

**Newsletter: Aphrodisias 2006**

We had a full and successful season in 2006, with many good results, widely varied activities, and a big excavation. We were digging in the area in which we plan to build a new extension to the Aphrodisias museum.

Archaeology is a team effort, and we had several teams, each with their own crew of local workmen: the marble conservation team, the anastylosis team, the excavation team, the sculpture team, and the survey team – all in all some 50 students and senior staff with some 70-80 workmen at the height of the action. You see some of us present at 6.30 am on a typical early morning (Fig. 1).

Much of our work in 2006 came together around the Sebasteion. This was a temple complex dedicated to Aphrodite and the early emperors, from Augustus to Nero, and is probably the single most important monument of the early Roman empire in the whole Greek East. The three-storeyed buildings that flanked its processional avenue carried a huge array of marble reliefs with scenes representing life-sized gods, heroes, and emperors. Some eighty panels survive.

We worked on the program of the reliefs, based on their archaeological findspots; on the conservation of the reliefs for display to the public in the new museum; on the anastylosis of part of the building to show their ancient context; and on preparation for the construction of the new museum space for the Sebasteion material. All aspects of this combined program took decisive steps forward in 2006.

Trevor Proudfoot and his team of local marble conservators completed another 20 of the reliefs to the highest specification, dismantling each one and reassembling it with all the pieces in the right place and using the best modern materials. Thomas Kaefer and Gerhard Paul made great progress with the anastylosis (that is, stone-for-stone reconstruction) of the east end of the South Building of the complex (Fig. 2).
They completed the short east wall and much of the Doric order of the first storey, repaired the rough masonry interior of the chambers that supported the façade, and prepared the blocks of the second, Ionic storey. We also began trial casts of the reliefs and made silicon moulds and textured concrete casts of one relief and its base. The casts of the reliefs will be incorporated into the restored building, while the original marble reliefs will go into the new museum hall.

Before the reliefs leave our workshop-depot for their new home, we need to complete our study of which elements fit together. In 2006 we made significant progress on the material from the North Building, and carried out trials by placing reliefs onto the inscribed bases that should go with them. The North Building reliefs have majestic figures of ethne, or conquered peoples of the Augustan empire, pictured as if they were statues standing on labeled bases. Careful study of their findplaces suggested which ones we should try together, and we were able to demonstrate the correct bases for several. For example, the relief of a woman with her arms crossed in front of her, we can now say for sure, sat on a base for the ethnos of the Dacians (Fig. 3).

Fig. 3: The relief and base for the ethnus of the Dacians from the north building of the Sebasteion.
The Geyre Foundation in Istanbul is generously supporting the Sebasteion project and has engaged the famous Turkish architect Çengiz Bektas to design the new museum hall for the reliefs. We identified the back of the museum, to its north, as the least invasive place to site the building. This area had only one major drawback: it is where we had earlier built a depot (the Stoa Depot II) where we stored, studied, and databased thousands of carved marble sculpture fragments. We took a deep breath and emptied and demolished the Stoa Depot and excavated beneath it.

One of our sculpture team's main tasks then was to transfer the material from the Stoa Depot to six temporary containers. We sorted, checked, and moved 2,300 marble items, shelf by shelf. This laborious work also acted as a complete check on our database information on each piece. The sculpture team was Heather Awan, Ian Lockey, Sarah Madole, Esen Ögüs, and Rose Trentinella, led and supervised by Julia Lenaghan.

Once we had emptied its shelves, we pulled down the Stoa Depot and undertook a major excavation beneath it (12 m by 72 m), supervised by Peter De Staebler (Fig. 4). The main remains encountered were the walls of Late Roman domestic structures, and in September the cultural advisory council of the modern province of Aydin gave permission to proceed with the construction, which will begin in early spring 2007.

Other research and conservation projects in 2006 were varied and fruitful. Christopher Ratté continued his regional survey in the territory of Aphrodisias with excellent results. The sculpture team supplemented and refined our sarcophagus database, which now has 705 items in it, and Heather Awan worked on her Ph.D. study of sarcophagi in context. Ian Lockey continued his Ph.D. study of the Atrium House, and Kent Severson with Alisa Eagleton undertook a major conservation of a root-damaged mosaic in the same house (Fig. 5). Mark Abbe also pursued his exciting research on the painting and gilding of marble sculpture at the site, using an X-ray fluorescence spectrometer.
Two excellent Ph.D.’s were completed and successfully defended: Peter De Staebler on the Late Roman City Wall and Phil Stinson on the Civil Basilica. Bahadir Yildirim came to work on his publication of the reliefs from the Basilica, and Michelle Berenfeld on her study of the Bishop’s Palace.

As always at Aphrodisias, there were exciting new finds of carved marble that we recorded and studied. Among the most important are a small satyr head (inv. 06-24), a miniature genre figure of a striding peasant with short tunic and seed bag at his side (inv. 06-25), both from the excavation north of the Museum, and three new sarcophagi from the southeast necropolis: a sarcophagus chest decorated with two flying eroses holding a tabula (S-549); an inscribed sarcophagus decorated with a tabula and corner figures of Pan and Dionysos (S-457) and an important inscribed garland sarcophagus of the early third century AD, made by one Marcus Aurelius Epagathos for his son Menodotos, himself, and his wife Aurelia Attalis (S-548) (Fig. 6).

Publication has also made great progress. The collaborative volume on the Portrait Statuary from Aphrodisias was published in 2006 in our site series as *Aphrodisias II*, and the volume on the cult statue of Aphrodite, by Lisa Brody, will appear shortly as *Aphrodisias III*. A volume on the Sculptor’s Workshop by Julie van Voorhis will be *Aphrodisias IV*. In the meantime, a dense collection of recent studies on the archaeology and monuments of the site will be published in 2007 as *Aphrodisias Papers 4*; it represents a body of work undertaken by our team over the last five years.

2006 was a wonderful year for the project, and we are deeply grateful to you, the Friends, for your generous support that makes our work possible.

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