

# The Friends of the Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford Magazine

BAfM Award  
2015



**Malcolm Osman:  
28 years behind  
the camera**

**Using ornaments  
as currency**

**Godmakers of  
Calcutta**

**Rediscovering the  
Indus civilisation**

**Angling ancient  
and modern**

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### Editorial

What do you think of our new cover? We want to modernise the look of the Magazine to attract more people to pick it up in the Museum Shop, or at events, to promote the Friends. There's now a moneybox on the shelf by the stairs where you can drop in a £1 coin to save going to the till. We'd like to hear your views on the new design – emails please to [julesgammon@outlook.com](mailto:julesgammon@outlook.com)

We were again recognised in the British Association of Museums' Newsletter Awards (p8) and if this issue is an indicator, there should be more to come. Articles on the Indus civilisation and the fascinating 'Godmakers' of Calcutta make a strong centre spread (pp 6-7); opposite we feature an interview with Malcolm Osman (p3), responsible for so many remarkable photographs during his 28 years as Pitt Rivers photographer, and on p5 retiring Director Michael O'Hanlon's favourite case. On p11 Daniel Ward's piece on an Ukrainian duct flute wins the 2015 children's competition.

Finally we welcome John Grimley Evans to our editorial team. Grimley has compiled the Magazine index since autumn 2014 and you can read his article on the ingenious interlocking mechanism of Japanese *tenkara* fishing rods on p9. Felicity Wood and Deb Manley have stepped down from the team but Felicity continues to be intimately involved – writing articles and compiling the events listings on the back page. Many thanks to them all.

Happy New Year.

**Juliette Gammon, Editor**

**Cover image:** Highland man wearing nose and neck pearl shell crescents, Papua New Guinea, 1980 – see article p5. Photo: Michael O'Hanlon

I AM delighted to say that Dr Laura Van Broekhoven, Head of the Curatorial Department at the Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen in the Netherlands and Assistant Professor of Archaeology at Leiden University, has been appointed as the new Director of the Pitt Rivers Museum. She will take up the directorship on 1 March 2016.

It is a challenging time to do so. Core funding for University museums is increasingly uncertain. To guard against funding cuts we are developing PRM's commercial side by creating new products for the shop and marketing the Court as a venue for receptions. We are also delighted that Fiona Gourley has been appointed as Head of Development for Museums and Collections. Fiona, who has a degree in anthropology and loves the Pitt Rivers, will be assisting with fundraising campaigns, and we are working toward the endowment of key staff posts to protect the work of the Museum in difficult financial times.

And just to keep us on our toes, the Pitt Rivers needs to move over 100,000 objects from its reserve collections store. Longer-term solutions are now being planned to house the reserve collections. The move will be a huge challenge, but will improve storage and enhance database records, improving access to these collections making it possible to use them in many more ways.

When times are difficult, it's important to have real friends, and the Museum is especially grateful for the ongoing support of its Friends.

**Laura Peers, Interim Director**

WORK on the Lower Gallery 'craft' displays continues with an eclectic arrangement of woodworking, featuring newly commissioned Noh masks, a German Noah's ark, and several examples of pyro-engraving. The project's public programme is helping to satisfy the evident appetite for special events: September's Pitt Fest attracted record numbers (p10), and both our 'Day of the Dead' (10 November) and 'Light Night' (20 November) evenings sold out. Recent workshops on darning and Kintsugi ceramic repair



were also fully booked (p4). I'd like to thank all the volunteers who assist with VERVE events – needless to say we are all looking forward to another exciting year in 2016.

**Helen Adams,**  
VERVE Project Curator/  
Engagement Officer



Headaddress pyro-engraved with  
nsibidi script, Nigeria 1914.26.6

© Pitt Rivers Museum

### Between Friends

LAST year we made a major donation to the Museum towards a new case to display the objects from the Cook expeditions, so we were disappointed that chemical problems with the case lining have delayed the rehousing of this important collection. The celebratory 'Cook case' evening has therefore been postponed for a year. Happily, the date timetabled for this event was filled at short notice by Catherine Kermorgant, who described her work with Devadasis, the 'sacred' prostitutes of India. This was a sympathetic and insightful talk that generated a lively discussion.

The last talk of 2015 was by Kirsty Norman, who gave a hair-raising account of her work as a museum conservator in Kuwait before and during the first Gulf War, and of the restitution of most of the archaeological objects taken to Iraq from the completely destroyed private and national museum buildings.

The Friends' support of the PRM involves the co-ordinated efforts of a team of active members who organise enjoyable events and produce this excellent Magazine. I am therefore delighted to report that following our search for a new Secretary and a Membership Development Officer, we have appointed two excellent applicants to these posts, and a third who will help with membership and events. They will be formally appointed at the January Council meeting. Finally, some exciting stop press news: Alexander Armstrong, the well-known TV personality, comedian and musician, has agreed to become a Patron of FPRM. Alexander loves the Museum and often brings his family here.

**Gillian Morriss-Kay, Chair of the Friends**



© Studio Edmark

# Malcolm Osman: Pitt Rivers Museum's photographer

*Malcolm Osman came to the Museum from Nuclear Physics in 1987 and is now the longest-serving employee working here. Sally Owen wrote about her conversation with him in Newsletter 6, 1993; as Malcolm has now stepped down to part-time work before full retirement at the end of 2016, I thought it was time to catch up with him again.*

**W**E met in the purpose-built photographic studio on the top floor of the new extension. This airy room, equipped with several printers and a very large computer screen, seemed a world away from the old 'green shed' studio with all the alchemy-like equipment that photographers needed 20 years ago. Malcolm also showed me the storeroom next door, which is both a 'holding room' for objects waiting to be photographed and a second studio: it houses a 'copy stand', an adjustable rig with a camera and lighting that is used to photograph small objects and 'flat-copy'.

In the old days, most photography was in monochrome, mainly because of the cost but also due to the relatively short lifespan of colour materials. However, images for Museum postcards and book illustrations were taken on large-format colour transparencies when needed. The arrival of digital technology has made photography accessible to most people, and this has had a major impact on Malcolm's work: visiting researchers often take their own photographs, so the number of outside requests for images has decreased. Originally Malcolm photographed all new accessions, but these are now routinely

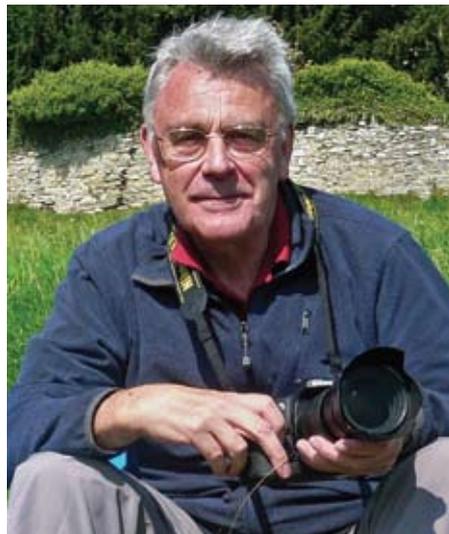


Photo: Mike Gilbert

*Malcolm Osman has worked for the University of Oxford since 1981*

photographed by the collections' staff.

Malcolm's major role today is making large-scale images for the public, including the photographs for the regular exhibitions in the Long Gallery. He has also been involved in the VERVE (Need Make Use) project, making the explanatory photographs for its displays. It is, however, the technical problems requiring computer as well as traditional photographic skills

that provide his real challenges. Some large textiles, for instance, have had to be photographed in two parts and then 'stitched' together digitally, or laid out on the floor of the researchers' area and photographed from above. At the other end of the scale, the team working on the amulet-cataloguing project *Small Blessings* needed Malcolm's technical expertise to photograph some of their very tiny, shiny or transparent items.

When I asked Malcolm about his favourite Pitt Rivers objects, he mentioned the Chinese ivory puzzle ball. He had also enjoyed photographing the material for the recent Haida project, and was particularly pleased with the panoramic view of the Museum interior taken for the front of the Mike O'Hanlon's new book *The Pitt Rivers Museum, A World Within* (also used for the cover of the Friends' 30th Anniversary Magazine). This very high-resolution panoramic view was only possible with high quality digital equipment and computer processing.

Finally, Malcolm showed me some of his own personal images: wonderful church interiors, marble tomb effigies, amusing figures carved on misericords and many more. He has also photographed Cornwall's beautiful landscape and its rich mining heritage, such as ruined mine engine-houses. This is the landscape of his birth, to which he returns each year. His latest joy is a camera-equipped flying 'drone', which enables him to take aerial views of landscapes and archaeological sites. What a wonderful retirement he is going to have!

**Felicity Wood, Friend**



*Left: Detail from harp, South Sudan – I loved the beautifully carved head on the neck 1884.113.10; Above: Ship of the establishment, UK (1706) – a wonderful piece of stunning craftsmanship which I took out of its case to examine in detail 1886.1.1665; Right: Glass spearheads, not the usual way in which I record objects – but very effective from left to right: 1953.10.4; 1921.91.54; 1938.35.1401; 1940.7.11; 1938.35.1403*

All images: © Pitt Rivers Museum

# Friends go for gold

IN writing about the display *Preserving What is Valued* (issue 84, p9), Heather Richardson mentioned the Japanese art of *kintsugi* (mending ceramic pieces with *urushi* lacquer and powdered gold). Rather than a ‘can’t see the join’ repair, *kintsugi* celebrates the mend, thus making the piece extra special.

The Friends were invited to offer well-loved cracked, chipped or broken ceramic items to be repaired by Muneaki Shimode and Takahiko Sato from Kyoto, VERVE project Artists in Residence during November 2015. Sadly, because of the complexity of existing repairs, a few pieces could not be accepted. However, ten were suitable for repair as part of this project. The ceramics offered by Mary Butcher, Jane Mellanby and Felicity Wood had always been cracked while in their possession – they liked them despite the damage. However, items offered by Friends Terri Costain, Olive Duncan, Delia Gray-Durant and Sue Morley had all been broken while they owned them. Each piece was accompanied by its own special story, telling of its circumstances and why it was treasured. The lid of a Royal Worcester serving dish belonging to Helen Cadoux-Hudson, a wedding present of 32 years ago and accidentally broken just recently, was chosen to be the subject of a short documentary film.\*

Museum visitors were able to watch *kintsugi* demonstrations on the Lower Gallery during November, including sessions at the Japanese Fired Works Night (5 November) and the Saturday Spotlight (14 November). The repaired pieces, together with their stories, will be on display in case L8A, the bow-fronted case on the Lower Gallery, from 26 January to 24 April 2016. A few pieces belonging to members of staff were also given the *kintsugi* treatment – so, all in all, it was a very *Pitt Rivers* event!

**Felicity Wood**, Friend

\*<http://vimeo.com/pittriversmuseum/kintsugi>



Image: © Pitt Rivers Museum

Takahiko Sato repairing Helen Cadoux-Hudson's Royal Worcester lid

## Traveller's Tales Madagascar

IF I say ‘Madagascar’ what do you think of? Vanilla, lemurs, chameleons, baobab trees, David Attenborough perhaps? Totem poles? Of course not. Anyone who has visited the Pitt Rivers and British Museum will surely associate them with the Queen Charlotte Islands. Imagine my surprise on a recent trip to Madagascar to find that the Mahafaly tribe also had a tradition of totem poles.

Originally only available to the nobility but later the wealthy too, *aloalo* are carved wooden funerary posts rising high above large, rectangular constructions a metre out of the ground. There are close links between the living Mahafaly and their dead or ‘gods on earth’. These tombs or *fanasy*, meaning ‘your eternal place’, are for the bones of a single person, can cost more than the houses of the living and are carefully maintained according to the customs of *fady*, the rules surrounding visiting which includes exhumation and reburial ceremonies.



The style and decoration of *aloalo* reflect or depict the status and achievements attained by the deceased person in life. Geometric and symbolic shapes are topped by sculpted figures or objects – nude human figures symbolise procreation, wrestlers signify strength, birds (usually storks) stand for freedom and the ubiquitous zebu cattle represent



Photos: Sue Morley

Bottom left: *aloalo*-style gatepost at a tourist lodge, Bekopaka, West Madagascar  
Left: 1904 tomb with original (or traditional) carved *aloalo*, near Tuléar, SW Madagascar

status and prosperity. Zebu are also slaughtered at the funerary feast and the horns scattered on the memorial ensuring it is imbued with the sacred spirit.

The oldest and the best *aloalo* are now circulating on the international art market and only a few (closely guarded by the family) remain in situ. However their style is celebrated in tourist hotels as wall decorations or gate posts. Nowadays colourful paintings adorn the outside walls of the memorials depicting the highlights and material possessions from the person's life with more artistic freedom.

**Sue Morley**, Friend

# Take a case: Ornamental objects used as currency

To tell you the truth, my favourite case in the Museum is always the one in development – whether the wonderful new displays now being dressed on the Lower Gallery or the fresh displays on models which will shortly be installed in the Court. But if I were forced to choose, one of my favourites among the existing cases is that devoted to ‘Ornamental objects used as currency’ on the Lower Gallery, in particular the section on shell currency in the Pacific.

In part, the case (L75.A) is a favourite because it’s a classic, artefact-rich Pitt Rivers one, with dozens of examples of shell currency of different types. It reminds me of my predecessor Thomas Penniman’s insistence that visitors should never feel the Museum to be merely “a place where they can ‘do’ the collection between showers but one in which they can always find more of what interests them and learn about the subject rather than put up with our idea of what is best for them to see”.

And of course the shell currency case is a favourite because it’s rich in the miniaturisation which is so distinctive an aspect of the Museum: shell necklaces coiled in small black specimen boxes, tiny handwritten labels indicating the source of the artefacts. George Pitt-Rivers, the General’s grandson and subject of an intriguing new biography, donated one of them (2010.2.1).<sup>1</sup>

The case is a favourite of mine, too, because it currently holds examples of the most celebrated shell ornaments in anthropology: the necklaces and arm shells which circulated in the ‘kula ring’. First described by Bronislaw Malinowski in his 1922 classic *Argonauts of the*



Above: Shell currency case; Below left: Kula armshell 1940.12.313 and necklace 1890.5.1, Trobriand Islands, PNG Armshells and necklaces were the principal valuables which circulated in the kula ring

Both images: © Pitt Rivers Museum

*Western Pacific* which set the standard for anthropological fieldwork, the *kula* is an elaborate system of ceremonial exchange linking island communities off the northeast coast of New Guinea.

Malinowski described the perilous journeys people made by canoe to exchange these shell ornaments, necklaces circulating clockwise, arm shells anti-clockwise around the communities which make up the ‘ring’. Neither arm shells nor necklaces are possessed permanently, or really worn on the body, but men compete for their temporary possession which brings great prestige. Malinowski brilliantly showed how the *kula* acted as a framework, uniting participants over a

wide area, serving as a substitute for war and as an umbrella under which much trading of useful products also went on. (The exciting tale of how the Museum first obtained and then lost a major collection of Malinowski’s is recounted in my book *The Pitt Rivers Museum: a world within*).<sup>2</sup>

My own fieldwork was also in New Guinea, though in the highlands rather than on the islands, and this is a final personal reason why the case devoted to such shell ornaments is a favourite of mine. Traditionally, only a few shell ornaments were traded as far as the highlands, where they were highly valued despite sometimes being indifferent in quality.

However, when Australian colonists arrived there in the 1930s, they flew gigantic numbers of pearl shells up from the coast to pay for land, labour and for food. Brightly coloured face paints were another such import, and swiftly replaced the muted earth colours previously used. Today, photographs of highlanders draped in shell ornaments, their faces elaborately painted, are sometimes used to portray a land of unchanged tribal traditions apparently forgotten by time. In fact, such photographs are evidence of just the reverse.

**Michael O’Hanlon,**

Former Museum Director and Friend



<sup>1</sup> Bradley Hart’s *George Pitt-Rivers and the Nazis* (Bloomsbury, 2015)

<sup>2</sup> Scala 2014

# Godmakers of Calcutta

'City of contrasts' is a travel writing cliché, but I can think of few places which deserve this description more than Kolkata. Crowded urban slums and decaying ancient merchant districts jostle areas of colonial grandeur, while shining high rise apartment blocks and offices and air-conditioned malls soar upwards around the city.

With a small group of travellers, I was in the final two days of a tour which had followed the Ganges by train, bus and riverboat from the cool foothills of the Himalayas, down through Uttar Pradesh and Bengal to hot, hectic, historic Kolkata. Surya, our guide, weaved us between trams, cars, hurtling *tuk-tuks* (three-wheeled, wood-framed taxis) and hand-pulled rickshaws, to gaze at spectacular Raj-era landmarks: the stately white marble Victoria Memorial, St Paul's Cathedral, the City Hall and the mighty Howrah Bridge, before taking us to fascinating Kumartuli in the north of the city.

All traces of colonial India vanished. Crouching on the banks of the River Hooghly, Kumartuli is the potters' district of Kolkata. The settlement is centuries old. Its name comes from the Hindi words *kumar* (potter) and *tuli* (neighbourhood). Originally, the potters of the area used the clay from near their homes to make pots and cups. Gradually they took to making statues of gods and goddesses principally for *pujas* (Hindu religious ceremonies), but increasingly for export. All the idols are made by hand using the black river clay, which clads frames of bamboo and hay. Some of the larger figures can take up to a week to complete.

Production reaches fever-pitch before the *Durga Puja*. This famous five-day festival takes place in October and is the highlight of the Kolkata calendar, when most of the city devotes itself to celebrating the revered Mother Goddess Durga and her victory

over the evil buffalo demon Mahishasura. More than 2,500 *pandals* (decorative temporary structures to house the idols) are erected, all vying for the admiration of festival-goers. The city is adorned with lights, and people from all over India descend on Kolkata to enjoy the carnival atmosphere. Officially, the festival honours the powerful female force (*shakti*) in the Universe. At the end of the *Durga Puja* all the brilliantly painted god figures are thrown into the river, where their clay will dissolve and return to its home.

It was April and already the sculptors were hard at work preparing for the *Puja*. We wandered past shadowy, cavernous ateliers crammed to the ceiling with half-finished idols of Durga and her other embodiment, fierce Kali, and other gods and goddesses, some up to 12 feet tall. None were for sale; most had been pre-ordered for the festival, while the rest would be travelling to other countries to adorn temples, institutions and grand occasions, such as weddings. With the ever-widening Bengali diaspora, overseas demand goes up every year. Kumartuli's 500 or so workshops produce around 12,000 idols a year.

Wiry artisans of all ages, many bare-chested and some clad in *lungis* worked on, kneading clay and shaping the figures around their bamboo and hay frames. Once dry, the idols are painted. Traditionally, the lotus-shaped eyes of the Goddess are painted on in a ceremonial ritual a week before the *Puja*. Durga is frequently depicted riding serenely on a tiger or, in her fiercer Kali incarnation, dancing on the chest of her husband, Shiva. Sometimes she has many arms, signifying her multiple powers.

As we flew out of Kolkata the following day I looked down at the receding Hooghly River and tried to locate Kumartuli, the most different and exotic workplace that I have seen.

**Dorothy Walker, Friend**



Clockwise top: Different stages of construction; statues of fierce Kali; Goddess Durga on a tiger; many-armed Durga dances on Shiva; street in Kumartuli

Photos: Brian Penny

# The Indus civilisation: lost for four millennia

**I**n *Civilisation*, Kenneth Clark pondered the non-western origins of civilisation long before the classical Greeks. “Three or four times in history man has made a leap forward,” he observed in 1969. “One such time was about the year 3000 BC, when quite suddenly civilisation appeared, not



Above: Mohenjo-daro drainage system; Top right: ‘Priest King’, Mohenjo-daro, both images courtesy of Robert Knox; Below: Pottery figure of Ox, Punjab Province, Pakistan 1953.1.9

only in Egypt and Mesopotamia but also in the Indus valley.”

The Indus civilisation – lost for almost four thousand years until its discovery in the 1920s by British and Indian archaeologists – has some presence in the Pitt Rivers Museum, if not as much as it deserves. The collection contains small pieces of carnelian roughed out for making beads, excavated in the 1930s by Ernest Mackay. They bring to mind the long, finely-drilled, carnelian beads from the Indus found in the Royal Cemetery at Ur; indeed Mackay was the first to



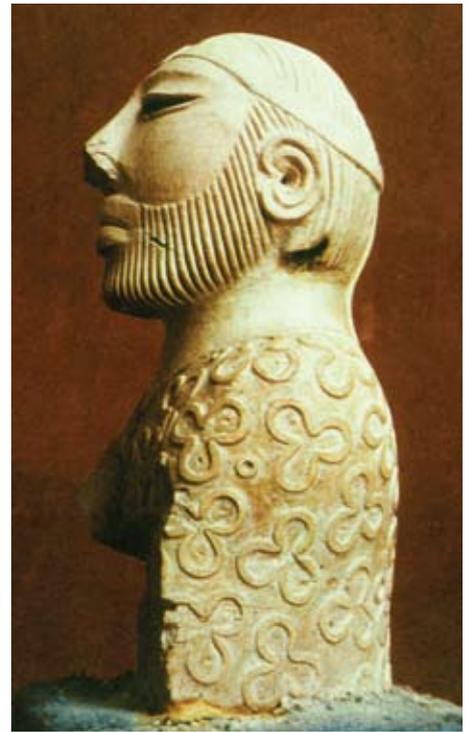
© Pitt Rivers Museum

explain the sophisticated Indus drilling technique using a hard mineral tip made from ‘Ernestite’: a name invented by later Indus archaeologists to honour Mackay. It also contains plaster casts of some seal impressions donated by an Indian maharaja in the 1950s, showing the celebrated Indus ‘unicorn’ motif, accompanied by still-undeciphered signs. The Pitt Rivers also has a pottery figurine of an ox from Harappa, typical of Indus figurines.

Archaeologists have identified well over a thousand Indus settlements. They cover at least 800,000 square kilometres of what in 1947 became Pakistan and India – an area approximately a quarter the size of Western Europe – with an original population of perhaps one million. This was the most extensive urban culture of its time – about twice the size of Egypt or Mesopotamia – which traded vigorously with the Persian Gulf, Mesopotamia and possibly even further afield. Although most Indus settlements were villages, some were towns, and at least five were substantial cities. The two largest cities, Mohenjo-daro (‘Mound of the Dead’) and Harappa, located some 600 kilometres apart beside the Indus river and one of its many tributaries, were comparable with cities like Memphis in Egypt and Ur in Mesopotamia during the ‘Mature’ period of the Indus civilisation, that is, between about 2500 and 1900 BC. In 1980, Mohenjo-daro was inscribed in UNESCO’s list of World Heritage Sites.

However, the cities, for all their excellent brick-built construction, do not boast pyramids, palaces, temples, graves, statues, paintings or hoards of gold. Their unique sculpture is minuscule and their grandest building, the so-called Great Bath at Mohenjo-daro, the earliest public water tank in the world, measures 12 by 7 metres, with two wide staircases on the north and south leading down to a brick floor at a maximum depth of 2.4 metres, made watertight by a thick layer of bitumen. Yet, the cities’ drainage/sanitation was two millennia ahead of the Roman empire’s; it included magnificent circular wells, elaborate drains running beneath corbelled arches and the world’s first toilets.

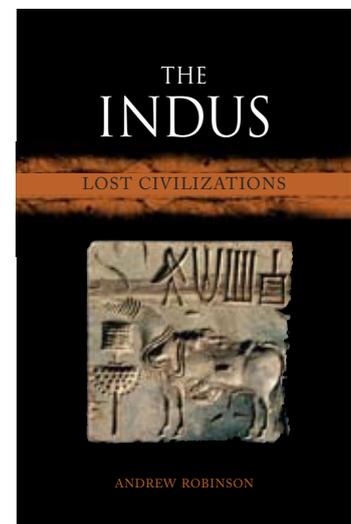
Less than ten per cent of the mature Indus settlements have been excavated. Important clues to their



functioning, including further inscriptions, unquestionably remain to be dug up, as has happened in recent decades. Nonetheless, the civilisation is far from being lost. Its half-understood mysteries continue to fascinate anyone interested in the origins of civilisation. Why, for example, is there zero evidence for Indus warfare? Personally, I am drawn to its apparent success in combining artistic excellence, technological sophistication and economic vigour with social egalitarianism, political freedom and religious moderation over more than half a millennium. If further investigation were to show this attractive picture to be accurate, the Indus civilisation would also be a hopeful sign for the future of humankind.

**Andrew Robinson, Friend**

Andrew is the author of *The Indus: Lost Civilizations*, Reaktion Books (November 2015), and *India: A Short History*, Thames & Hudson (2014)



# An honourable mention

To Cheltenham in October for the British Association of Museums' annual conference where I collected a special 'Honourable Mention' award for the Anniversary Issue (81). It wasn't considered for the Newsletter of the Year category as the judges felt that the "outstanding content and contributions" from our notable patrons made comparison with other Museums' submissions unfair.

The Conference was hosted by the Friends of The Wilson, Cheltenham's Art Gallery and Museum, with the theme 'Engaging the next generation of Friends'. Opening the event, the Lord Lieutenant of Gloucestershire declared this: "the most difficult task facing Friends in a rapidly changing world".

It led to some inspiring talks and lively discussion. Sophie Roberts of Cheltenham's Holst Birthplace Museum did a placement during her BA in Education Studies before volunteering in various Gloucestershire museums. Experience she believed: "vital for securing my place on a PGCE course." Kay Symons from the Ashmolean felt targeting the recently-retired could bring Friends' average age down from 75 to 58.

A fine example of attracting the younger cohort came from the delightful Jasmine Farram, winner of the BAFM award for young people who have made an outstanding contribution to their Museum. Jasmine, the services and



*Selfie workshop – teenagers mirror portraits in Tunbridge Wells Museum's Camden Collection*

©Tunbridge Wells Museum

administration officer at Tunbridge Wells Museum, developed a 'Selfie Workshop' for 11 to 25 year-olds. A local photographer and artist used lighting, props and poses to help them create 'portraits' mirroring those in the Museum's Camden Collection. Showing the historical links between portraits and selfies has seen a rise in teens using the museum as a school research tool as well as an increase in their weekend visits.

The conference underlined the diversity of Museums and Friends' roles which range from fundraising for acquisitions to running Museums singlehanded. But, relations with staff are not always happy and Friends can feel sidelined.

Very different from the Pitt Rivers where our mutually supportive relationship with staff is furthered by their insightful contributions to the Magazine.

**Juliette Gammon, Editor**

# Behind the scenes at the library

FIFTEEN Friends were treated recently to a behind-the-scenes tour of the Weston Library. Giles Gilbert Scott's 1930s New Bodleian building was built primarily as a store to cope with the perennial problem facing all great libraries – increasing lack of room as collections grow continually. Eleven storeys of bookstacks seemed generous and suitable 80 years ago, but storage of rare and fragile material is now a technical and sophisticated business, and the Bodleian decided to re-organise the building completely.



Image: Gillian Morriss-Kay

Three areas were to be developed: high-tech storage and constant monitoring of the Special Collections; more research facilities and greater involvement of the public.

This last is splendidly realised on the ground floor. A new entrance on Broad Street, the vast Blackwell Hall, the shop, café, lecture theatre, exhibition gallery, and the Treasury, where some of the library's most valuable possessions will be displayed for everyone's delectation. On the first floor, glass-walled, book-filled balconies around all sides of the Hall remind visitors of the library's real purpose.

We had an enjoyable time, observing two of the reading rooms, watching a paleography group at work in a seminar room, admiring the Visiting Scholars' Room (described by *The Independent* as 'a rather spiffing, elevated eyrie'), spotting the squints allowing glimpses down into the Hall, noting the architects' maximum use of natural light and revelling in the views of Oxford from the terrace outside the new Oriental Reading Room. Thanks to the Bodleian's massive digitisation programme much material is now available online, but in the new, world-class Conservation Department we discussed treating infestations, modern book repair materials and techniques, and the latest preservation methods, all of which keep these collections physically safe.

The Weston Library is a veritable box of delights, and now we, too, have the chance to enjoy some of its treasures.

**Rosemary King, Friend**

# Catching the connections

THE top gallery of the Pitt Rivers Museum is largely taken up with things for killing people but there is also a small assemblage of things for catching fish. It includes a few of the Museum's collection of fishing rods, tools that have been invented many times and in many places. In addition to holding a line out over the edge of boat, bank, bed of reeds, or coral reef, a rod enables a fisherman to steer a hooked fish around obstacles, has flexibility to absorb shocks and prevent a heavy fish from breaking the line, and provides means for projecting the bait or lure over a distance. In Western angling, projection is achieved by using the rod as a flexible throwing stick to send a weighted bait on a line from a free-running reel, or, in fly fishing, flinging out a length of line heavy enough to carry the necessary momentum.

One of the gallery's exhibits is a 19th century Japanese telescopic rod of five hollow concentric bamboo canes that was extended, the accession note claims, by blowing into the butt (1888.28.9). Each section is of constant diameter and each joint airtight. It would have been used in Japanese mountain streams and lakes for a style of fly fishing known as *tenkara* ('from heaven') recently introduced into the USA and Europe. The *tenkara* rod is used without a reel and is long enough to flick a line forward several metres across a stream. Ideal for rough-country angling, *tenkara* does not need a clear space behind the angler for the



Woodcut from *St Albans book 1880 facsimile showing horsehair whipping*. Bodleian shelfmark 25834 d.40



Photo: Gillian Morris-Kay

Above: *Telescopic bamboo fishing rod, Japan 1888.28.9*; Bottom: *Rod depicted in Tackle, its Materials and Manufacture, John Harrington Keene (1886). Radcliffe Science library, Bodleian shelfmark 18956 e.21*

back cast of western trout fishing, and for ease of carriage the rod is telescopic or composed of interlocking separate segments. *Tenkara* angling was developed by anglers using artificial flies in pursuit of the several salmonids native to Japan, and in the West is being introduced for trout fishing.

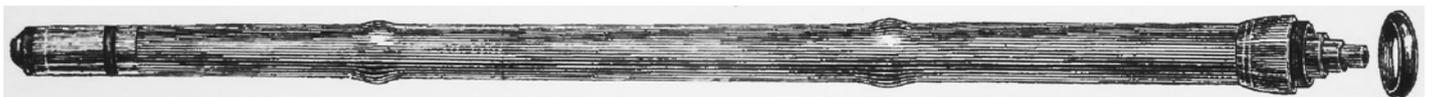
In older times, rods everywhere in the world were lovingly and ingeniously created from locally sourced materials. In England, the earliest prescription (with illustrations) is in the 1496 printing of the *St Alban's Book* which includes a "treatyse of fysshynge wyth an Angle" – 'angle' being the Middle English derivative of the Old English 'angel' meaning a hook. The treatise is widely thought to have been written by Dame Juliana Berners who was prioress of the nunnery at Sopwell and recommends angling as good for the soul as well as for health and happiness.

Dame Juliana's prescription for making a rod starts with a butt section of hazel, willow, or aspen, cut between Michaelmas and Candlemas. The intermediate section was of green hazel, and the top of blackthorn, crab, medlar, or juniper. Instructions are given for straightening, drying, and fitting the pieces together and whipping the top with horsehair.

Intriguingly, Dame Juliana comments that when the rod is disassembled it can be used as a walking staff so that no one need know that the bearer is going fishing. Perhaps a meditative walk could be a convenient cover for a Prioress bunking off from nunning to see if the local trout were rising. She was not into poaching; her treatise ends with a 15th century version of the *Countryside Code* that included not stealing other people's fish as well as closing gates.

With the growth of trade and empire, British rod-makers drew increasingly on exotic materials, notably bamboo from the East and greenheart from the West Indies. In the footsteps of Dame Juliana, 19th century fishing tackle catalogues included rods that could masquerade as walking sticks, and one model illustrated in a book of 1886 was a telescopic device of hollow concentric bamboo canes. Our Museum *tenkara* rod illustrates Eastern contribution to the technology as well as the techniques of Western angling.

**John Grimley Evans**  
Friend and Professor Emeritus of Clinical Geratology,  
University of Oxford



# Craft on the grass: Pitt Fest 2015

UNLIKE the blazing sunshine of previous years, the September morning of our third annual Pitt Fest dawned cold and drizzly. Would the weather dampen the appetite of event-goers? Not at all; more than 3,300 people came to make, handle, listen, watch, dance, eat, drink and be inspired on the Museums' lawn – exceeding last year's attendance by at least 10%. You can watch a short video of the day on the 'Pitt Channel' area of our homepage.

So what is the point of Pitt Fest? Of course it's a great deal of fun but there are more fundamental reasons behind it. Two of VERVE's aims are to impart a clearer message of what the Museum is (or can be) about, and to increase participation. The project's interpretation of the Pitt Rivers is not necessarily one of anthropology or ethnography but of technology. Many of the collections are handmade, pre-industrial artefacts that suggest intimate knowledge of materials, design and techniques. Pitt Fest takes just some of the craft processes evident in the collections and makes them accessible and immediate, to re-engage people of all ages with their hands, and to see things 'being made' in order to contextualise and reanimate those static objects sitting behind glass.

So visitors to 'Pitt Fest: Handmade' could learn about dyeing techniques and fire-making, see a pole-lathe in action, or have a go at stone carving, pottery or basketry. Of course no festival is complete without face-painting, music or food, and we tried to inject a global flavour into our line-up. One could try Tibetan dumplings or Peruvian ceviche (raw fish) while listening to Ugandan song or Brazilian capoeira, before perusing the market stalls of fair-trade and local artisanal goodies.

Putting on a festival takes enormous amounts of time, planning, brawn, and goodwill. We are grateful to the many staff, collaborators and volunteers (including the Friends) who helped make Pitt Fest 2015 such a success.

**Helen Adams, VERVE Project Curator & Engagement Officer**



*Above left: Wooden flowers by Stuart King; Above: Romilly Swann of The Outside demonstrates natural dyes; Left: Terry Bremble, Friend; Below: Families enjoyed the hands-on activities*



*Left: Volunteer Tim Renders and Museum Director Michael O'Hanlon at the welcome tent*

Images © Pitt Rivers Museum

## Hand-made cordage with the Friends

It occurred to me that cordage (string, rope) is something one takes for granted, and it would be a good 'hand-made' project for this year's Friends' stand at Pitt Fest. We were fortunate to have offers of help from Oxfordshire Basketmakers Jo Gilmour and Bob Summers, and it became very much a joint enterprise. Jo, Bob, and I had done a practice run the week before, and they both kindly donated rush. Meanwhile, I had been experimenting with making cordage from plastic carrier bags.



Our stand was sited between leather-working (exquisite handbags) and bubbling vats of colourful dyes. We had a steady stream of visitors – both adults and children – keen to have a go at making rush bracelets or plastic string head-pieces, or just to enjoy plaiting or experience the twisting rhythm of cordage-making. There was a very good rota of FPRM volunteers,

many bringing plastic bags to add to the 'materials bank'.

In preparing an information sheet\* for this event, the earliest representation of string that I could find on the web was on a carved Palaeolithic 'Venus' figure c20,000 BC who is shown wearing a string skirt. When you next visit the Pitt Rivers, do take a look in the little drawers below case C117.

There is even a sample of plastic string from Zambia made from the strands of a woven plastic sack. One cannot fail to be impressed by the quipu (a series of knotted cords from ancient Peru, used as a tally system) below C108A; but my favourite cordage example is of neatly twisted bent grass, part of an Orkney basket in C113A. (Note: a torch is advised in order to see the details of this basket.)

**Felicity Wood, Friend**

\*For a copy, email: felicityswood@gmail.com



*Left: 'Cubbie' with grass cordage, Orkney 1953.5.21; Above: Making cordage at Friends' stand*

Photo: Felicity Wood

© Pitt Rivers Museum



## Children's choice: Duct flutes

**W**HEN I started to think about my favourite artefact in the Pitt Rivers I knew I would have to visit the Museum with this question in mind. Deciding on one single favourite item would be difficult. I remember liking the totem pole when I was younger possibly because it has such a good location and is hard to miss. There are also many interesting things that are easier to miss. On this visit I would need to be more of an explorer!

I love how the collection has grown from 18,000 to over 500,000 items in 131 years and how everything is packed in so carefully and lovingly. The space feels very special, like a massive treasure chest with endless

things to discover and learn about.

I decided to begin exploring in musical instruments. This is where I found my (current) favourite object. I was in search of recorders but, at first, there didn't seem to be any. I discovered that 'duct flutes' are almost the same. There are several on display with even more in cabinet drawers. I would love to play some of them to discover the sound they make, but, unfortunately, I am not allowed to do that.

Two duct flutes got my attention. One was made in Ireland, from bamboo, in the first half of the 20th century and was decorated. However, if I had to choose a favourite it would be the duct flute from Kharkov in the Ukraine (1938.34.217).

It was made in 1909 from hazel or willow wood. It has six finger

holes and a thumb hole, like both my descant and treble recorders, but it seemed to be in-between their sizes.

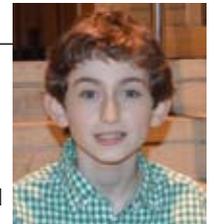
It looked quite new and had some white paint on it, but what I liked the most was that it had small stumps in-between each finger hole which would stop you from getting the fingering wrong.

I would like to play all the duct flutes I saw, but this one really caught my eye, if not my ear!

**Daniel Wald, age 10**

*Ed: Daniel's excellent article and drawing won the 2015's children's column award. Daniel's received a £10 voucher for the Museum shop and one year's family membership of the Friends.*

*Runners-up, Sam Heide (issue 84) and Catherine Jeans (83), also receive £10 vouchers in recognition of their efforts.*



*Daniel Wald at the Christmas Party*

### Letter to the Editor

I have just been reading about Larmer Tree Gardens\*, and thought the General would definitely approve of the way the PRM is developing, as the modern ethos of our Museum is totally in keeping with that fostered by Pitt-Rivers at Larmer Tree. As well as interesting and educational, he wanted to make archaeology fun! And the PRM is doing that for anthropology as well! Even though I live quite far away, your magazine does a very good job of keeping people like me in touch with all the marvellous things that are going on there. I think it will always be my favourite museum.

**Peter Wagstaff, Friend, West Yorkshire**

*\*The UK's first privately-owned pleasure grounds opened to the public in 1880 on Pitt-Rivers' Rushmore Estate, Tollard Royal, nr Salisbury, Wiltshire (see Issue 75, p6)*

### Keep us up to date!

We send regular emails with news and reminders of Friends' events. If you don't receive these, or your email address changes, please email: **mariannicholls26@gmail.com** or phone: **01235 516607**

### New Friends

It's a great pleasure to have Joella Werlin from Seattle, USA, join us as a new Life Member. Our other new Friends are: Fiona Bacon and David Thurston, Inga Ristau, Richard and Anne Marie Schoonhoven, Daniel Wald and family, and Ziyue Wu (all from Oxford); James Ludlow (student member, Stoke Mandeville); James Norris and family (Buckingham) and Sidsel Woxen (Kidlington). To learn more about becoming a Friend, or if your details change, please contact Membership Secretary Rosemary King: **rhking17@gmail.com** or **01367 242433**

## Christmas Party

**L**AST December's Christmas Party drew a merry crowd of Friends and their Friends to a festive evening at the Museum. We were serenaded by the Meadow Lane Quartet and the jazz band, Just Friends. Partygoers wandered through the displays seeking answers to the quiz while quaffing wine and sampling the delicious food provided by The Friends.

The Silent Auction raised £1,106 towards the framing of photographs by Sheila Paine for the exhibition: *Embroidered Visions: Photographs of Central Asia and the Middle East*, planned for November 2016 to April 2017. The lots were generously donated by: Maggie White of Burford; The Cherwell Boathouse; Phoenix Picturehouse; Mezzeto; Oxford Playhouse; Randolph Hotel, Sarah Snoxall, and several Friends.



*Clockwise: Just Friends; Friends' Chair Gillian Morriss-Kay with husband Jonathan Bard; Colin and Vivienne Langton, and Stephen Wood serve the wine; Susan and John Farnell with Linda Teasdale*

*Maggie White*



THE CHERWELL BOATHOUSE



Photos: GFS

# INFORMATION SHEET

The Magazine of the Friends of the Pitt Rivers Museum is produced termly



## 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

**President of Friends of Pitt Rivers:**

Professor Chris Gosden

**Patrons of Friends of Pitt Rivers:**

Alexander Armstrong, Sir David

Attenborough, Danby Bloch, Professor Sir

Barry Cunliffe, Dame Penelope Lively, Michael

Palin CBE, Philip Pullman CBE

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Email: [prm@prm.ox.ac.uk](mailto: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

**Family events:** see [prm.ox.ac.uk/events](http://prm.ox.ac.uk/events)

### Magazine

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**Printed: Oxuniprint**

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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

**Lower Gallery, Case L8A 26 January to 24 April 2016**

Celebrating Imperfection: A display of ceramics mended during the kintsugi residency and their stories (p4)



*Mumaki Shimode working on Delia Gray-Durant's Wedgewood alphabet mug*

**Long Gallery:**

**A Procession**

**4 February-29 May 2016**



photography, focusing in particular on a series of Henry Balfour's albums.

This exhibition by Turner Prize winner Elizabeth Price is a series of photographs, etchings and screen prints made in response to the Pitt Rivers Museum's collection of

### Events

**Wood whittling workshop (£25)**

**20 February, 10.00-12.30/14.00-16.30**

Learn to carve a beautiful, functional, cooking spatula in this half-day workshop with Barnaby Carder\*

**Life Drawing After Hours**

**2, 9, 16 & 23 March, 18.00-20.00**

Tutored drawing sessions in the galleries (£5 per session). Learn about objects representing the body from various cultures and improve your technical drawing skills.\*

**Stone Carving Workshop (£25)**

**13 March, 10.00-12.30/ 14.00-16.30**

Stone carver Nancy Peskett will offer special insight into how stone has been worked across cultures for thousands of years in this hands-on half-day workshop.\*

**Common Objects: Sonorous Matter (£10)**

**22 March, 19.00 start**

An intimate evening of music in the galleries. Two new first performances of scores inspired by selected objects from the Museum's collections.\*

\*book online

For further information about the displays and events listed above and for other PRM What's On information eg Saturday Spotlight (third Saturday of the month, 14.30, free) and After Hours Tours (twice monthly 17.30 – 19.00, £10\*) see: [prm.ox.ac.uk/whatson](http://prm.ox.ac.uk/whatson)

## FRIENDS' DIARY DATES

**Behind the Scenes**

**Wednesday 13 January, 2016**

**11.00 or 14.00**

**Visit to PRM's Photograph Collections**

Enquiries: Martin Rush

[martinrush48@gmail.com](mailto:martinrush48@gmail.com) **01865 725842**

**Spring Away Day**

**Tuesday 2 February, 2016**

**An Architectural Walkabout**, fully booked

**Greater Zimbabwe (talk)**

**\*Wednesday 17 February, 18.00 for 18.30**

**Navigator Ndhlovu**, recipient of a Kenneth Kirkwood Fund bursary, in conversation with **Gillian Morriss-Kay**, Chair of FPRM

**Kenneth Kirkwood Memorial Lecture Day MAGIC and its role in human society**

**Saturday 12 March 10.00-16.00**

The Ancient Iranian priests of the Zoroastrian faith, the Magi or three Wise Men, gave us the word Magic. So what connection can we see between religion and the dazzling sleights of hand and psychological illusions associated with Magic today? What common functions have oracles, shamans, spirits and sacrifice played in the great diversity of human cultures? Four distinguished speakers give us their views.

See booking form enclosed.

Enquiries: [shahinbekhradnia@hotmail.com](mailto:shahinbekhradnia@hotmail.com)

**Architecture for All (talk)**

**\*Wednesday 20 April, 18.00 for 18.30**

**Marcel Vellinga**, Reader in Anthropology of Architecture, Oxford Brookes University

**Summer Away Day to Newbury**

**Monday 9 May**

Visit to Sandham Memorial Chapel and West Berks Museum (Newbury)

See booking form

Enquiries: Rosemary Lee

[rosemarylee143@btinternet.com](mailto:rosemarylee143@btinternet.com)

**01491 873276**

**The mystery of the hanging garden of Babylon**

**\*Wednesday 18 May 18.00 for 18.30**

**Stephanie Dalley**

Retired Research Fellow, Assyriology, Oriental Institute, University of Oxford

**\*Pitt Rivers Lecture Room, access via**

**Robinson Close, South Parks Road, OX1 3PP**

Visitors most welcome. £2

No parking. Tea from 18.00

Enquiries: Terry Bremble

[g.bremble@gmail.com](mailto:g.bremble@gmail.com)

**01865 390489**

See [prm.ox.ac.uk/friendsevents](http://prm.ox.ac.uk/friendsevents) for more information about these Friends' events