

herculaneum archaeology

the newsletter of the Friends of Herculaneum Society - Issue 16 Spring 2013



LUCIUS MAMMIUS MAXIMUS COMES TO LONDON!

LIFE AND DEATH IN POMPEII AND HERCULANEUM AT THE BRITISH MUSEUM 28 MARCH - 29 SEPTEMBER 2013



1. THE BRITISH MUSEUM

DR PAUL ROBERTS, CURATOR ANSWERS SOME QUESTIONS ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

WHAT IS YOUR PERSONAL INTEREST IN POMPEII AND HERCULANEUM?

I went to visit with my Mum and sister in 1976 as a schoolboy visiting both Pompeii and Herculaneum. In the 70s it was possible to see objects on open display – some of the wooden furniture was there in glass cases. I was impressed by the scale of Pompeii and the intimacy of Herculaneum. In the exhibition I have wanted to give equal weight to Pompeii and Herculaneum.

WHAT WOULD YOU SAY ARE THE MAIN DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE SITES?

First of all, scale and then degree of refinement. Pompeii was a commercial hub whereas Herculaneum was more refined. Herculaneum was less industrial and displayed the upper end of art decorations. For example, the marble reliefs from the House of the Dionysiac Reliefs in Herculaneum which you will be able to see in the exhibition are the types of decorative artwork not found in Pompeii. So, there was a qualitative difference between the two – Pompeii was less refined.

WHAT IS FOUND IN HERCULANEUM AND NOT IN POMPEII?

In Herculaneum, because of the nature of preservation, we can find furniture and foodstuffs. In addition, the Herculaneum sewer has given us an insight into the ordinary lives of the common people.

WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO CREATE THIS EXHIBITION?

I always wanted to do an exhibition about ordinary people and their daily life. I grew up in a restaurant surrounded by people and family so maybe this is why I have always been fascinated by ordinary people and their lives.

WHEN DID THE IDEA FOR THE EXHIBITION EMERGE?

In 2006-7. I took some amber from the British Museum to the Naples Museum and saw an 'off the peg' exhibition about to be brought out and I thought, we could do one much better than this if we build it ourselves. Officially the project began in the Spring of 2009. It was facilitated by the merger of the Soprintendenza of Pompeii and Herculaneum. I developed a very good working relationship with Mariapaola Guidobaldi who authorized the objects on loan from the Archives of the Naples Museum. She was assisted by Giuseppe Zolfo, a senior conservator working with the Herculaneum Conservation Project and the Soprintendenza who advised what could travel and what couldn't. 90% of the objects at the exhibition are from Naples (the rest are from the British Museum).

WHAT WAS THE GREATEST CHALLENGE FOR YOU?

Trying to write the book [accompanying the exhibition] and set up the exhibition at the same time.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE OBJECT IN THE EXHIBITION?

I have two – the statue of the Empress Livia as you enter the exhibition reminding us that Pompeii and Herculaneum are part of the Roman empire 2 hours from Rome. The second object must be the baby's wooden cradle.

WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNT ABOUT ROMAN SOCIETY THROUGH CURATING THIS EXHIBITION THAT YOU DIDN'T KNOW BEFORE?

The social revolution. I didn't know much about slaves and the role of women before.



2. PAUL AND VANESSA IN POMPEII
JANUARY 2013

WHAT WAS THE MOST DIFFICULT ITEM TO TRANSPORT FROM NAPLES?

Undoubtedly, the wooden furniture. Each individual element of the furniture had to be wrapped extremely carefully for transportation.

I KNOW YOU HAD HIGH HOPES OF DISPLAYING THE RECENTLY EXCAVATED WOODEN ROOF OF THE HOUSE OF TELEPHUS. WHY WERE YOU UNABLE TO DO SO?

Unfortunately, the roof timbers are not in an adequate stage of conservation to be displayed. However, Mariapaola Guidobaldi authorised one of the roof panels which was discovered 17 years ago to be included in the exhibition.

VANESSA BALDWIN TALKS ABOUT THE ROLE OF THE ASSISTANT CURATOR

WHAT EXACTLY IS YOUR ROLE AS ASSISTANT CURATOR?

As assistant curator I worked alongside the lead curator, Dr. Paul Roberts, on all aspects of the exhibition. When you're part of the curatorial team of a major exhibition you get to work with many people across the museum: from the exhibition and design department, to conservation and scientific research. Different departments and people entered the planning phase at different points, it is part of the curators' job to convey the messages of the exhibition and keep everyone up to date with the list of exhibits – which was changing and evolving up until a few months before the opening. Following the planning stages, the arrival of objects brought the start of the installation, which lasted about a month in total. 90% of the objects in the exhibition were on loan from the Soprintendenza Speciale per i Beni Archeologici di Napoli e Pompei, with the other 10% being from the British Museum's own collection. The objects range from large bronze statues, to small glass perfume bottles, so the installation was a varied process. With the installation complete, Paul and I launched in to presentations, tours and interviews leading up to the opening – the media and public interest has been terrific.

WHAT WOULD YOU SAY IS THE MAIN MESSAGE OF THE EXHIBITION?

It's difficult to condense an entire exhibition, with over 300 objects, into one message! However, I think I would like people to leave with a sense of the diversity of life in ordinary Roman towns like Pompeii and Herculaneum: that rich and poor, free and enslaved, were living alongside each other. The exhibition gave us the opportunity to display items from the wealthiest homes alongside those which could have come from the poorest.

WHAT DO YOU WANT PEOPLE TO FEEL WHEN THEY HAVE SEEN THE EXHIBITION?

To feel that they have a greater understanding of what domestic life might have been like for the inhabitants of Pompeii and Herculaneum prior to the eruption of AD 79; that their lives at once bore similarities, yet also stark differences, to our own. The exhibition is designed around the imagined plan of a Roman house, with objects positioned according to the rooms they might have been found in. By grouping objects in this way we hoped to give a sense of how a Roman house operated and what might have happened in each space, whilst introducing some of the real people who inhabited the towns.

IN PREPARING THE EXHIBITION, WHAT WAS YOUR FAVOURITE PART?

Every stage of the preparation was doubtlessly declared my favourite at some point! However, our trips to the sites themselves are my highlights. Working with our colleagues in Italy, exploring the stores of Herculaneum, Pompeii and Naples Museum – these were the most magical experiences. We made two trips during my time on the project, with the primary aim of taking photographs for use within the exhibition and the accompanying books. The process could sometimes be frustrating, but was always very rewarding. I remember spending hours one morning with two of the British Museum photographers at one end of the Decumanus Maximus in Herculaneum, waiting for a 10 second break in the cloud cover. WHAT WAS THE MOST DIFFICULT THING YOU HAD TO DO?

There was not a specifically difficult task, but rather the juggling of many different aspects that caused the most headaches. At one point all of our text deadlines seemed to arrive at once: for the exhibition text, for the books and for various articles. This all had to be navigated alongside the final decisions relating to the design and the installation planning.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE OBJECT AND WHY?

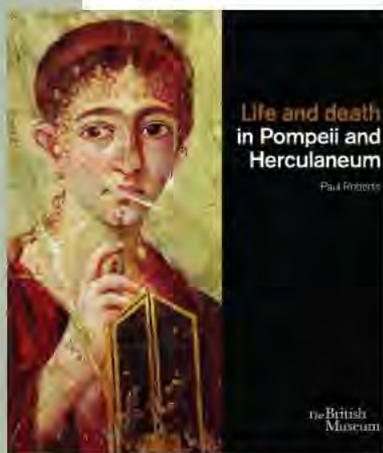
My favourite object is also something that has changed many times over the past 15 months. Even since the opening I've changed my mind each time I've given someone a tour. One I'm sure many other visitors will share with me is the garden room from the House of the Golden Bracelet in Pompeii. I vividly remember seeing these frescoed walls showing a chaotic, yet incredibly serene, garden scene for the first time at the Rosso Pompeiano exhibition in Rome in 2008. I encountered them twice more, in an exhibition in Germany and in the stores of the Antiquarium at Boscoreale, before they arrived here in their vast crates in February. It was important for us that the design enabled visitors to stand within the walls of this beautiful room, as its incredible preservation gives us a real sense of being in the room of a wealthy Pompeian house. And I think I appreciate it all the more for knowing the work that went in to the design, transportation and installation!

WHAT DO YOU HOPE THE LEGACY OF THE EXHIBITION TO BE?

It would be fantastic if the exhibition expanded Herculaneum's reputation as a site that is just as archaeologically and historically valuable as Pompeii. We also wanted to draw people's attention to some of the fantastic work going on at both of the sites today. In our kitchen section we display a showcase full of fascinating material from a cess-pit in Herculaneum, excavated by the Herculaneum Conservation Project only a few years ago. DO YOU HAVE A COMMENTS BOOK AND CAN YOU SHARE SOME OF YOUR FAVOURITE COMMENTS BY EXHIBITION GOERS SO FAR?

We don't have a comments book, but I have some favourite reactions of visitors that I've taken round, or overheard. I particularly enjoy the moment students of the Cambridge Latin Course turn the corner from the street section into the atrium and come face to face with the herm of Caecilius. One of my favourite comments came from the novelist and historian Tom Holland, who declared the exhibition the 'ancient history Jurassic park', referring to the almost child-like excitement of seeing these ancient objects, that are familiar to so many people from school books and popular culture, assembled together in one place.

Krystyna Cech



Paul Roberts, *Life and Death in Pompeii and Herculaneum*. The British Museum Press, 2013. ISBN 978-0-7141-2276 (hbk), 978-0-7141-2282 (pbk) 320 pp. 400 ill.

Paul Roberts, curator at the British Museum specialising in Roman art and archaeology, has written this truly sumptuous catalogue to accompany the great exhibition now running at the BM. The organisation of the volume mirrors that of the exhibition, which takes you through a typical Roman house room by room. After a couple of chapters giving background and general context for Pompeii and Herculaneum we have chapters on Living Above the Shop; Atrium; Cubiculum; Garden; Living Rooms and Interior Design; Dining; and Kitchens, Toilets and Baths. The volume closes with a discussion of the cities' final hours.

The exhibition has received rave reviews, and the book is a worthy accompaniment. It is hard to see how it could be any better. The figures above – number of pages, number of illustrations – indicate the level of detail. Opening completely at random, I find “Some wine did not travel very far, as several properties in Pompeii produced their own, including the Villa of the Mysteries, with its wine press and dolium yard. One bar in Pompeii on Via di Nola (V. 4, 6–8) had a wine press, eight dolia and also a small bakery, so customers could have some bread with their wine. The House of the Ship Europa in Pompeii had a sizeable vineyard, while other open spaces in Pompeii, such as the so-called cattle market near the amphitheatre, where in fact vineyards on a large commercial scale.” Each of those sentences has a footnote giving the scholarly or archaeological authority for the statement. Every page is packed with information like this. Yet the overall impression is not one of endless minutiae. The broader perspective is always clear, and the reading flows along effortlessly. The illustrations are beautifully reproduced and include an astonishing number (to me, anyway) of things not seen, or not easily seen, elsewhere. For Friends of Herculaneum the prominence of the smaller town in this catalogue (and exhibition) is welcome. The reason is clear: owing to its peculiar conditions of preservation, Herculaneum has much to offer an exhibition focusing on domestic life.

The introductory chapters give an overview of the history of the excavations, a guide to the typical Roman house, the history of the region and the towns in antiquity, and basic information about Roman politics, names, people and society. For the ghouls among us (and—be honest—it's the gruesome end of the inhabitants that is one reason for the perennial fascination of Pompeii and Herculaneum) the final chapter gives all the gory details. More importantly it gives the latest scientific thinking about what exactly happened during the eruption, with due allowance for the unknowable. The latest numismatic research on the date is reported, as well as research refuting the long-

standing belief that the residents of Pompeii died mostly from suffocation: the contorted ‘pugilist’ pose of victims, represented now by the famous casts, and other evidence suggest death by extreme heat, in other words from a pyroclastic flow such as the one that carbonised Herculaneum—but not as hot as that one, so that there was no carbonisation at Pompeii. The book is clearly a labour of love, and the product of many years' profound engagement with its subject. One wonders how the author found time to produce so substantial a volume in the midst of the enormous work of arranging the exhibition. No book can have everything; on any of this one's myriad topics, separate, equally long books exist. The abundant references take the curious reader further; should a fuller treatment be desired. The delicate balance of breadth and depth in so wide a range of material is superbly well judged here. Dr Roberts deserves the warmest congratulations.

Robert Fowler

Report on ‘Vesuvius: a volcano, its history and legacy’

3 May 2013 at the British Museum

When was Mt Vesuvius formed? How does it fit with the plate tectonics of the Mediterranean and Adriatic? How does archaeology elucidate geology, and vice versa? These are some of the themes discussed in three presentations by Iain Stewart, of the University of Plymouth, Clive Oppenheimer of Cambridge University, and Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, also of Cambridge.

Prof. Stewart explained that Vesuvius is actually a very young volcano, formed as the movement of the tectonic plates shifted eastward from Spain over the past 40 (?) million years. At the same time, the land mass of Africa has been moving north, pushing downwards under the sea toward Eurasia. The Tyrrhenian Sea has been “ripped apart by this trench migration.” Where the older volcanoes of the western Mediterranean are now quiet, those like Vesuvius, farther east, are the most active. The Campi Flegrei, it turns out, are a potentially much greater eruptive force than Vesuvius itself.

Prof. Oppenheimer is interested in how archaeology meets volcanology, and how nature affects human occupation, migration, and cultural change. His discussion of ‘risk zones’ showed that the huge population of Naples is potentially in the line of disaster the next time around. He also pointed out how odd it is that no literary mention of the eruption of AD 79 survives other than the letters of Pliny the Younger. Prof. Wallace-Hadrill discussed the different effects of the volcano on Pompeii and Herculaneum, with particular

emphasis on the so-called 'boat houses' in which so many people died. Sadly, they had about 12 hours to leave before the pyroclastic flow fell upon them, but obviously they didn't comprehend the danger. He showed evidence for the repeated rise and fall of the shoreline at the water's edge over the century previous to the eruption, activity that in hindsight was due to the magma pools building up and falling back preparatory to the large explosion.

All agreed that the destruction depended on the particular circumstances of the eruption and the direction of the wind. Although Giuseppe Mastrolorenzo from the Vesuvius Observatory didn't make it to London, the other three talks, and the stimulating discussion with questions from the audience, made for a terrific evening.

Nancy H. Ramage

Dana Professor of the Humanities and Arts Emerita,
Ithaca College



3. MEMBERS AT THE PRIVATE VIEW



Mount Vesuvius, 1985. Andy Warhol. An Italian art dealer commissioned Warhol to create a series on Vesuvius. Warhol used an ordinary postcard sold to tourists for inspiration, cropping elements out of the original in order to focus on the exploding volcano. By using popular culture as source material, Warhol connects the series with his larger interest in the mass production of images.

Mount Vesuvius, 1985. Andy Warhol (American, 1928—1987). Screenprint on linen, hand-colored with acrylic; 72.4 x 81.3cm. The Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh; Founding Collection, Contribution the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc. © 2013 The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc. / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

Report on a Private View of the Pompeii and Herculaneum Exhibition

24 May 2013 at the British Museum

On a wet and windy Friday morning, 25 members of the Friends of Herculaneum Society assembled in the front entrance to the British Museum ready to be given a private view of the Life and Death in Pompeii and Herculaneum exhibition led by the curator Paul Roberts. We were in for a treat: we had

what in effect amounted to a tour of a Roman house as well as a glimpse of the low life and the high life of a Roman town and its population. Paul took us round the exhibition pointing out objects of everyday life as well those of decoration and adornment building up a picture of daily life 2000 years ago. There was a sense of immediacy in the objects on display in the context of the social spaces they originated in. At the same time, there was also the sense of loss in that these same objects were never to be used or admired again by the citizens who inhabited the Roman *città* devastated by the eruption of Vesuvius in AD 79. There is some question now as to whether the eruption took place in August as is commonly accepted or in October (Paul veers towards October). As far as Herculaneum is concerned, intensely hot pyroclastic surges carbonised wood and organic materials with the result that wooden furniture (a stool, a chest, a bench and most poignantly a cradle) and recognisable fruit and vegetables (figs, pomegranates, olives and walnuts) form part of the display. Also, from Herculaneum are two exquisite marble reliefs which were found in the House of the Dionysiac Reliefs on separate occasions in 1997 and 2007 and displayed together again for the first time after the eruption. Also on display is a ceiling panel from the House of the Relief of Telephus which formed part of the ceiling which was discovered last year. Treasures from the Villa of Papyri are also there: one of the five bronze statues of the so-called 'dancers', the marble statue of the god Pan making love to a she-goat, the bronze statue of a piglet (our mascot), a marble bust of Pyrrhus and a bronze bust of Lucius Calpurnius Piso Pontifex, the likely owner of the villa. On the point of the statue of Pan and the she-goat, Paul explained that when it was discovered in 1752 it was hidden from public view in the Palace of Portici as it was considered too shocking to be put on public display. However, seen from a Roman perspective the statue represents a goat god copulating with a goat and is hardly shocking. At the end we all came away with the feeling that our knowledge of Herculaneum had been enhanced by the objects on display and the expert and personal account of them given by the curator. We are lucky Paul stood up for Herculaneum when the exhibition was being mooted as there were those at the British Museum who were all for leaving it out as "nobody would be able to pronounce it." One omission for me was the lack of any visible reference to the invaluable collection of carbonised papyri discovered at the Villa of Papyri. Overall, however, my appreciation of life in a Roman *città* in the booming 1st century AD was greatly improved by the wonderful expertise and engaging commentary of the curator.

Krystyna Cech



4. SARAH HENDRIKS AT WORK

THE FRIENDS OF HERCULANEUM BURSARY REPORT

Thanks to the support of the Friends of Herculaneu Society, I was able to spend last summer working with the Latin Papyri from Herculaneum, now held in Naples. For just over a month I worked with the original papyri at the Biblioteca Nazionale di Napoli in association with the Centro Internazionale per lo Studio dei Papiri Ercolanesi and the Officina dei Papiri. The object of my study was PHerc 78, the said text *Obolostates Faenerator* by Caecilius Statius.

This study began as a research project undertaken at the University of Oxford as part of the MSt in Greek/Latin Languages and Literature. During this course, under the guidance of Dr Dirk Obbink, I examined some original late C18/early C19 drawings of this Herculaneum Papyri, now held in the Bodleian Library. While in Naples, the focus of my research was on the palaeography of the original papyrus and I hoped to find suitable comparisons in the script to contrast with the Bodleian Library drawings. During my time there, I discovered some exciting links between the Bodleian drawings and the original texts, and I look forward to presenting these results at the upcoming International Congress of Papyrology in Warsaw this August.

Receiving this grant from the Herculaneum Society meant that I was able to travel to Naples to study the original PHerc. 78, research I would otherwise have been unable to complete. My time in Naples was most rewarding, both personally and academically, and I was able to enjoy many of the unique cultural opportunities of the area alongside my research.

I am most grateful for this opportunity and would like to extend my sincere thanks to Dirk Obbink, Gianluca Del Mastro, CISPE, the Officina dei Papiri and not least the Society for their encouragement, support and assistance, and facilitating the discovery of future paths of research.

Sarah Hendriks

PRESS RELEASE:

THE LAST DAYS OF POMPEII: DECADENCE, APOCALYPSE, RESURRECTION
INTERNATIONAL LOAN EXHIBITION EXPLORES HOW AN ANCIENT CATASTROPHE HAS BECOME A MODERN MUSE FOR GENERATIONS OF ARTISTS

The eruption of Mount Vesuvius in A.D. 79 destroyed, yet paradoxically preserved the ancient city of Pompeii, providing a vivid glimpse into the daily lives of ancient Romans. Since the rediscovery of the site in the 1700s, centuries of leading artists—from Piranesi, Ingres and Alma-Tadema to Duchamp, Rothko, Warhol and Gormley have been inspired to re-imagine it in paintings, sculpture, photographs, performance and film. While exhibitions dedicated to the archaeology of Pompeii have been numerous, this is the first time this ancient city and cataclysmic event is explored through the lens of modern creators and thinkers. Featuring nearly 100 works, *The Last Days of Pompeii: Decadence, Apocalypse, Resurrection* will be on view from February 24 through July 7, 2013.

Organized by the Cleveland Museum of Art and the J. Paul Getty Museum, the title of the exhibition, *The Last Days of Pompeii: Decadence, Apocalypse, Resurrection*, is inspired by Edward Bulwer-Lytton's *Last Days of Pompeii*, an incredibly popular 1834 novel that combined a Victorian love story with sensational subplots of pagan decadence, Christianity and volcanic eruption. The book was presented as archaeologically accurate and helped transform Pompeii into a place to stage fiction. It captivated generations of readers, prompted tourists to visit the site and inspired many works of art in a wide variety of media.

"Each generation creates a new Pompeii for themselves," stated Jon Seydl, exhibition co-organizer and The Paul J. and Edith Ingalls Vignos, Jr. Curator of European Paintings and Sculpture (1500-1800) at the Cleveland Museum of Art. "It's an astonishingly rich subject for artists, who have returned over and over again to



Untitled (Seagram Mural Sketch), 600-1000. In the midst of his commission for the Seagram Murals, Rothko traveled to the bay of Naples. As a result of his encounter with Pompeian wall paintings, he radically changed course, moving toward a more somber, even oppressive effect. The rich palette for the series—deep reds, maroons and oranges—recalls fire, lava, smoke and dried blood. An entire gallery is devoted to ten Rothko works in the Cleveland Museum of Art.

Untitled (Seagram Mural Sketch), 1959. Mark Rothko (American, b. Russia, 1903—1970). Oil and mixed media on canvas. National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, Gift of the Mark Rothko Foundation, Inc. 1985.38.5. © 1998 Kate Rothko Prizel & Christopher Rothko / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York



The Dog from Pompei, 1991. Allan McCollum. For this work, the artist used a second-generation cast of the famous dog from the House of Vesonius Primus, first cast in 1874. While the animal's contorted body gives the viewer an immediate emotional charge, McCollum's fundamental goal for this series was to create an environment that would make the viewer reflect on how we use artifacts to engage with history, and how distant we ultimately are from the original dog.

Dog from Pompei, 1991. Allan McCollum. Polymer-modified Hydrocal; 53 x 53 x 53 cm. Photo: Lamay Photo. Courtesy of the Artist and Friedrich Petzel Gallery, New York

suit the preoccupations of their own time.”

Mixing chronology and media, the exhibition breaks down according to three broad themes. *Decadence* looks at why we consider Pompeii as a place of luxury, sex, violence and excess. *Apocalypse* explores Pompeii as the archetype of disaster—the cataclysm to which all others are compared—from the American Civil War and the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki to 9/11. And *Resurrection* considers how Pompeii has become a place to re-create and recast the ancient past.

The Last Days of Pompeii: Decadence, Apocalypse, Resurrection contains six galleries of remarkable works of art exploring these ideas from more than fifty public and private collections in Europe and the United States, including the Louvre, the National Gallery of Art in Washington, the Philadelphia Museum of Art and the Museum of Modern Art. Appearing only in Cleveland is a suite of ten large paintings by Mark Rothko, preliminary studies for the Seagram Building commission in the late 1950s. Rothko eventually withdrew from the project, and this is the first time these ten works have been exhibited in the same space. Also appearing in the Cleveland show is a 1991 installation called *The Dog from Pompei* by American artist, Allan McCollum, which brings together 16 replicas of perhaps the best-known of all the body casts from Pompeii, a startling work that has a powerful impact on the visitor.

“The scale of the disaster and the remarkable archaeological record have inspired some of the most interesting and important artists of the last three centuries,” stated Seydl. “All these artists used Pompeii to create entirely new stories that tell us much more about their own time than about antiquity.”

After a Gladiator Fight during a Meal at Pompeii, 1880. Francesco Netti. Netti's most famous work, this painting was displayed at the 1880 National Exposition in Turin and purchased by Queen Margarita of Italy. Though widely praised for its archeological accuracy, the painting presents an entirely fictional story of drunken, bloodthirsty banqueters, half-nude women, street violence and a corpse.

After a Gladiator Fight During a Meal in Pompeii, 1880. Francesco Netti (Italian, 1832–1894). Oil on canvas; 115 x 208 cm. Museo di Capodimonte, Fototeca della Soprintendenza per il P.S.A.E. e per il Polo Museale della Città di Napoli.



Following on from the success of our previous Schools Competitions in 2009 and 2011, our Schools Competition this year took the theme of 'Life and Death in Pompeii and Herculaneum' to coincide with the exhibition at the British Museum. Vanessa Baldwin, assistant curator of the exhibition, chose 5 objects from Herculaneum which formed the basis for the competition. The hope was that we would provide an impetus for schools to explore Herculaneum in order to compliment their visit to the exhibition. We had a fabulous response from schools up and down the country.

A few words of summing up from Nigel Wilson, chief judge of the competition:

This year's Schools Competition elicited a most gratifying response - there were more than 200 entries. It was notable, and perhaps a trifle surprising, that the 11-13 age group was very much better represented than the others. There were plenty of attractive and imaginative entries and it was not at all easy to draw up the list of prize winners, We have found room in this Newsletter to print a few, and plan to add others to the website. We should also like to thank all the entrants (and their teachers) for demonstrating their enthusiasm.

Below are some of the winning entries:

Story behind the Three-legged Table

Molly Dickens, Our Lady's Abingdon

11-13 Age Category

Write the story behind the Object



5. CARBONISED WOODEN TABLE FROM THE HOUSE OF THE MOSAIC ATRIUM

Mosaics are all the rage in Herculaneum, that's why my husband and I decided to get one done. We wanted to put it in the entrance to our house for all visitors to see. The mosaic itself was going to be of my husband and myself. My husband is a fisherman and I work at the market selling figs. Together we do pretty well for ourselves. Like all mosaics, an artist firstly has to draw the image, so I arranged for one to come to our house and draw my husband and me. My friend recommended him to me. His name is Julius. We were very excited when Julius agreed to come. I had my hair done in the latest fashion and we bought fine clothes; my husband wore his new toga and I, my finest jewellery. When the day came for Julius to come, I was rather nervous, especially when he actually arrived. He waddled up the path to our

front door. When I opened the door, I was quite taken aback as there stood before me probably the fattest man in Herculaneum! His face was round and his skin was pale. His long, dark hair was tied up in a ponytail and his toga was a creamy colour. "Hello", he huffed, "So errrr ... where do I set up? I opened the door wider and stood aside to let him through. Julius squeezed himself through the door frame and shuffled into our house. "You can set up over there, in front of that bench" I pointed out to him. So Julius trudged over to the area I had pointed out to him. I called my husband and he came rushing through. We began to position ourselves on the bench as Julius was setting up. Once Julius was finished, we sat completely still and Julius sat down on his stool and took out a long strip of soft lead. He had barely drawn a line when there was a SNAP and Julius was on the floor and his stool was shattered around him. When I got to help, I noticed certain pieces of the stool were carved in a picture I remember. "I'm so sorry," he said "I will try to fix it!" and then I realised where I remembered the stool from. I looked across the room to where my grandmother's small, 3-legged table had been. The empty space made my heart sink. While my husband and I were preparing ourselves, Julius had taken the small table, thinking it was a stool, and had used it to sit on. Julius slowly got up, collected the pieces, and told me he would bring it back tomorrow - good as new. And when he returned the next morning, the table was as good as new. He was so sorry about the table, that he did our mosaic for free! And now it can be seen at the entrance to our house, and that little table has another story to tell.

The Tale of the Dancer from the Villa of Papyri

Kitty Woods, St Michael's Catholic Grammar School
I had always loved to dance. As a girl, when I lived with my family on the edge of Herculaneum, I would entertain any visitors we had in our humble home and I was always performing to neighbours on hot summer nights. All who saw me dance would say, "Aurelia, how you can dance! What beautiful skills you have!" Everyone said I was a talented girl and my parents had always hoped I

6. BRONZE STATUE OF A WOMAN FASTENING HER DRESS FROM THE VILLA OF PAPYRI



would become a dancer in the rich villas surrounding our home. Therefore, when I turned fourteen, my parents were delighted to hear, from a friend of theirs who worked as a slave, that Lucius Calpurnius Piso Caesoninus had built a magnificent new villa on the edge of the coast, in front of the majestic Vesuvius and looking over the glistening sea. Lucius was looking for dancers to perform at a big party he was throwing on celebration of his new villa. All the upper classes of Rome, Pompeii and Herculaneum, were going to be there, including Julius Caesar, his son-in-law! Everyone told me I should go and I wasn't afraid to – it was the opportunity I had always dreamed of. So, on a warm summer's morning, I walked to the north west of Herculaneum and was greeted by the sight of the stately villa. I was awe struck at the sheer beauty of the grand building I saw before my eyes and could not believe that such a big building could exist in the same town that housed my family of 12 in our two-roomed hut. Arriving at the impressive villa, I was a tiny figure in a tornado of chaos. The door I entered was, I think, the staff door, although every feature was so ornate it was hard to tell. A few people gave me odd glances, and I started to feel apprehensive of what might happen because I certainly felt out of place. Suddenly, I was handed a professional dancer's dress, brightly coloured and swishing. I stared down at this assortment of fabric and then looked up again just in time to see a girl with light brown hair walking down the passage in front of me. She saw me looking at her and said over her shoulder: "You'll need those for dancing later! Follow me, for we're due to rehearse in a few minutes!" So, from that first party at the villa of Lucius Calpurnius Piso Caesoninus, I never stopped dancing and, over the years, I became the best dancer in the whole of the Roman Empire. Every rich citizen wanted me to dance at their parties. But, in memory of the first time I ever danced at a party, there will always be a statue of me, Aurelia Crassus, at Lucius' villa, the Villa of Papyri.

Loaf of Bread stamped Celer

Edmund Findlay, Birkdale School

Celer had been a slave for the last twenty-nine years of his life. The family who had owned him were members of one of the oldest and most important families in Herculaneum.

He had worked hard for his master Lucius Gaius Cecimus in Herculaneum and had provided a good service. He had been rewarded with his freedom only last year. As a freedman, he now ran the bakery next door to his former master's house. It was a typical day for Celer. He was up before dawn to commence his day in the bakery. There were mills in the bakery where the flour had to be ground. These were made of volcanic rock and consisted of a block cemented onto a base called a meta and a hollow cylinder called a catillus into which the grain was poured. A donkey was harnessed to this pole and turned the cylinder by walking in a circular path all day. The movement of the two blocks against each other ground the grain into flour. The flour then had to be made into circular loaves, stamped on the base with his name 'Celer', and finally baked in the wood-fire oven of the bakery. The bread would be sold that day to the townspeople of Herculaneum from the shop front which opened directly into the street. It was a typical day for Celer. All the daily chores lay ahead of him. The donkeys were brought to the three mills and attached to the poles. Slaves began adding the grain to the mills to make the flour to make the bread.



6. LOAF OF BREAD STAMPED WITH THE NAME OF A SLAVE, CELER FROM THE HOUSE OF THE STAGS

The sun was shining and the sky was blue. The mountain had been making a background rumbling noise for the last couple of days, and there was a cloud of debris in the air drifting in the direction of Pompeii. Refugees and travellers had started to arrive in Herculaneum. Some had carts of belongings and others carried their luggage on foot. They were covered with ash and dust, spattered with blood and their faces spoke of fear. Celer sold his bread to some of them and he listened to their tales of woe and horror. Celer was interested in their stories of how they had escaped the eruption but the thought hadn't occurred to him that it could happen in Herculaneum, too. The ash cloud was drifting in the opposite direction, wasn't it? He carried on with his daily chores. There was no need to panic, no need to escape. He had a job to do, a bakery to run. Trade was brisk. There were a lot of customers today. There were so many people travelling and they all needed to eat. Suddenly the sky darkened. The eruption had begun a new phase. Pumice stone was raining from the sky. It was frothy and bubbled, as light as the ash itself and no larger than a couple of inches. Celer at last began to worry. The pumice stone was like pieces of cloud falling from the sky. Should he too become a refugee and leave Herculaneum? He had just put a batch of his loaves into the wood-fire oven. A terrible rumble filled the sky. Pumice and ash had risen to a height greater than he could ever have imagined. It was many miles high. Suddenly, there was a deafening roar such as he had never before heard the like. A column of hot mud spewed into the sky. Celer looked towards the top of the mountain and saw that it had vanished. The shape

of the mountain had changed forever; the top of the mountain was no longer there. It had exploded into the column of mud like a fountain up to the heavens. Celer watched the spectacle in awe. Should he have left when others had done so? Too late now, he thought in his last seconds of his life as the eruption column collapsed onto Herculaneum. Boiling mud filled the rooms of the bakery, extinguishing all life in its path. All that was left of Celer were his loaves still baking in the oven to be discovered nearly two thousand years later when Herculaneum was excavated out of the solidified mud. His name stamped on the base of the bread was the legacy he left to tell the story of that fateful day.

**For the 14-16 age category we asked
“What do these (five) objects tell us
about Herculaneum? (1000 word limit)**



7. TOOLS PERHAPS BELONGING TO THE SOLDIER FROM THE ANCIENT SHORELINE

Bryony McIvor, Burntwood Secondary School

The absolute definitions and meanings of these objects are a little speculative, for example, the 'dancer' from the Villa of Papyri might not be dancer. The fact that there are more than one of these bronze statues strongly suggest that she is a dancer. However, she could be a priestess performing a ritual. She could be an important woman in Herculaneum, maybe a close friend of the sculptor or maybe she represents a feeling or characteristic such as beauty. Her pose is fairly ambiguous although she appears to either be removing or fastening her clothes. Her eyes are very prominent and are the only feature of her body that aren't made of bronze. The Romans obviously valued beauty as she is very attractive and her eyes are pronounced which could mean that sight is very important. Also, her bright eyes add to her good looks and they have a habit of following you around the room. The loaf doesn't look that much different from breads today showing that Romans had worked out the best way to bake loaves. In addition, the bread is branded meaning that there was more than one bakery in Herculaneum. Branding products is very modern and shows that the baker had business and marketing knowledge. It also shows that bakeries were in competition with each other so branding was important. The loaf of bread is quite interesting as the name of the slave 'Celer', is stamped on the bread and shows that slaves were reasonably respected in Herculaneum, especially if they were good at their job. It could also mean that a slave's status was used as the brand for this bakery which means he must have been important. The carbonised wooden cradle tells us that furniture in Herculaneum was rather sophisticated, as babies would sleep in their own cribs. This crib has a rocking mechanism which shows quite advanced technology. Modern day cribs look almost exactly like this one which shows how superior their technology was. It

also displays that Romans had the same problems sending children to sleep as we do now. Moreover, it illustrates that Romans had a certain amount of respect for children and childhood as they took the trouble to make mechanisms to help babies sleep better. Tragically a dead child was found in this crib when it was excavated. It had stayed there throughout the eruption. Furthermore, it might show us that mothers in Herculaneum could have lives away from children as the child found in the crib was there without anyone else. The tools of the 'soldier' are decorated showing that style, fashion and aesthetics were very important in Herculaneum. All these objects were made with appearance in mind and even the simplest items were important for showing off wealth. The tools were another way this "soldier" could display his wealth and class to his friends. Your image was obviously very important in Herculaneum as all of these objects have a hint of style about them. The three-legged table is also rather attractively decorated but more subtly so. This table may have been situated



8. CARBONISED WOODEN CRADLE FROM THE HOUSE OF MARCUS PILIUS PRIMIGENIUS GRANIANUS

in the bedroom or the dining room. It appears in a few paintings as well. Tables like this may have been common in villas in Pompeii and Herculaneum. This shows that it may have been a fashionable item for a Roman citizen to have. In conclusion, all these objects show that people in Herculaneum valued image and appearance very highly. They show innovative thinking, sophisticated design and refined skill.

John Peatfield, Stowe School

These five objects have much to tell us about the ancient Romans who once inhabited the sea-side town that was Herculaneum. Unlike Pompeii, which was preserved in a thick layer of ash and suffocated the population through pneumonoultramicroscopic silicovolcanokoniosis (ash entering the lungs), Herculaneum was completely covered in the lava that spilled out of Mount Vesuvius, covering it so that it lay 60 feet below the 'new' ground level. This meant that Pompeii's disaster preserved the outline of the people in their dying poses as rigor mortis set in, and all of the metal objects such as pots and pans as well as gladiatorial paraphernalia. Whereas in Herculaneum, the lava rapidly fossilised all of the wooden objects and so they are still recognisably preserved today. Herculaneum was different to Pompeii in many ways, for one thing it was smaller and had more of the traditions inherited from the Samnite period in its customs and building processes. The main activities were agriculture and fishing, and the lower classed were allowed to mingle freely with the upper classes. It was also known to be a place of leisure and entertainment. Herculaneum is less famous than the slightly larger town of Pompeii even though several aspects of what happened to it in the fateful year of AD 79 mean that the building work found there is more superior and better preserved than that found in Pompeii. Both cities were hit violently by the huge pyroclastic

flows, which are in essence enormous volcanic ash and pumice avalanches which have a core temperature of over 500 degrees celcius and can travel at 100 km/h or more. These pyroclastic flows wiped out the occupants of both cities and destroyed most of the upper stories of the red brick houses, but it did preserve the wooden pieces such as the small carbonised cot or cradle and the three legged table which are as definable today as they were then, only slightly blacker and more fragile. But what do these objects tell us about Herculaneum? Each one has its own specific story to tell and provides an insight into the lives of the families who possessed these everyday objects, which seem so moving and extraordinary to us now. First the wooden cot, found in the house of the mosaic atrium, which is of a simple design and shows us that Herculaneum was a place where families lived, not just a holiday resort by the sea. Some young child must have been sleeping when the deathly ash avalanches came swirling in and pneumonoultramicroscopic silicovolcanokoniosis killed everyone, including the innocent child. The cot is now of course empty, but looking at it the emptiness tells its own story of the real child who once slept there. It is a poignant reminder of lives lived and lost. Herculaneum would have followed the usual city plan like our own, with offices and theatres in the centre and suburbs all around the edge. Per contra they would have had amphitheatres, forums and market places; nevertheless they would have still had suburban houses lining the centre and giving bulk to their city. Many families would have lived there, so the finding of cots is not unexpected. Many people forget that both Herculaneum and Pompeii were populated by, in the day, perfectly ordinary suburban people who survived day to day on fairly ordinary jobs, from bakers and cleaners, to bankers and shop owners. Normal people made up the bulk of the population so you should not be surprised if you find more cots and beds than you do statues of long-forgotten deities. This is proven by the perfectly ordinary three legged table which is something that equally a slave or a wealthy citizen could have around the house. From that simple domestic item, we go to the bronze statue of a woman from the Villa of Papyri, which is thought to be where the father-in-law of Julius Caesar, Lucius Calpurnius Piso Caesoninus, lived. Its survival proves to us that important political figures, rich merchants and landowners all inhabited the city of Herculaneum. This means that Herculaneum and Pompeii must have been quite a significant province of mighty Rome and for many politicians it would have been paramount for their careers to be a leading and powerful individual in those cities. To show their power to any guest they may be having, they would adorn their houses with fine (and expensive) statues of gods that were supposedly in their favour. Romans often had small and quaint, to us, statues of the household gods to protect their homes from bad spirits. There is a strong sense of religious items and references in all aspects of people's lives, from tiny amulets to the more impressive statues as shown here. In the end though, no religious artefact was able to prevent the horror of the volcano. Many slaves would have lived here too, which is sometimes overlooked by the documentaries about the catastrophe, and most middle class and upper class families would have had one to twenty slaves to do domestic jobs. Some shops that used slaves to help with production as shown in the loaf of bread with the name Celer stamped on it, found in the House of Stags. Upstairs in this house are the slaves' rooms, with a separate wooden staircase leading to it, quite like there is a servant's staircase in many country homes in England. Celer would have worked most probably in the kitchen. The so-called soldiers' tools found on the ancient

shoreline (when the volcano erupted the coastline was about four hundred and fifty metres further in) also proves to us that there were many slaves living and working in the area. Thousands of artefacts have been recovered, but these five provide a snapshot of the hopes and fears lived by the citizens of Herculaneum, lives not unlike our own.

Sam Davies, Birkdale School

The main and fundamental impression that is given off by these objects is the normality that seems to be staring us in the face, an impression that gives us an idea of how those living in Pompeii and Herculaneum behaved in both life and in the days before their seemingly imminent death, being both exactly the same, and the carbonised bread implicates this more than most. What is at first noticeable about the loaf made by the slave 'Celer' is that it is divided into eight slices that could have been easily torn apart by hand: adults, children and slaves alike could have torn this without the use of a knife, providing a strong sense of the communal with people tearing themselves and each other a share of the bread. It is obvious that this bread has been designed this way, to be torn among friends. What is also interesting about this bread is the Romans' recognition for talent, and the fact that a slave has the right to stamp his name on it and have the assurance that his bread will not be claimed as his master's work, certainly raises questions about the priorities of Roman slave masters. It is possible that a good slave who toils hard for success was worth being proud of as a method of showing off to your friends. As demonstrated in the modern day with the French, bread had the potential to be an integral part of normal life, so allowing a slave to carry out this precious task shows the trust that masters often had. The tools from the soldier found by the shoreline, possibly having been killed by Vesuvius' blast, tell us about the usefulness of soldiers as a public service in Roman times. These tools would in no way be useful for fighting, but rather for building houses, roads, ditches and fortifications. This would indicate that Roman soldiers would spend just as much energy in peacetime infrastructural service as in fighting off barbarians. It seems to have been a very well rounded career. Next we see a carbonised baby's cradle, and what is immediately obvious about it is the functionality of its design, and just how similar it is to the design of a modern cradle; the curvature of the bottom slats of wood shows a great deal of thought and craftsmanship, as the working of as perfectly carved wood as possible would have been time-consuming. This would push up the price of the item considerably, meaning that such a cradle, with a properly constructed bottom and sides that have not fallen apart, would be used mainly by the wealthy. Others may not have been able to afford the rocking function. This also says something about parenting methods in Pompeii and Herculaneum; in a time when infant mortality was roughly 30%, keeping an heir child healthy and happy was very important as they would go on to inherit the family fortune, thus the rocking element. Viewing the Romans as great innovators, not even getting a baby to go to sleep was too small a task to facilitate. The carbonised table also shows great intricacy and craftsmanship, but in a different way to that of the cradle: this would not have been designed with complete functionality in mind, but also with the splendour of the object being taken into account. The baby would not have appreciated nor had anybody around to appreciate any design intricacies of their cradle. This shows how the Romans applauded functionality as well as splendour (unless impressing your friends was involved), as we have seen with the bread. This three legged table would have been situated in the triclinium or dining room with three 'chaise-longue' style couches; as well as

to the eye. The idea of having three couches, with three or so people on each, also indicates the communal methods of having a meal; people talking to one another would be talking across the food, so food seemed to be the bridge between families, friends and business men, showing it to be an integral part of the community. The table with its crafted legs would be there to enhance the food and to display the wealth of the family. There is a definite idea of prestige behind this. The bronze statue of a 'dancing' woman is also surrounded by this idea of prestige; in Roman times, impressing friends in high places was a sure-fire way of gaining work contracts, positions in society and therefore wealth and fame. The owner of this statue, who lived in the Villa of Papyri in Herculaneum, was undoubtedly accustomed to this. From the statue we can immediately tell that most people from high up in Society were male. The female figure, with her sensuous arms attending to the top of her stola would certainly have appealed to the men gathering round to admire her, providing a community in the knowing glances between each other. From the name of the house 'of papyri', this effect has worked, as in the house were found 1,785 scrolls of papyrus paper, clearly part of the profession of the owner who seemed to have records of a huge amount of transactions. The fact that many of these objects have been left around Vesuvius is testament to the normality of the days before the eruption. There was no time to remove them when the ash appeared and there were no suspicions over safety; children were raised there, long term businesses set up and soldiers sent there on leave to invest in the infrastructure of the area. The bread would have been baked either the same day or the day before due to the lack of preservatives. What these objects tell us is that life was no different leading up, still in the full Roman swing.

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