Cook-voyage: a case history

Thanks in part to the Friends’ donation, a new ‘permanent’ display of objects collected on James Cook’s famous Pacific voyages will be installed on the Lower Gallery later this year. The larger part of the collection comprises more than 150 objects acquired on Cook’s second voyage (1772–1775) by the naturalists Reinhold Forster and his son George, and given by them to the Ashmolean in 1776. The new case is now in place and the display being prepared will be more comprehensive than any previous one. In the next issue I will introduce the new exhibit; here I reflect on some earlier ones.

At least some of the collection was still on display at the Ashmolean in the 1860s and when transferred to the Pitt Rivers in the 1880s, Henry Balfour kept it together, separate from the typological displays. The photograph from around 1900 shows part of the display to the left of the entrance. In 1940 this was dismantled and the collection sent away for safe-keeping.

After the War the display was not reinstalled and in 1968 when the new Lecturer in Ethnology Peter Gathercole was asked to mount a special exhibition devoted to ‘the Cook Collection’, he had to gather items from all parts of the Museum and its stores. There is an excellent photographic record of the preparation and installation of *From the Islands of the South Seas, 1773-74*. After it closed in 1971 a version was installed in a dedicated case on the Lower Gallery. Friends will remember this ‘permanent’ display, which was only dismantled in 2009 when more than 60 objects were loaned to an exhibition that toured to Bonn, Vienna, and Bern.

Meanwhile, in 2002 I ‘discovered’ a small collection that Joseph Banks acquired when he sailed as naturalist on Cook’s first voyage (1768–1771). Banks had given this to his old college Christ Church and it was transferred to the Pitt Rivers in the 1880s. Soon after its ‘discovery’ the collection was loaned to the Captain Cook Memorial Museum in Whitby, and last year to The Collection, Lincoln, for the exhibition *Joseph Banks: A Great Endeavour – A Lincolnshire Gentleman and his Legacy.*

The new display will include objects from both the Banks and the Forster collections. As with Pitt Rivers Museum exhibitions in general, it will let the objects ‘speak for themselves’ as much as possible. For anyone who wants to know more about the history of the collections and the decades’ worth of collections and conservation work that lie behind the new display, there is a dedicated website at [web.prm.ox.ac.uk/cookvoyages/index.php/en/index.html](http://web.prm.ox.ac.uk/cookvoyages/index.php/en/index.html) that is full of information, images, and links to further resources.

Jeremy Coote, Curator and Joint Head of Collections
Editorial
On the cover Curator and Joint Head of Collections Jeremy Coote looks at the history of the Museum’s iconic Cook-voyage Collection. This is the first of a two-part article celebrating the Cook case which will be unveiled in the Lower Gallery this summer. Jeremy will write about the new display in issue 84.

The centre spread is devoted to an in-depth look at two ‘skin’ collections: African skin-covered masks (p6) and exotic skin armour (p7) in an interview with Jill Salmond. Her late husband Keith Nicklin donated many of his slides to the Museum, some of which are reproduced here. Jonathan Bard kicks off a new occasional series on Museum cases with ‘Origins of Writing’ (opposite); Sue Morley take us travelling to Tibet (p9) and Becca McVean introduces the volunteer primary school guides (p10).

Some people have asked why we changed our name from Newsletter to Magazine. This was partly in celebration of the tremendous Anniversary Issue last October when contributors included Penelope Lively, Michael Palin and Philip Pullman and, also, to reflect the continuing high standard of the text and images we publish.

In the last issue of the year we plan to introduce an obituary column for former Friends. So, if you know of any Friend who has died since August 2014, please send their name and dates of birth and death to julesgammon@outlook.com

Please note my new email address.

Juliette Gammon, Editor

Between Friends
The first few months of 2015 were a very active time for the Friends. In January we celebrated a new book, The Temple Guardians, by Harriet Impey (Friend) and Katie Pickwoad, accompanied by an informative and entertaining lecture by Harriet’s husband Menno Fitski. The book was inspired by two ancient wooden statues that Menno brought from Japan to the Rijksmuseum, where he is Curator of Eastern Art.

In February Elizabeth Gowing told us the story behind her recent book Edith and I: on the trail of an Edwardian traveller in Kosovo, and about her own work there. In March Shahn Bekhradnia organised another very successful Kenneth Kirkwood lecture day on the subject of transgender. This topic currently has much sympathetic coverage in the media, so the event attracted a capacity audience. Several people requested a transcript of Edith and I: on the trail of an Edwardian traveller in Kosovo, which I’m happy to provide via email requests – gillian.morriss-kay@dpag.ox.ac.uk

In May renowned social and evolutionary neuroscientist Robin Dunbar gave a fascinating talk on ‘How we came to be human’ and there are further treats in store later in May and June (see back page for dates): a visit to the Hunterian and Soane Museums; William Dalrymple and Vidya Shah’s performance of The Last Mogul; finally, preceding the AGM, Mike O’Hanlon will look back on his very successful period as PRM director.

Gillian Morriss-Kay, Chair of the Friends

News from the Museum
It’s a time of major staff change. The Museum’s director, Mike O’Hanlon, will be retiring at the end of September: a short-listing process is now underway. Meanwhile Cathy Wright, PRM’s administrator, retired at the end of April. Esther Byrom has been seconded to look after this role until December 2015. Cathy and her husband Steve plan to do some travelling (to Australia via China and Thailand) before settling into their new home in Lincolnshire.

Cathy took over from Julia Cousins in January 2004. As administrator she looked after a huge spectrum of things – from the everyday to the extraordinary: retirements, maternity leaves, arrival of new staff, important visitors, secondments, funding, visitor numbers, exhibitions, leaking roofs, security, the logistics of the building works and sitting on the Friends’ Council and Finance sub-committee. She was always such a firm supporter of the Friends even to the extent of offering two days of gardening as a ‘lot’ for a Christmas party silent auction. The Friends gave Cathy a garden voucher with many good wishes for a flourishing Lincolnshire garden. There can be no better words to describe her than those used by Mike in the June 2009 newsletter: solid gold. Felicity Wood, Friend

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Gillian Morriss-Kay, Chair of the Friends
Take a case:
The Origins of Writing
A new occasional series with a closer look behind the glass

Writing was the greatest invention in the history of the world; it made everything else possible, and Case 106A has some wonderful and very early examples. Unfortunately, this is one of those PRM cases where what you get out of it depends on what you already know as the labeling is minimal, not even giving dates. The accompanying card for the modest Egyptian pottery shard just mentions that it has a maker’s mark and is Naqada II. This means it is about 5,200 years old (5.2 Kya*), predating proper writing in the sense of capturing spoken language in symbols, and may be one of the oldest artefacts in the PRM.

Writing was invented five times. The Babylonians were first at around 5.1 Kya with cuneiform, a mix of logograms (word symbols; modern examples are @ and £) and phonemes (syllable symbols). Egyptians produced hieroglyphics a century later, which include consonants, syllables and rebuses: symbols whose sound can be recognised (as in the text message 4U). At around the same time, the inhabitants of the Indus valley (Pakistan area) were making seals, which included still uninterpretable marks. However, as there were some 400 of them, they are likely to represent syllables. The Chinese produced their logogram-based characters much later (around 3.4 Kya) and the earliest examples are on oracle bones: these were burnt and the lines of the cracks through the symbols were used for divination. Finally, the Mayan culture of Mesoamerica invented glyphs some 3 Kya; these are now recognised as logograms with phoneme modifications. Unpicking how all these languages work has been a triumph of scholarship over the last 200 years.

Alphabets that capture consonants and vowels are relatively recent; they build on abjads, or a set of consonants only, and there are hieroglyphic and cuneiform examples. The first widely used abjad, and the root of virtually every other alphabet, including ours, is from Phoenicia a little over 3 Kya. From it derived the Greek alphabet of about 2.8 Kya which included vowels. The idea of reducing a whole spoken language to less than 30 symbols was remarkable, but the fact that English spelling has never settled down shows how tricky it still is to put into practice.

As the image of the case shows, and its caption details, the PRM has some wonderful examples of almost all of these categories. Cuneiform is represented by a 2.6 Kya Babylonian brick from the time of Nebuchadnezzar and an earlier example from 4 Kya giving temple barley accounts. Egyptian writing is shown in both its hieroglyphic and demotic (cursive) styles. There are slightly grubby Indus seals whose plaster imprints are as fresh today as they were 4.5 Kya, and beautiful examples of early Chinese writing on bones from about 3.2 Kya. As to letters, the 2.5 Kya stone slab (stele) from Tunis shows an early example of Punic abjad writing with a geometric column to the left.

Is anything missing? Yes, the case has no example of a Mayan glyph, but there is one shard with a glyph in the PRM archive. Perhaps it should be put in the case, together with a bit more information about all these remarkable pieces of writing history.

Jonathan Bard, Friend and Emeritus Professor, University of Edinburgh

*Thousand years ago
How the Indian Mutiny was triggered

Unrest in India towards British and East India Company rule grew in the mid-1850s. Then, in 1857, a low-cast kalasi, or arsenal technician, circulated a rumour that the new Pattern 1853 Enfield Rifle, issued to the company’s army, used paper-cartridges sealed with pig and cow fat. Both were anathema to Muslims and Hindus, although the cartridges were actually greased with mutton fat and wax.

Soldiers charging muzzle-loading rifles and muskets had to bite the cartridges to expose the powder which, for percussion guns, was all poured down the barrel; for flintlock guns a little was also put into the priming pan. The cartridge paper containing a ball or a new conical bullet was then dropped down the barrel and rammed home with a rod. The sepoys’ refusal to bite these contentious bullets was the stimulus for the Indian Mutiny.

The rifles and muskets employed during and after the Mutiny were the early India-Pattern flintlock Brown Bess, which continued to be used by tribal insurgents, and the percussion Pattern 42, both smooth-bore muskets.

In 1859 after the mutiny, the Indian troops were issued with the last British-government smooth-bore musket (.65 calibre with a simple V sight). This was a significantly inferior to the 1853 .577 calibre percussion Enfield rifle with a rifled bore and adjustable sights that was issued to British troops to ensure that they could handle any future mutiny.

The PRM’s upper gallery has an experimental rifle that Colonel Lane Fox helped develop in 1852 when employed by the Board of Ordnance to improve firearm efficiency (1884.27.57). This was before he added Pitt-Rivers to his name in 1880. There is also a Brown Bess (1884.27.38) on display.

An 1859 Pattern musket will be available for people to see and handle at the Beatrice Blackwood Evening.

William Dalrymple at the Pitt Rivers

When we first thought of asking William Dalrymple to be our speaker for a Beatrice Blackwood (BB) event, there was considerable feeling that procuring him was unlikely. However, one email later we were delighted when he replied: “Love Pitt Rivers - end of May, beginning of June next year.” William, larger than life as usual. What is more, he told us he’d like to bring a Hindustani musician Vidya Shah who sings and plays the tanpura. So our BB lecture took on the flavour of a performance and hence an evening, bringing to life a world of emperors, courtesans, politics, bayonets, intrigue and love. This was beginning to look like a party!

There was one small hitch – Vidya would need an airfare. Another stroke of luck came our way when Sujain Talwar, a young lawyer in Mumbai who loves to promote Indian culture wherever he can, offered to pay Vidya’s airfare which we accepted with alacrity. We are so grateful and are hoping he and his family will be able to join us. And further, Steppes Travel who have been creating bespoke holidays worldwide for 25 years, are delighted to be supporting William who has travelled with them to India and beyond over the years. It was his presence in our programme that was a huge incentive for Steppes to give the Friends a generous donation towards this exciting event.

We hope the serendipity of such an evening will enhance this many faceted and vivid re-enactment of the momentous happenings of Mughal India in 1857, important to us all for an understanding of Muslim, Hindu and British colonial history.

After the performance in the Oxford University Museum of Natural History, there will be a party in the Pitt Rivers with food and drink. Two of William’s books, The Last Mughal and The Return of a King, will be on sale, ready to be signed.

We look forward to seeing all Friends, who can buy tickets at the discounted price of £14 by entering VIDYA in the coupon box at oxfordplayhouse.com/ticketsoxford

Barbara Topley, Friend

Colin Langton, Friend
THis year’s Kenneth Kirkwood Memorial Lecture Day tackled a theme that, after years of languishing in the dark corners of rarely-spoken-about subjects, is now very much of the moment – transgenderism.

The topic, ‘To be He or She?’ and its anthropological relevance, was underlined by the reminder that while in modern times people with ambiguous or reversed gender identities can find themselves rejected or marginalised, in many ancient cultures such people were accorded rights.

The occurrence of transgenderism can be traced to an individual’s brain development according to the first speaker Gillian Morriss-Kay, Emeritus Professor of Developmental Anatomy at Oxford University. She is also the Chair of the Museum’s Friends.

Gillian spoke on ‘Biological gender determination: definite and indefinite’, and outlined how key events in the determination of a person’s gender occur in several distinct developmental stages: at fertilisation, during early pregnancy, late pregnancy and the first three months after birth, and finally at puberty. At any of these stages events may be initiated that lead to gender ambiguity. Brain gender depends on presence or absence of a late prenatal/early postnatal testosterone surge and is probably irreversible. If an individual’s brain gender does not match their anatomical gender they may feel they are in the ‘wrong’ body.

Dr Hongwei Bao, Assistant Professor in Media Studies at Nottingham University, talked about gay, lesbian and transgender representations in contemporary Chinese cinema, illustrated by film clips. He cited the recent announcement by Li Yinhe, China’s leading sociologist in gender and sexuality, that she had been living with a transgender man for 17 years, as a major platform for prompting more open debate about transgenderism in modern China.

However, he said to date transgender identities and rights in China are very much grouped with other sexual minority issues and often used as political allegories. The authorities like to characterise sexual and gender minorities as symptoms of Western decadence that “disrupt Chinese culture” rather than as something biological that can occur naturally.

So the ‘coming out’ by a public figure such as Li Yinhe is hugely important. “Transgender identity is yet to emerge in China’s public discourse. For the moment China’s transgenders seem more happy to keep themselves private.” Many people remain largely ignorant about the subject.

Dr Caroline Osella, Reader in Social Anthropology at SOAS (School of Oriental and African Studies), University of London, noted that other societies: “have not always been as afraid and as angry about this issue, but there seems to be something about Western modernity that has ramped up intolerance.”

An expert on South India, she said India has recently seen changes to laws about sexual behaviour, homosexuality and trans-identities, with the socially conservative state of Kerala now even holding annual Queer Pride events. However the murder in 2012 of one of Kerala’s most prominent activists poses some very serious questions about enduring prejudices. Her death, she said, was a story that “sits in a time space” between old and new attitudes. “Fear and stereotypes can so easily attach to us...a process familiar to anthropologists, attitudes to ‘witchcraft’ being a prime example. Transgender people remain objects of both fascination and fear...in danger of violence.”

The final speaker was Dr Emma Smith, Fellow and Tutor in English at Oxford University, whose talk was about transvestism in Shakespeare. All his female roles were written for male actors and in some plays, Twelfth Night in particular, the plotline and cross-dressing by characters highlight fascinating gender ambiguities.

She was not aware of the existence yet of any transgender theatre company: “but it would be interesting to see one.”

On behalf of the Friends, I’d like to thank Shahin Bekhradnia for arranging such a brilliant and captivating programme.

Nicky Moeran,
Friend and Kenneth Kirkwood’s daughter

Clockwise top left: Queer Pride poster Kerala; Emma Smith; Shahin Bekhradnia; Hongwei Bao
Jill Salmons and her late husband Keith Nicklin spent many years studying skin-covered masks from the Cross River region of Nigeria and Cameroon. The Museum has an interesting collection of this style of mask, plus a set of 79 slides taken in the Cross River by Keith during his fieldwork in the 1970s. Consequently, I welcomed the opportunity to spend time with Jill researching these collections.

Jill confirmed the technique of covering a wooden mask with skin is unique to the Cross River region. In the 1970s when the slides were taken, this practice was on the decline and Keith was proactive in encouraging the continuation of the skill. Looking at the images Jill could see they showed a range of old pre-existing masks with their good friend Patrick Achong making both a cap and helmet example. Jill emphasised the expertise and time required to make this type. The slides record various stages of the process; including carving the actual mask, preparing the skin, shaping and securing it onto the carving, and painting the finished product.

Patrick, who was self-taught and went on to become a Master Carver, often used duiker skin, a small antelope native to the region. Examining the masks in the Museum Jill thought several were made using duiker, popular due to the thinness of the hide. Talking about this technique with Jill as we studied the collection, I could really see and appreciate the skill involved and the quality of the finished masks. Looking closely I was soon able to recognise whether the skin smoothly adhered to the wood, notice how finely the features were carved, and see if the joins were neatly finished.

The Museum collection includes a diverse range of skin-covered cap and helmet masks. The cap masks are worn on top of the head and the helmet masks over the whole head, resting on the shoulders. Only men wear the helmet masks, whereas both sexes wear the cap masks, although females will leave their actual face uncovered. Both types of mask can have one or more faces. Looking at the multiple-faced ones Jill described how the skin is often painted with darker pigments to denote the male, whereas the female is left a lighter shade.

In the Cross River region a skin-covered mask is worn as part of a masquerade costume and can be used for a range of events. This can include cultural displays, entertainment, festivals, and rituals like funerals and initiations. Jill emphasised how different they look when they are worn to how we see them in the Museum. They are often freshly repainted, polished with palm oil to enhance the colour, and embellished with additional decorations like porcupine quills and feathers. Some even have a pot on the top which can contain fire, creating a very dramatic effect when lit.

Spending time with Jill examining the slides and the masks I gained a really invaluable insight into African skin-covered masks. If you are interested in learning more, Jill and Keith have written extensively on this subject.* At the very least, I encourage you to take the time to have a close look at some of these masks which you can find on display in the Court in case 5A ‘Nigerian Masks and Masquerade’. Jill played an active role in selecting the best examples to go in this case and the knowledge I gained was incorporated into the display labels. For example, Jill identified the triple-faced helmet mask as probably representing a man and his two wives. The style is associated with the Warriors Society masquerade.

Jill Salmons gives an insight into African skin-covered masks

*Please email zena.mcgreevy@prm.ox.ac.uk for suggested reading
Animal Armour

The Pitt Rivers Museum cares for around 400 examples of leather or animal skin armour, hunting garb and shields. There are hundreds more offensive weapons with organic components – blades with leather sheaths, the shagreen grips on Japanese swords, or spears studded with teeth and bone shards. Given this enormous variety and the limelight often afforded to one star object in particular – the porcupine fish helmet from Kiribati – I will focus here on just a handful of other fish and reptile-skin examples where the structure of the skin is integral to the object’s practical or symbolic effectiveness.

The Nile Crocodile, which can reach 20 feet in length, has long been revered and feared, its tough skin well-suited for shields and armour. Ceremonial crocodile armours were known among the cult followers of the Ancient Egyptian crocodile god Sobek, who was associated with fertility and military prowess. In the Pitt Rivers, you can find three much later examples: in the Upper Gallery there is a breastplate made from the horny plates of a mature crocodile, acquired by General Pitt-Rivers from the antiquary and historian Sir Samuel Rush Meyrick. In the new Leatherwork display on the Lower Gallery, there is an unusual crocodile-skin triple sheath for three Dervish knives, originally acquired by British cavalry around the time of the Battle of Omdurman, Sudan in 1898.

Perhaps most interesting of all is a kot fighting shield in the Dinka display on the Upper Gallery. In South Sudan kot were usually made of hide such as hippo, elephant or buffalo and – occasionally – giraffe or crocodile. Just like hide, reptile and fish skins have to be treated or they will decay. The fat and flesh is scraped off, the skin rubbed with salt, and it is kept in the shade for several days where it will ‘weep’ water. Once cured the skin is wetted again and slits cut down the centre. The skin is pegged out in the ground to retain its shape as the slits are threaded over a central wooden pole, which tighten as it dries. A deliberate horizontal fold across the centre accommodates the owner’s knuckles as he grips the shield.

Laminar and lamellar armours are perfect examples of design emulating protective models found in nature. Roman lorica segmentata and Japanese samurai ō-yoroi famously used overlapping plates that essentially act like insect exoskeletons or reptile skin. Scale armour differs in that individual plates are attached to backing material. A wonderful example, again displayed in the Upper Gallery, is an Iban ‘war jacket’, one of several covered in feathers or scales collected from Sarawak in the early 20th century. Locally known as baju empurau, it is made of parrotfish scales woven to an under-vest of tree bark and its style echoes the horn scale cuirasses worn by Moro pirates from the Philippines. Worn on hunting trips or raids, it is clearly not the most complete of armours but it helps cover the internal organs, and was complemented with plenty of protective amulets.

Parrotfish (*pseudoscarus*) species are prolific in the Indo-Pacific region. A soft fin-rayed fish, their lentoid scales overlap in a head-to-tail direction like roof tiles and in body armour this structure helps deflect blows while retaining flexibility within the garment. The scales are also rounded and uniform in shape, making construction easier. All these attributes make the lentoid scale a better choice for such armour than, say, the interlocking, peg-and-socket type ganoid scales of a sturgeon or the small, dense denticle scales of a shark. Once again, then, here is an object demonstrating the human ingenuity and resourcefulness that underpins so many of the collections in the Museum.

Helen Adams, VERVE Project Curator/Engagement Officer

All images © Pitt Rivers Museum

Right: Iban parrotfish war jacket, Sarawak, Malaysia, 1908.59.1; Left: Breastplate of horny crocodile plates, southern Egypt, 1884.31.1; Below: Dinka crocodile-skin kot shield, Republic of South Sudan, 1979.20.116
A host of harpsichords

In February a group of Friends enjoyed a lively and ‘hands-on’ tour of the Bate Collection with its enthusiastic and engaging Director Andrew Lamb. The Collection is part of the University of Oxford’s Faculty of Music and at its core are the mainly European instruments, donated by Philip Bate in 1968. A rare condition of the gift allows the instruments to be played by the public.

The Collection has subsequently been expanded and Andrew showed us a number of iconic instruments as well as encouraging us to wander and play. First came the Bressan treble recorder which was made c1720 in France, survived the London Blitz and is regarded as one of the least modified instruments of the period. It is very unusual for old instruments not to have been adapted, so this is a rare example of its true sound.

The Collection includes a fine range of ‘brass’ instruments, though not all are brass. We saw the Simon Beale trumpet made in 1667. Beale was state trumpeter for Oliver Cromwell and – presumably because of his talent – also served Charles II. The design was so successful that it is still used by the Household Cavalry. We also admired an amazing military serpent (a bass wind instrument) played at Waterloo and recently at the Royal Albert Hall.

The Bate has a wonderful variety of historically important keyboard instruments. Many are visually extremely attractive, including a Goermans c.1750 harpsichord.

William Smith’s c1720 London-built example is much plainer but likely to be the one owned by Handel. Another beautiful instrument was built in 1986 by Michael Johnson in the tradition of the renowned Ruckers.

The Collection has so many other fascinating musical treasures ranging from a 13th century deer-bone whistle to a saxophone built by Adolphe Sax himself. It is definitely worth a visit, and admission is free!

Virginia Taylor, Friend

Exploring the textile store

In January, a group of the Friends were privileged to be taken on a guided tour of the Museum’s textile store by Heather Richardson, Head of Conservation and Julia Nicholson, Joint Head of Collections Management. The tour encompassed an erudite explanation of how clothing, head-dresses, shoes and other artefacts are conserved and stored, plus the opportunity to spend time both admiring and learning about some of the conserved pieces themselves.

These included stunning textile treasures from Oman, Canada and ancient Peru as well as some from ethnic peoples of South West China and an early 20th century collection from Nagaland, a remote corner of North East India. The Nagaland collection was particularly fascinating and it is indebted to two Englishmen who had joined the Indian Civil Service: John Henry Hutton and James Philip Mills. Both not only collected avidly but also documented their collections with extensive ethnographic information plus full descriptions of how the garments were made and used.

Among this collection was a simple man’s groin cover, lengta, illustrated here. It is fascinating in many ways: it was practical with discrete brass clips to weigh down the front of the cloth thus preserving the wearer’s modesty and sparing his blushes; while its comparative simplicity (it was made of plain wool yarn) underpinned a subtle flamboyance. The cloth was decorated with a band of additional red weaving as well as painted designs of dogs and cockerels in black waxy pigment (made of tree sap, rice beer and ash), which were applied as surface decoration using a sharpened piece of bamboo.

The trip provided both a highly informative and very enjoyable opportunity that allowed us to explore some of the artefacts in the PRM’s vast reserve collection, to learn about how it is managed and conserved and the constraints and pressures on staff carrying out this work.

Anne James, Friend
The Lion Man: creation and recreation

Some 42,000 years ago, groups of early European migrants spread along the valleys of the Danube and its tributaries. Deep, capacious caves on the treeless sides of the valleys now named Lone and Ach (Swabian Jura, Southwest Germany) provided shelter for the long winters and enabled the development of a rich culture. Surviving artefacts include flutes made from the wing bones of large birds, and mammoth-ivory animal carvings whose discovery in 1931 created a sensation.

In 1932 the anatomist Robert Wetzel, who claimed that his work would establish Ice Age origins of the Aryan German race, raised the swastika over excavations of the Hohlenstein-Stadel cave. On 25 August 1939 his assistant Otto Völzing unearthed hundreds of fragments of mammoth ivory in a small chamber deep within the cave. The timing was unfortunate, to say the least – Hitler planned to invade Poland the next day, so excavation was abruptly terminated. The fragments were taken to Tübingen University for safe storage and moved to Ulm in 1956. They were only rediscovered in 1969, when about 200 of them were glued together to form a 29.6-cm-high human/animal figure that lacked its right arm and much of its back. A few more fragments were later added to the head, which was ‘completed’ with a beeswax mixture in 1988.

In 2009-12 new excavations unearthed many more fragments and enabled the age to be revised to 40,000 years, probably older than the Hohle Fels “Venus” (see Newsletter 76). In 2012-13 the statuette was deconstructed and reconstructed from more than 600 pieces, producing the 31.1 cm-high version now displayed in the Ulmer Museum.

The Lion Man’s function will forever remain a matter of speculation, but its sequestered location, well away from the domestic area of the cave, suggests a ritual or religious significance.

Gillian Morriss-Kay, Chair of the Friends and Emeritus Professor, Balliol College

Travellers’ tales: mantras on the wind

Travelling cross-country in the summer from Xining, through Eastern or Old Tibet (Quinhai and Sichuan) to Chengdu one expects to see spectacular mountain scenery covered with carpets of alpine flowers. To this natural beauty the people add extraordinary displays of prayer flag arrangements. Visually varied, exciting and beautiful, they spread the mantras on the wind – the fastest way.

Reminiscent of bunting, banners, spears, maypoles or even washing lines these collections of flags cover the hillsides, bridges, mountain passes, houses, nomads’ tents, monasteries, sacred places and festival sites. Simple, cheap and portable, prayer flags are ubiquitous and very important to the Tibetan way of life. Traditionally prayer flags have a combination of mantras (including om ma ni padme hum), special prayers and auspicious symbols printed on them.

The Wind Horse is often depicted in the centre. His strength (as used by nomads) carries the prayers from earth to heaven with the speed of the wind. On his back he carries the wish-fulfilling Jewels of Enlightenment for the benefit of everyone.

The four corners may include the powerful Four Dignitaries – the tiger for confidence, the snow lion for fearless joy, the dragon for gentle power, and garuda for wisdom. The colours assist in linking earth and heaven. Yellow relates to the earth; green to water; white to the clouds; blue to the sky and red to fire.

Fluttering in the wind Buddha’s teachings and special blessings are endlessly spread around the world carrying good fortune to all in need. Meanwhile the Tibetans are endlessly accumulating good karma for their next life.

Sue Morley, Friend
The ‘children’s ambassadors’
Presenting the primary school guides

It’s 30 years since education guides began introducing primary school children to the delights of the Pitt Rivers Collection. There have been many squeals over the toe of the Egyptian Mummy, many jaws dropping at the seal intestine raincoats and many questions asked about how the totem pole actually got into the Museum. These moments are orchestrated by a team of highly dedicated and professional volunteers who routinely give up their time to showcase Museum objects to children.

The Pitt Rivers Education Service was set up in the 1980s by the late Hélène la Rue who recruited a team of guides to show primary school children around the Museum. She realised that pupils need to be in small groups if they are to engage fully with the objects. The typological display means objects from a particular culture are scattered throughout the Museum and require the nimble feet of an experienced guide to link them together.

A range of curriculum-linked trails are offered to schools, from Ancient Egypt to Native American. The guides encourage pupils to interact with objects and, as their curiosity is piqued and they ask more questions, the trail becomes more of a dialogue between them. One guide recalls standing in front of the ivory huskies pulling kayaks on a sledge and being asked, “Which do you think goes faster – a Lamborghini or a husky?”

When Hélène’s duties took her attention elsewhere, the guides lobbied for someone to manage the Education Service which led to Andy McLellan taking up the new post of Head of Education in 2000. As a former history teacher he embraced the philosophy of object-centred teaching, introducing handling objects from source communities into the primary school trails. Pupils may now touch deer-hoof Haida rattles or beaded Blackfoot moccasins and are challenged to deduce what the materials they are made from tell us about their environment.

There are currently 14 active education guides who regularly give up their time to take pupils on trails. Some have been guiding for over 20 years while others have joined more recently. They come from an eclectic range of backgrounds: as well as teachers there’s also a publisher and a retired nurse. After completing their recruitment programme, guides enter the hallowed grounds of the monthly training meeting.

As the Primary School Education Officer, I have organised these for about seven years as a forum to review new initiatives and meet other members of Museum staff. We also discuss the challenges we face from children fainting at the sight of the Mummy’s toe to key objects vanishing from the Museum! Endless flexibility and patience are key criteria for a guide.

There are dispiriting moments when schools don’t turn up or pupils chant: “Can we see the shrunken heads now?” However, the guides say how much they enjoy being with the children and see themselves as ambassadors for the Museum and its collections. Apart from engaging pupils with the objects they also want to demonstrate that Museums are fun places to visit.

The children also make us appreciate the collections in a different way – I have been assured by many a five-year-old that Pingu lives in our model igloo! I certainly enjoy the camaraderie of the guides and am very grateful for their generosity and professionalism – without them, we could not run the Primary School Education Programme in the way that we do.

Becca McVean,
Primary School Education Officer
**Children’s choice: Baauk Dagger**

**The** reason the Baauk Dagger is curved is because the Rachwar Tribe wanted the dagger to be shaped like a Buffalo Horn. It was mostly used in India, Nepal and Bhutan.

The thing that caught my eye about this particular dagger was the curved blade shape, which is very unusual. The dagger has a bronze handle and a silver, curved blade that glints in the light; the woven case is a mixture of brown and an autumn leaf red. I find the decorations are so carefully and beautifully done and it is amazing that people about 100 years ago could create patterns as beautiful as this. Even we in our modern-day period would struggle to make such finely-done ones.

The way you use this dagger is pretty much the same as using a normal straight dagger, but with a few differences. Firstly, the impact is a bit different. Secondly, I think that the Baauk dagger is better because, if you are fighting a battle and you are whacking your opponent, unlike with a straight dagger you can get their dagger stuck in the curve of your blade. Lastly, when you hold someone captive cornered against the wall, if they move their head or try to escape then they go right into the blade.

So in conclusion, in my opinion the Baauk dagger has added advantages because of its size and shape.

*Catherine Jeans*

**New Friends**

It’s been a bumper few months for new Friends and we’re delighted to welcome two more life members: Urs Bischofberger from Switzerland, a Friend since 1996, and David Merriott from Oxford.

Other newcomers are: Chris and Josephine Amor (Devizes); Richard, Laura and Lottie Blundell (Northleach); Andrew Casebow (Guernsey); Nicolas Roques (Abingdon); Robert Wardell (Penrith) and from Oxford: Megan Carberry, Norman and Mary Gregory; Mallory and Elizabeth Factor; Catherine Farfan; Phyllis Ferguson; Sheila Middleton; Meg Moshion and Ann Spoke Symonds.

Finally, many apologies to Ruth and Mike Wooldridge who joined last October but were accidentally missed from the New Friends’ list in issue 82 due to the Editor’s computer crashing.

To become a Friend, please contact Rosemary King: rhking17@gmail.com

**WiFi in PRM**

There is now free public WiFi in all areas of the Museum. Connect to PRM Public. Name and email address are required on first connection.

**A favourite thing: Inuit Week Calendar**

Although it’s impossible for me to classify any object here as my definitive favourite, the one that comes closest to receiving that title is a relatively unassuming bone artefact held in the Tallies and Counting section (C110A) of the Writing and Communication case at the front of the Court.

Measuring approximately 12 centimetres long with seven drilled holes along the length, it was collected by an unknown person from Disko Island in Baffin Bay off the west coast of Greenland, and donated to the museum in 1919 by Louis Clarke.

Henry Balfour was originally perplexed when he accessioned it, but “turned to the literature for enlightenment”. He found its likeness, though made of wood, described in W. Thalbitzer’s early ethnography of the Angmagssalik Inuit (Eskimo) from southern Greenland. Thalbitzer had seen this comparable artefact in use by the Inuit who would move a peg connected by sinew to the rod down the successive holes, representing the days of the week.

This was notable as before their interactions with Moravian Missionaries, the Inuit measured units of time through lunar cycles, not weeks or months as the Gregorian calendar understands them. They now needed this aide to track the weekly Sabbath.

What makes this artefact so fascinating to me is its adoption of a new concept – that of a week – through the creation of an object. More than a tally, this calendar tangibly illustrates a crucial period of transition, for both the Inuit and Moravians in Greenland.

In November, due to my ‘different’ (Canadian) accent, I was asked to record a modified version of the Inuit Week Calendar information found on the audio guide for the Northern Lights event, and that night walking around the Museum heard myself incorporated into the soundscape, marking my own transition from a visitor to employee. Surreal.

Jordan Graham, MPhil Archaeology student, University of Oxford/Museum Shop and general enquiries, PRM

**Family events**

Pitt Stops Afternoon Explorers. Under 5 events and more: prm.ox.ac.uk/families.html
INFORMATION

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Annual Subscription: £22 (Joint: £30)
Family: £30; Over 60; £15 (Joint: £22)
Student: (18-25); £10
Life Membership: (for 65+): £125
Subscription year from 1 May.
First subscription paid after 1 January valid to 30 April of following year

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Sir David Attenborough, Danby Bloch,
Professor Sir Barry Cunliffe, Dame Penelope
Sir Lenny Henry, Dame Stephanie Mendoros,
Professor Sir Jonathan Rees-Mogg, Sir David Willetts

Museum
Pitt Rivers Museum, South Parks Road,
Oxford OX1 3PP
prm.ox.ac.uk
01865 270927
Email: prm@prm.ox.ac.uk
Open: Tuesday-Sunday 10.00-16.30
Monday 12.00-16.30
Admission free

Highlights tours
Wednesdays 14.30 and 15.15
Volunteer-led introduction to the Museum.
Approximately 20 mins. No booking required

Saturday Spotlight
Third Saturday of the month. 14.30
A programme of general interest events

After Hours
Occasional themed evening events

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The views expressed are not necessarily
those of the Museum. All contributors to
the Magazine are Friends unless otherwise
stated.

MUSEUM DIARY DATES

Exhibitions and case displays

Long Gallery
Architecture For All:
The Photography of Paul Oliver
16 May-11 October 2015
Reminders of the extraordinary richness,
beauty and tenacity of the architectural
heritage of the world

Case 22 in the Court
My Siberian Year, 1914-1915
Until 28 February 2016
Showcase display to mark the centenary of
the Oxford and Pennsylvania expedition to
Siberia

Case 17, Lower Gallery
Tall Tales: Making Social Networks
Until 7 June 2015
Work by Royal College of Art Jewellery and
Metal MA students

Preserving What is Valued
Late June 2015-January 2016
The Conservation Department curate a
temporary exhibition showcasing original
repairs found on objects in the PRM
collections from all areas of the world.

Three arm ornaments from Africa demonstrating
different repair methods © Pitt Rivers Museum

FRIENDS’ DIARY DATES

Friends’ Lecture
The talk below will be held in the PRM’s
Lecture Room, access via Robinson Close,
South Parks Road, Oxford, OX1 3PP.
Refreshments served 18.00. No parking
Visitors very welcome but £2 contribution
towards costs appreciated
Enquiries: Terry Bremble
01865 390489

Wednesday 17 June 18.30
Parting shots: a valedictory retrospective
Mike O’Hanlon, Pitt Rivers Museum’s
outgoing director
To be followed by the Friends’ AGM
agenda

Summer Away Day
Thursday 21 May
Hunterian Museum + Sir John Soane’s
Museum, Lincoln’s Inn Fields, London WC2A
Enquiries: Rosemary Lee
01491 873276

Beatrice Blackwood Evening
Friday 5 June 18.15 (doors open 17.45)
The Last Mughal
William Dalrymple, writer and historian, in
performance with Vidya Shah, musician.
Lecture Theatre of the Oxford University
Museum, Parks Road, Oxford OX1 3PW
followed by food and drinks in the Pitt Rivers
Museum until 21.00. Tickets £16 from Oxford
Playhouse 01865 305305 or from PRM shop
Enquiries: Barbara Topley
guilatopley@gmail.com
01865 775348

A Celebration Evening for Friends
Wednesday 21 October 18.00
Redisplaying the Museum’s Cook-voyage
Collection
Short presentations by Alan Cooke, Jeremy
Coote, Jeremy Uden, Chris Wilkinson.
*Bookings by 9 October. A Just for Friends event.
Enquiries: Rosemary Lee
01491 873276

Autumn Away Day
Monday 2 November
*A visit to the Bodleian’s recently opened
Weston Library
*Bookings by 19 October
Enquiries: Gillian Morriss-Kay
01865 315185

*See enclosed
For more information about these Friends
events see prm.ox.ac.uk/friendsevents