

EDITORIAL

This year BISI has taken its first steps as a totally self-funded body, although we still benefit from the continuing support of the British Academy for our office and administration. We remain active in research, publication and outreach, as well as maintaining close links with Iraqi colleagues through a strong visiting-scholars programme.

There have been several significant developments at the Iraq Museum, Baghdad, in 2009. February saw the partial re-opening of the Museum, six years after the terrible events of 2003. Dr Amira Edan was appointed Director, having been Acting Director since Dr Donny George was forced to leave Iraq in 2006. A major initiative to make an inventory of the entire collection has begun.

With a number of cultural heritage organisations BISI was a signatory to a letter conveyed by the UK National Commission for UNESCO to Sir John Chilcot, chairman of the Committee of Inquiry into Iraq, to ensure that the problems faced by British forces in safeguarding the cultural heritage in Iraq will be part of the investigation.

While our return to Iraq is not yet possible, BISI continues to welcome many visitors from Iraq to Britain for training, research and participation in national and international conferences.

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This year's lecture programme was rich and varied. On 12 March 2009 Professor Amélie Kuhrt discussed "The Question of Hellenisation: the Case of the City of Babylon". On 18 May Patrick Cockburn, Middle East correspondent of *The Independent*, gave an Appeal Lecture on "Iraq: Is the Age of Wars Over?" In the Bonham-Carter Lecture on 17 June Dr Eleanor Wilkinson and Professor Tony Wilkinson addressed "Archaeology in Iraq: Preservation, Visualisation and Access". On 17 September Professor Jim Khalili presented an Appeal Talk on "Science and Rationalism in Ninth-Century Baghdad". The 2009 AGM is scheduled for 10 December, to be followed by a lecture on "The Neo-Assyrian Imperial Project: Mechanisms of Coherence" by Dr Karen Radner.

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This year BISI has allocated research grants as follows: to Professor Mary Jacobus to help support the conference "Culture Wars: Heritage and Armed Conflict in the 21st Century"; to Tony Matthiesen for work on "The State, Communalism and Transnationalism in Saudi Arabia and Bahrain"; to Alison Millerman for work on the "American Dimension to the Excavations at Ur in the 1920s and '30s"; to Ali A. K. Ali for research into "Iraqi Refugees in Jordan: The Migration Decision-making Process"; to Khyam Allami for "The Iraqi 'Ud School: Its Influences and Development"; to Mr Jeffrey Orchard and Mrs Jocelyn Orchard for "The Hajar Project, Oman: Ancient Aflaj Research Programme"; to Dr Alessandro Scafi in support of the conference "The Cosmography of Paradise: The Other World from Ancient Mesopotamia to Medieval Europe", which took place at the Warburg Institute in March; to Dr John MacGinnis to facilitate his participation in the excavations at Tell Masaikh; and to Dr Jacob Dahl for work towards the "Syrian Digital Library of Cuneiform". Reports on all research grants appear in BISI newsletters, which is sent out to members of BISI and also available online at <http://www.britac.ac.uk/institutes/iraq/newsletter.htm>.

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The Development Committee enjoyed another busy year. On 7 February the fourth in the successful Birkbeck-BISI study day series explored "From Babylon to Amarna: Ancient Middle Eastern Interactions in the Days of Akhenaten". Next year's event on 6 February 2010 will be dedicated to "Seven Years On: The Iraq National Museum, Iraq National Library and Archive and Cultural Heritage in Iraq", and organised by Dr Mariana Giovino. On 25 April Dr Erica Hunter convened the sixth in the Christianity in Iraq seminar series: A Seminar day on Christian education in Iraq. Grants were made in support of a range of events: to Mohammed Jawad of the Imperial College Iraqi Society, towards the inaugural Iraqi Cultural Exhibition; to Fran Hazelton and the

Enheduanna Society for the “On-line Art Gallery”; to Andy Lowings for his “Golden Lyre of Ur Project”; to the REEL Iraq Festival (also supported in part by BISI Appeal funds); to John Orna-Ornstein in support of a programme of community events alongside the British Museum exhibition, *Babylon: Myth and Reality* (co-sponsored by the British Iraqi Friendship Society); to Peter Stone for the paperback printing of his and Joanne Farchakh Bajjaly’s *The Destruction of Cultural Heritage in Iraq*. Reports on all development grants appear in BISI newsletters.

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The BISI Appeal Committee continues to attract the generous support of corporate and individual donors, sponsoring the Appeal talks and the visiting-scholars programme. Our current BISI Scholar is Mr Munir Essa Al Khazraji, who is working on the Iraq Museum’s inventory project. This year we have also helped host Ms Saba Al-Omari, Mr Mustafa Maroof Hussein, Ms Layla Salih Mahmood, Mr Qahtan al-Hussein and Mr Hikmat Basheer Al-Aswad. Our next Appeal event will take place on 4 February 2010 at the British Museum, when Dr Saad Eskander, Director of the Iraq National Library and Archive, will speak on “INLA at a Time of National Crisis: Difficult Choices and Unanticipated Challenges”.

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The publications programme this year produced *New Light on Nimrud — Proceedings of the Nimrud Conference 11th–13th March 2002*, edited by J. E. Curtis, H. McCall, D. Collon and L. al-Gailani Werr, and *Ivories from Nimrud VI — Ivories from the North West Palace (1845–1992)*, by G. Herrmann, S. Laidlaw with H. Coffey. Four further volumes are scheduled to appear next year: *Once There Was a Place: Settlement Archaeology at Chagar Bazar, 1999–2002* by A. McMahon; *Archaeological Atlas of Samarra (Samarra Studies II)*, by A. Northedge and D. Kennet; *Your Praise is Sweet: A Memorial Volume for Jeremy Black from Students, Colleagues and Friends*, edited by H. Baker, E. Robson and G. Zólyomi; and Dr Stuart Campbell’s report on the excavations at Umm Dabaghiyah.

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Finally we are proud to announce that in January Dr Martin Worthington received from the American Oriental Society its prestigious Jonas Greenfield Prize for Younger Semitists, for his article “Dialect admixture of Babylonian and Assyrian in *SAA* VIII, X, XII, XVII and XVIII”, which we published in *Iraq* LXVIII (2006).