herculaneum archaeology
the newsletter of the Friends of Herculaneum Society - Issue 5 Summer 2006

GREETINGS FROM NAPLES

I write from the Grand Hotel Oriente in Naples on the eve of the Society's first visit to Herculaneum. The heat, though moderate by Neapolitan standards – a mere 35° C – is enervating, and Friends returning from touring today are looking somewhat wrung out. But there is much excitement at the prospects for tomorrow's visit to the site, where we have made arrangements to visit both the recent excavations of the Villa of the Papyri and the exotic underground theatre, the latter long closed to the public. The Herculaneum Conservation Project staff are standing by to show us their work.

After the tour of Herculaneum and a chance to freshen up, we will gather in the Sala Rari of the Biblioteca Nazionale for the first of our more formal events, the highlight of which will be a talk by the Coordinator General of the Restoring Ancient Stabiae Foundation, Prof. Thomas Noble Howe. We will be greeted by the Mayor of Ercolano, as well as by the Director of the Library, Dr. Mauro Giancaspro, and the curator of the Herculaneum papyrus collection there, Dr. Agnese Travaglione. We hope to hear news of the local archaeological superintendency's study concerning the feasibility of renewed excavation at the site of the Villa. Other presentations and excursions await us on Saturday and Sunday, and of course the banquet – what Italian gathering is complete without a *cena*?

I write now in the future tense; the next issue of the newsletter will contain a report in the past tense of what should go down in history as a landmark event for the Society.

One item of concluded business that it gives me great pleasure to report, however, is the award of the student bursary announced in the last newsletter. Mantha Zarmakoupi will receive £1000 and travel expenses to enable her to complete the work for a digital 3-D reconstruction of the Villa of the Papyri (see her contribution to issue 3 of this newsletter). This will include a virtual reality walk through the Villa by means of a DVD which will in due course be available to members of the Society.

And now, back to La Bella Napoli. Ciao!

Robert Fowler

OBJECTS OF THE SOCIETY

The objects of the Society are:

- to advance the **education** of the public concerning the World Heritage Site of Herculaneum, in particular to create an archive of materials relating to the World Heritage site at Herculaneum and the work of the Herculaneum Society
- to promote **research** into Herculaneum, including the continued investigation of the Villa of the Papyri at Herculaneum, and the publication of the useful results of such research
- to promote the **conservation**, for the benefit of the public, of the artefacts and buildings at Herculaneum

Left: Members of the Society examine the recent excavations of the Villa of the Papyri as part of the excursion to Herculaneum on 30 June 2006. See pp. 4–5 for more photographs taken at this event.

VOLCANISM AT VESUVIUS

Herculaneum owes both its destruction and its preservation to the activity of Mt. Vesuvius, and the fate of the Bay of Naples continues to depend on the volcano. In this article, CHRIS HAWKESWORTH and JAMES SMALL discuss Vesuvius' volcanic nature and how to predict future eruptions.

Vesuvius is a wonderful resource for geologists, as well as for archaeologists. We benefit from the detailed history of the volcano preserved in written records and in paintings, and from the concern to improve risk analysis for people living in the Naples area.

There are volcanoes in southern Italy because of the interplay between the African and European plates, and magmas are generated under Vesuvius in response to the introduction of fluids, primarily water and carbon dioxide, in old sea floor that has been dragged down into the Earth's mantle. These fluids allow melting to occur at lower temperatures, and they also result in more explosive volcanism.

The history of Vesuvius has three aspects: (i) long periods of little activity; (ii) eruptions of lava, as in 1944, and regularly seen more recently on Etna; and (iii) massive explosive eruptions. For the most part it is only the explosive eruptions that are dangerous to people living nearby, and so one of the key questions is what conditions are required for the eruptions to be explosive. The answer appears in large part to be linked to how long it takes for the amounts of volatiles to build up until the system becomes explosive.

A major task for volcanologists is to understand the history of Vesuvius well enough for us to have a better idea of its likely behaviour in the future. The volcano is at least 35,000 years old, and its most striking characteristic is that the present cone sits within the base of an older cone that was blown off in previous eruptions (**Fig. 1**). The remaining wall of the older structure is along the northern margin, as part of what is called the Somma volcano, and that volcano reached its maximum height – perhaps as high as 1900m, as opposed to 1271m for modern-day Vesuvius – about 18,000 years ago. 17,000 years ago there was the first massive explosive eruption, and these occurred at regular intervals until AD 79. They are termed plinian eruptions following the description of the AD 79 eruption by Pliny, and they are characterized by high clouds of ash that extend several kilometres up into the atmosphere. They are extremely

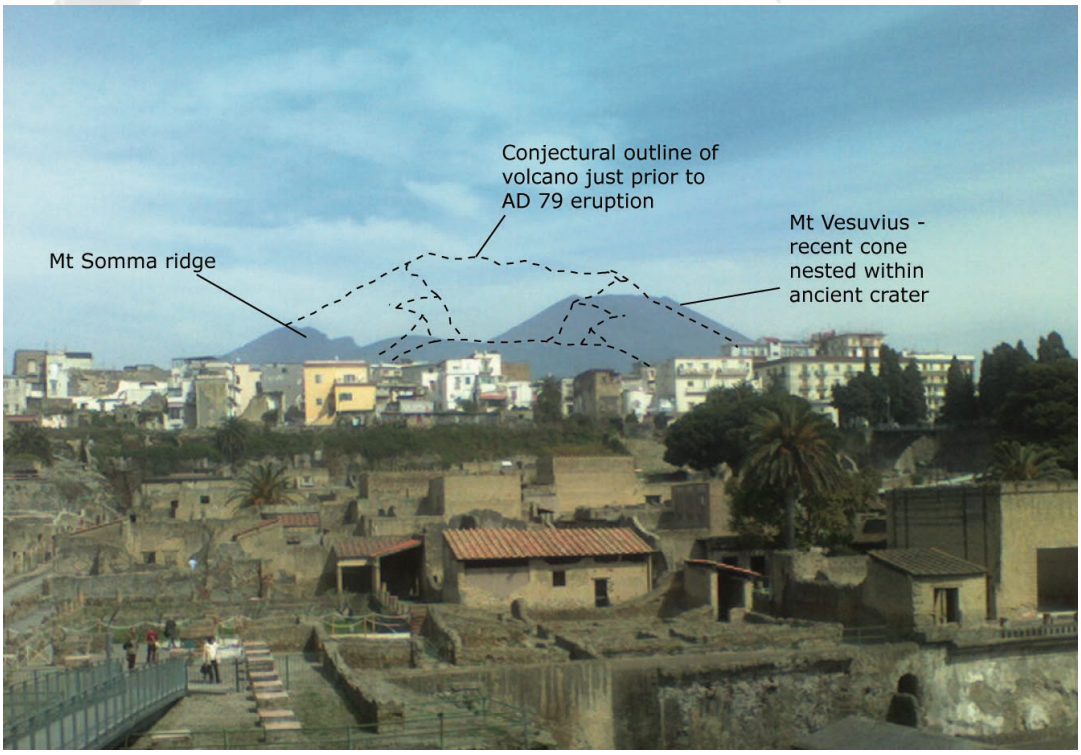

Figure 1. View of Vesuvius and Mt. Somma from Herculaneum. Note the distinctive two-peaked shape of the mountain as it stands today. Roman paintings depict Vesuvius with only one peak, covered with vegetation almost all the way to the summit. Recent research suggests a strongly asymmetric, amphitheatre-like morphology immediately prior to AD 79. This was generated by several large explosive eruptions blasting out portions of the ancient Mt. Somma volcanic cone. The highest parts of the 'amphitheatre' rim at that time may have been around 1500m – significantly higher than the current Vesuvius cone (around 1270m) and the remnants of the Somma rim (in the region of 1000 – 1100m).

dangerous: the ash columns are unstable and collapse, forming rapidly moving flows of hot gas and debris, called pyroclastic flows and surges. These were responsible for the deaths and devastation at Pompeii and Herculaneum. Pompeii was more downwind of the eruption in AD 79, and so it is mostly buried in ash and pumice fallout with a few flows and surges, whereas Herculaneum is largely buried in flow and surge deposits. One result is that some materials, such as books, are preserved only at Herculaneum, but it is also more difficult to excavate there because the deposits are more massive.

Looking back over the history of the volcano, the AD 79 eruption is remarkable for two reasons. Firstly, it had been around 800 years since Vesuvius had last erupted, although the name 'Vesuvius' may have the connotation of smoke or 'extinguished fire'. Certainly there was no communal memory of hazardous volcanic eruptions of Vesuvius. Secondly, the thirty years before the AD 79 eruption were characterized by high earthquake activity. This was regarded as normal behaviour and not yet associated with volcanism. One implication is that major volcanic eruptions at Vesuvius are associated with significant earthquake activity, perhaps over many years, and that offers some reassurance in the context of predicting future plinian eruptions.

Current studies are therefore concerned with monitoring earthquake activity, and imaging the structure beneath the volcano in particular to see if melt is present. They are also grappling with the underlying problem of the cause of plinian eruptions: the build-up of volatile gases. Tiny capsules of melt are preserved, trapped inside the crystals in volcanic rocks. These preserve unique records of the volatile contents of the magma before it moved up to shallow levels and degassed. We now know that the bigger eruptions are of melts that had higher water contents and were stored at greater depths, and over longer timescales, than the magmas in the less explosive eruptions. The next question to be addressed is precisely how long it takes to build up the volatile contents to the levels required for explosive eruptions.

To sum up, Herculaneum is a valuable archaeological resource because it was hit by fast-moving volcanic surges and flows of hot gas and debris, that resulted in great destruction but also in the truly exceptional preservation of, for example, manuscript books. For the future, there is some reassurance from Vesuvius' historic record that there will be considerable earthquake activity before the next major plinian eruption. With our improved understanding of volcanic processes, these and other early warning signals should not go unheeded as they did before AD 79.

Chris Hawkesworth
James Small
University of Bristol

Above: In the run-up to the public meeting of the Society in Naples, senior scholars and graduate students specializing in the study of the Herculaneum papyri gathered in the Biblioteca Nazionale to discuss recent work on some of the most challenging texts to emerge from the Villa of the Papyri. Here we see a detail of a manuscript of Epicurus, *On Nature* Book 2.

THE FIRST NAPLES CONFERE

Right: Members approach the recently excavated corner of the Villa of the Papyri at Herculaneum. Prof. Antonio De Simone, who carried out the excavation, addressed the Society the following morning.

Above: Members visit the House of the Wooden Partition, one of the best-preserved houses at Herculaneum.

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Right: Dr. Mauro Giancaspro, Director of the Biblioteca Nazionale, welcomes the Society to the Library's Sala Rari, where members gathered on 30 June. The Biblioteca Nazionale was co-sponsor of the conference along with the Accademia di Archeologia, Lettere e Belle Arti di Napoli.

Right: The reception at the Accademia on the morning of 1 July. On the left is Dr. Carlo Knight, who delivered the third presentation of the morning, following Prof. Francesca Longo Auricchio and Prof. Antonio De Simone.

FROM THE ARCHIVE

Giacomo Leopardi, *Paralipomeni della Batracomiomachia*

In this delightful mock epic, a satire on the disunited monarchies of Italy after the fall of Napoleon, the Mice this time (unlike in 'Homer', where they fought the Frogs) fight the Crabs and their leader King Senzacapo (No-Head). They are compelled to institute a constitutional monarchy to defend themselves, under the good-natured Rodipane (Gnawbread), nephew of the late King Mangiaprosciutti (Chewhams). It was written by Leopardi at the end of his life, 1835–7, and first published at Paris in 1842. Probably passages like the following, not to mention the references to constitutional monarchy, would have prevented its publication in the absolutist Naples of the day.

CANTO TERZO

Leopardi has just described the underground capital of the Mice, Topaia, where little light is needed, as mice like living in the dark. The mice occasionally light a torch if they need to...

11

D'Ercolano così sotto Resina,
Che d'ignobili case e di taverne
Copre la nobilissima ruina,
Al tremolar di pallide lucerne
Scende a veder la gente pellegrina
Le membra afflitte e pur di fama eterne,
Magioni e scene e templi e colonnati
Allo splendor del giorno ancor negati.

At Herculaneum thus, under Resina,
which with vulgar houses and taverns
covers up that most noble ruin,
at the trembling of pallid lamps
the foreign tourists go down to see
its pieces, afflicted, yet–in fame–eternal,
houses and theatres, temples and colonnades,
still denied today their place in the daylight.

12

Certo se un suol germanico o britanno
Queste ruine nostre ricoprisse,
Di faci a visitar l'antico danno
Più non bisogneria ch'uom si servisse,
E d'ogni spesa in onta e d'ogni affanno
Pompei, ch'ad ugual sorte il fato addisse,
All'aspetto del Sol tornata ancora
Tutta, e non pur sì poca parte fora.

Certainly if German land or English
had covered these ruins of ours here,
no man would ever any more be looking
for torches to visit their antique misfortunes;
and heedless of every expense and every trouble,
Pompeii, which fate has assigned the same lot,
would have returned once more to the sight of the sun,
entire, and no such tiny part of it.

13

Vergogna sempiterna e vitupero
D'Italia non dirò, ma di chi prezza
Disonesto tesor più che il mistero
Dell'aurea antichità porre in chiarezza,
E riscossa di terra allo straniero,
Mostrare ancor l'italica grandezza.
Lor sia data dal ciel giusta mercede,
Se pur ciò non indarno al ciel si chiede.

Eternal shame and bitter disgrace
Of Italy I will not call it, but of those who prize
stolen treasure more than placing the secrets
of golden antiquity in the clear light,
and, freed from the earth for foreigners to see,
revealing once more Italian greatness.
May heaven give them, then, their just reward,
if that is not now asked of heaven in vain.

14

E mercè s'abbia non di riso e d'ira,
Di ch'ebbe sempre assai, ma d'altri danni
L'ipocrita canaglia, onde sospira
L'Europa tutta invan tanti e tanti anni
I papiri ove cauta ella delira,
Scacciando ognun, su i mercenari scanni;
Razza e cagion di cui mi dorrebb'anco
Se boia e forche ci venisser manco.

And may their reward be not laughter and anger,
of which they've always had plenty, but worse punishments,
the hypocritical rabble that makes all Europe
sigh in vain for so many, many years
for those papyri it slowly dribbles over,
chasing all away, in their mercenary professors' chairs;
a breed of animals that would make me sorry
if we had too few hangmen and pitchforks for them.

15

Tornando ai topi, a cui dagli scaffali
di questi furbi agevole è il ritorno...

To return to the Mice, to whom from the bookshelves
of rogues like these is but an easy step...

Translated by David Armstrong

THE LIBRARY OF PHILODEMUS

Daniel Delattre, *La Villa des Papyrus et les rouleaux d'Herculanum: La Bibliothèque de Philodème* (Liège: CeDoPaL/ Editions de l'ULg, 2006). 182 pp. €20.

To most of those interested in the classical world, a mention of papyri will bring to mind the great discoveries made in the sands of Egypt: documents shedding light on life in Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt, as well as literary texts, some quite extensive. And yet, as Delattre reminds us at the start of this lively and informative guide, papyrology has its origins in the finds made at the Villa of the Papyri in Herculaneum in 1752–4: hundreds of carbonized book-rolls, mostly Greek philosophical works, but including about sixty Latin books. The first Greek papyrus document to emerge from Egypt, the so-called Carta Borgiana, was not to be published until 1788. Further large papyrus finds were made there in the nineteenth century, turning into a torrent around the turn of the twentieth with the discovery of the rubbish heaps of Oxyrhynchus, but even today we have nothing to compare with the discoveries at Herculaneum. With the Egyptian finds we are largely reduced to reading unsorted fragments retrieved from rubbish, or recycled as mummy wrappings. Only Herculaneum can give us an idea of the composition and formation of a library, associated with a known individual. And no other site has given us virtually complete works of literature in such profusion, even if in many cases only the last quarter or so of the text can be recovered by the means currently available. Nor is the potential of the site exhausted. Marcello Gigante had long argued that the Villa must have had a Latin library besides the Greek philosophical library already discovered, and Delattre follows him. One might add: if more Latin, why not also more Greek? No cultured Roman aristocrat would confine his reading in that language to philosophy alone.

Delattre begins his survey with an overview of the Villa, including the story of its discovery, and taking into account the most recent excavations. The usual identification of the Villa as that of Lucius Calpurnius Piso Caesoninus, father-in-law of Julius Caesar, is adopted. Delattre includes a brief description of the Villa's important sculpture collection: we may now add to his references the fundamental study of the collection by C. Mattusch (reviewed in issue 3 of this newsletter). Members of the Society will be particularly interested in the author's views concerning the future of the Villa. As always Delattre gives a balanced summary of the controversy, and no-one will question the importance of 'responsibility and reason'. (p. 13 n. 8)

In chapter 2, the focus shifts to the papyri themselves: the find spots, the conservation of the collection over time, the number of rolls discovered. The size of the collection is sometimes overestimated, since inventories register separately the parts of rolls that were broken up soon after their discovery. The figure of 650–700 given here will be generally acceptable. Before moving to their current home in the National Library in Naples, the papyri were housed in the National Archaeological Museum. Visitors there can still see a selection in photographs, but for many years the papyri themselves once unrolled were pasted to a backing sheet and hung on the walls. There could be no starker contrast with the meticulous care now devoted to the conservation of these rolls.

Continued on back page.

Above: Philodemus, *On Death*, Book 4, column 113 (of 118). Philodemus discusses how to react when unjustly sentenced to death, like Socrates. This early engraving (1806–9) was made under John Hayter's supervision shortly after the opening of the roll. Many of the letters depicted here are now lost from the original papyrus.

Chapter 3 gives an account of the history of the opening of the rolls and of the operation of Antonio Piaggio's unrolling machine (shown in issue 3 of this newsletter, p. 6). Once a roll had been cut open so that its flexible middle part (representing the end of the roll) could be unrolled on the machine, the outer parts were put aside. After Piaggio's time, it became established practice to copy the text visible on the inner surface of these sections, and then scrape the surface off to reveal a new layer underneath. This destructive procedure would be repeated until the outermost edge was reached or the fragment was on the point of falling apart altogether. Much of the modern editor's work is concerned with identifying in the collection the outer parts corresponding to each unrolled middle.

In chapter 4, Delattre provides a survey of what is known concerning the format of the rolls and of individual columns of text, punctuation (reduced to the essentials), corrections (made as discreetly as possible), initial and final titles, and so on. The rolls were for the most part highly professional productions. Even the tendency for each successive line of a column to begin slightly further to the left may perhaps represent a deliberate aesthetic effect. The reader will wish to have access to further illustrations, such as those provided in D. Sider's book on the Villa (reviewed in issue 4 of this newsletter), in order to obtain the most profit from this chapter.

Following these chapters on the books as objects, Delattre moves on to give a sketch of their contents. Chapter 5 is concerned with the composition of the library, ranging from copies of key Epicurean texts made as far back as the third century BC to works of the Epicurean Philodemus copied in the author's lifetime (first century BC); then in chapter 6 Delattre shows that the library was almost certainly Philodemus' own, containing as it does work in progress, and texts apparently not intended for general circulation. A brief survey of Philodemus' works follows, arranged by category, and some thoughts on their significance.

After the account of the checkered editorial history of the papyri in chapter 7 (a list of the standard editions is given in an appendix), chapter 8 brings the story up to the present day, introducing the latest technological and scholarly advances in the study of the rolls. The chapter is lent a personal touch by Delattre's account of his own progress in reconstructing over many years the original form of Book IV of Philodemus' work *On Music*: the unique excitement of the process of discovery is well conveyed, as well as the need for large reserves of patience. One's appetite is whetted for the final publication of his edition of the treatise, due to appear this year; and it is pleasing to learn that an English edition and translation of that work will follow.

W. B. Henry

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Following our Annual General Meeting on 15 July, the Society's next meeting will be held early in 2007. We currently expect that it will showcase the papyrus finds from Herculaneum and the exciting recent advances in the study of the papyri. Further details will be sent out to members nearer the time.

Members still have a chance to visit the exhibition *The Final Hours of Herculaneum* (see the review of the catalogue in issue 4 of this newsletter). The exhibition is at the Archäologische Staatssammlung in Munich until 1 November, and in Nijmegen at the Museum Het Valkhof from 1 December until 18 March 2007.

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For more information about the Society, or if you have any comments, suggestions or ideas for articles for the next edition of *Herculaneum Archaeology*, please feel free to contact the editor. We hope you have enjoyed this edition, and thank you for your interest.

Edited by Matthew Bladen