesting current developments in our activities. You can keep up-to-date with other items of news by regularly visiting our website. These are exciting but testing times for universities. Classics in St Andrews is proud to maintain the standards of excellence which have long been its hallmark. On the teaching front, we continue to be consistently placed in the top four or five Classics departments in the UK in the broadsheets' university league-tables. In research, we sustain a high profile by publishing books and articles that span the whole range of Greek and Roman culture, by accepting lecture invitations around the world, and by organising a programme of seminars and conferences which in turn attracts an international array of academic visitors to St Andrews. A particularly pleasing fact about recent years has been a substantial increase in our postgraduate numbers, including students

from Canada, China, Finland, Germany, Holland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Lithuania, Switzerland, and the USA (let no one accuse us of insularity on the east coast of Fife!). Our students, both undergrads and postgrads, are our most important link to the outside world. We are extremely grateful to all those who have donated to the university's 600th anniversary appeal: the funds accrued in this way are being used to award new postgraduate scholarships. In that connection I'd like also to mention a very generous recent bequest from the estate of Ian Kidd, former Professor of Greek and a lifelong servant of the university: from 2013-14 we will be setting up the 'Kidd Scholarship' (for PhD study) in his memory. To all our former students, wherever you are in the world, we send our very best wishes and hope that you'll remember to keep in touch.

Stephen Halliwell, Head of School

This is Sparta - virtually!



View of the Sparta Acropolis Basilica from the west

A successful collaboration between the Schools of Classics and Computer Science on the virtual reconstruction of the Sparta Acropolis Basilica, Greece has now expanded to include colleagues in the School of Art History. In the last two years, the focus of the project has also turned from Sparta to the virtual reconstruction of St Andrews Cathedral. Using elements of gaming technology, visitors can explore both the Sparta Basilica (6th century AD) and St Andrews cathedral (12th century AD) online and experience the space as the buildings were in their original foundations.

The virtual reconstructions are appealing to a range of users and the intention is to give them to schools and to make them available online for the general public to use. In the case of the Sparta site (funded in part through the Higher Education Academy) we have recreated the entire Spartan Acropolis for our Archaeology students both to explore for enjoyment and to conduct a virtual archaeological survey as part of their core third-year Archaeology module.

While we have been thrilled with the resources we have produced we have also found that the work of reconstruction has contributed to our understanding of processes of Christianization and use of space in Late Antique Churches.

The St Andrews reconstruction has been funded in part through the University's 600th Anniversary fund as well as FILTA. We have been pleased that the St Andrews Cathedral reconstructions have proved to be as successful as the Sparta reconstruction and current plans are that Historic Scotland will make the reconstructed Cathedral available on site for visitors to use. Visitors to the virtual cathedral can become monks or other historical characters and they are likely to meet other virtual visitors and even a ghost!

To visit the reconstructions for yourself, go to <http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/classics/research/projects/church-space/exploring>



St Andrews Cathedral and St Rule's tower

Trajan's Column

This project is constructing a website which graphically presents Trajan's Column in Rome (completed AD 113), using Jon Coulston's photographic archive. Some 3,000 images of the Column, taken over thirty years, are being made publically available for the first time. The project is initially being supported by the School, and is now seeking outside funding.

The website is linked to a forthcoming monograph on the monument, introducing a new numbering system which will allow individual human figures on the helical frieze (of which there are 2,671) and items of spoliated equipment on the pedestal reliefs (some 620) to be exactly located and viewed. This will serve as a research tool for scholars, and as a study aid for students.

Trajan's Column is the foremost iconographic source for the Roman army, Roman warfare, Roman frontier studies, and for the Optimus Princeps, Trajan (AD 98-117). It is one of the most studied monuments surviving from the ancient world, yet the sheer quantity and variety of sculpted detail has overwhelmed most viewers.

The website will open up this detail with images of



*Trajan's Column scene XXIV:
Barbarian heads presented to Trajan*

the reliefs themselves (many taken close-up from scaffolding) interactively linked to nineteenth century casts, made before acid rain erosion was inflicted on the marble. This is a dynamic project, and as the website expands it will also provide descriptive text, research bibliographies and an online forum.

View more on Jon Coulston's work:
<http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/classics/research/impact/image-and-identity/>

Classics for schools

Staff and students welcomed pupils from local schools for a Classics activity day on 15th March 2012. The pupils were taken on a digital 'tour' of ancient Sparta, based on collaborative work between Rebecca Sweetman and the School of Computer Science; they also were guided through educational activities on the Roman army, ancient drama and ways of addressing Roman emperors.

Staff continue to give talks in local schools; highlights of which include talks given at Kirkcaldy High School by Jon Hesk on ancient tragedy and Emma Buckley on Aeneid Book 6. Pupils participating in this year's Sutton Trust at St Andrews will hear talks given by Classics staff on ancient coins and on Augustan Rome. From October 2012 the School of Classics will be working with the IRIS project to bring their 'literacy through Latin' course to schools in southern Fife. This will mark the first expansion of the IRIS initiative into Scottish schools. Look out for an update on the project in future newsletters!

Drama

Graduates of the School of Classics may be familiar with the front cover image, a copy of which hangs in the school library. It depicts a scene from a play staged by Classics students thirty years ago.

Research into Greek drama continues in the school today, with Jon Hesk and Stephen Halliwell publishing widely on the subject. Jon Hesk has begun work on a project to produce online resources that will make recent research accessible to pupils and teachers in secondary schools across the UK and wider afield.

<http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/classics/research/impact/greek-drama/>

*The University of St Andrews is a charity registered in Scotland,
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Professor Greg Woolf writes



When I stepped down as Head of School in July 2009 I had the fantastic good fortune to be elected to a three year fellowship by The Leverhulme Trust, a charity established by the will of the founder of Unilever, which today spends around £60 million every year on research in every field of endeavour. My fellowship has enabled me to investigate the origins of religious pluralism. Living in a world of many religions is something we take for granted today; but religions in a modern sense appeared only during classical antiquity (and rather mysteriously at around the same time in Iraq, Iran, north India and China). This momentous change is something I have been interested in since I gave the Rhind Lectures on this theme to the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland in 2005. Three years has given me the chance to dig much deeper and explore much more widely. The first year I spent at the Max Weber Centre of the University of Erfurt in Germany, as part of mixed team in which sociologists, philosophers, theologians and classicists all worked together on religious history. Since then I have been based back in St Andrews, and have found time to write one book on ancient ethnography and a more general study of Roman

imperialism. But I have continued to travel widely to present my research on the origins of religions to audiences of scholars and also to master-classes of graduate students, often the most challenging critics. Nothing beats this kind of debate as a way of sharpening one's ideas, and I have been lucky to spend periods doing this in Brazil, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and most recently Switzerland. The University has generously awarded me a fourth year of leave next year to finish the project: in the meantime my undergraduate teaching has been replaced by Dr Félix Racine, from Yale, who has also been spending his time in St Andrews writing a study of late antique notions of geography.

Ancient and Modern Olympics

The London Olympics gave an ideal opportunity for reassessing the connections between modern sporting culture and ancient tradition.

Ancient notions of sporting competition and glory were very similar to our own: athletes were celebrity figures in the ancient world, then as now. And the modern notion that a host country puts itself on show through its games has overlaps with ancient ideals of civic self-promotion: by the time of the Roman Empire every major Greek-speaking city had its own athletic festival or festivals.

However, other features of the ancient games look distinctly odd by modern standards. The Olympics, like other ancient athletic festivals, was among other things a religious occasion, accompanied by sacrifices and processions. Athletic competition had educational contexts quite alien to anything we are familiar with: the gymnasium was an elitist institution of higher education in Greek culture, rather than simply a place for exercise. And athletic competition had much closer links with military training than it usually does for us: in particular the violence of the ancient combat sports (including boxing with hardened leather gloves which could inflict hideous injuries) would have been immediately shocking to a modern time-traveller transported back to ancient Olympia.

Dr Jason König's 'Ancient and Modern Olympics' blog (<http://ancientandmodernolympics.wordpress.com/>) was set up in March 2012 to address questions like those in relation to recent news stories, and to provide new translations of documents on ancient athletics which don't usually make it into the standard sourcebooks. It hosted weekly posts over the Olympic period, and will be updated monthly from October 2012 onwards.