We had an exciting and rewarding season at Aphrodisias in 2008. We conducted major new excavation in the city center, opened a new museum hall for the Sebasteion reliefs, and mounted a major exhibition of Roman Portraits from the site in Istanbul—as well as continuing our documentation as well as continuing our site conservation and documentation work.

Headline discoveries include the monumental figured capital from the Roman Civil Basilica, seen above—it is decorated with heads of bulls and roaring lions—and a delicate pilaster capital depicting a pastoral scene from an excavated city avenue. These finds attest to the quality, range, and preservation of marble finds at Aphrodisias. They also have precise contexts.

**BASILICA**

Excavation was pursued in one of the largest buildings of the city, the Roman Civil Basilica of the late 1st c. CE, located at the southwest corner of the South Agora. The work was supervised by Phil Stinson, who will publish its architecture. A 12 x 8 m trench (fig. 2) at the south end of the Basilica in its South Hall provided new evidence of its extraordinary multi-storied decoration preserved in a dense catastrophic collapse of the building. Architectural blocks (some weighing up to 8 tons!) were carefully removed by crane. At the floor level, we found architectural drawings and foot markers incised on the marble paving, as well as fragments of a statue, an un-inscribed statue base (which we re-erected) and voussoir blocks of a large arch. This arch once sprang from an in-situ pier decorated with the spectacular figured capital (fig. 1). The bulls and lions of the pier’s capital would have projected into the flanking archways.
AVENUE EXCAVATION
A major new excavation (fig. 3) begun in 2008 of a grand north-south avenue (ca. 8m wide) along the city center’s east side provided detailed archaeological evidence for this major artery, the abandonment history of the classical city, and its post-antique life. Visitors will also have an improved experience of the monuments to which the avenue gave access.

Important discoveries were made at the north end of this marble-paved “5th Avenue,” which runs between the Temple of Aphrodite Forecourt and the Sebasteion. The work was carefully supervised by Maryl Gensheimer, Kathryn Hagen, Alexis North, Nicole Potdevin, Leslie Wallick, and Christopher Wayner. Major finds include: a head of Ganymede from one of the Sebasteion reliefs; over 800 coins, largely small denominations of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, indicating Ottoman commercial activity; and parts of the late antique colonnades flanking the avenue.

The most important find is the marble pilaster capital (fig. 5) from the east colonnade, which features a peasant tending a goat. It is from a series of late antique pilaster capitals of which eighteen others, also depicting various rustic activities, were found along the same colonnade in earlier excavations. With the goat capital were found extensive remains of wall painting, colored marble revetment, and glass wall mosaic (fig. 6), which formed an elaborate frame for the capital.

CONSERVATION
Kent Severson supervised object and site conservation by students Anna Serotta and Raina Chao. A major initiative was also begun to study and conserve the Hadrianic Baths, one of the grandest complexes of the site. We cleaned several chambers and prepared our strategy for opening the complex to visitors as an open-air museum.

DOCUMENTATION & STUDY
Our active architectural documentation program focused on the following projects: Harry Mark, our senior architect, supervised a team of architecture students (Casey Milbrand, Nina Cherian, Eliza Bober, Felipe Rojas) making detailed plans and drawings of the Avenue excavations, the Civil Basilica, and the Sebasteion. Ian Lockey pursued his PhD dissertation project on the Atrium House. Documentation and study for final publications of major monuments were continued by Andrew Leung and Katherine Welch on the Stadium; Michele
SEBASTEION ANASTYLOSIS

The stone-for-stone reconstruction or anastylosis of the east end of the Sebasteion’s South Building made great progress in 2008 (fig. 7). Thomas Kaefer and Gerhard Paul supervised the work and were assisted by architecture students Fatma Gül Öztürk, and Özgür Öztürk, and sculpture conservators Emma Kate Bertenshaw and Nicholas Barnfield. Work on the second storey with a sequence of mythological reliefs framed by the architecture is close to completion.

NEW MUSEUM HALL

Sixty-five Sebasteion reliefs never before visible to the public and the remarkable Blue Horse from the Civil Basilica, all conserved in recent seasons, were installed in the new Sevgi Gönül Hall of the Aphrodisias Museum (figs. 8-9). The new museum hall, designed by Cengiz Bektaş and sponsored by the Geyre Vakfı (Istanbul), opened in May 2008. The conservation work on the sculptures and their installation were carried out by Gerhard Paul, Thomas Kaefer, and Trevor Proudfoot. The signage for the display was prepared by Harry Mark.
ISTANBUL EXHIBITION & PUBLICATIONS

A major exhibition of sculpture from Aphrodisias took place in Istanbul (26 September 2008 – 25 January 2009) at the Cultural Center of Yapı Kredi bank, which sponsored it, together with the Geyre Vakfi and Ministry of Culture and Tourism of Turkey. Its catalog, *Roman Portraits from Aphrodisias* (Yapı Kredi Publishing 2008), edited by R.R.R. Smith and Julia Lenaghan, and a set of labels and wall panels for the exhibition and its 50 pieces of sculpture was written by the excavation team during the 2008 season (fig. 10). The extensive mounting and conservation work for the exhibition was carried out by Adrian Powell and Trevor Proudfoot with Hikmet Apaydin and local specialists.

Other recently published volumes include: *Aphrodisias Papers 4: New Research on the City and Its Monuments* (Portsmouth, RI 2008) edited by Christopher Ratté and R.R.R. Smith; and *Aphrodisias: City and Sculpture in Roman Asia* (Ertuğ & Kocabıyık, Istanbul 2009), by R.R.R. Smith and Ahmet Ertuğ (fig. 10).

The main part of our dedicated core research team of more than 45 students, senior staff, and visiting specialists is shown below, beside the 2008 trench in the Civil Basilica (fig. 11). Their success was dependent upon collaboration with skilled local work crews, the Aphrodisias Museum staff, and the representatives of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism.

We gratefully acknowledge the tremendous ongoing support of all the Friends of Aphrodisias, and express our warm thanks for the support of all the major donors over the past year—support which makes our work at this wonderful and unique ancient site possible.

Friends:
- Geyre Vakfi in Istanbul
- Friends of Aphrodisias in New York
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As of 4/29/09

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