

# **FRIENDS OF THE CLASSICS MUSEUM THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY**

## **38th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

**8 February 2024, Social Sciences Research Building, ANU**

### **President's Report**

I am pleased to submit the annual President's report of the Friends of the Classics Museum, The Australian National University, for a year in which there have been significant, and quite extraordinary, events for the museum.

Our AGM was held on 2 March, 2023.

The Committee was elected as follows:

President - Ros Jackson

Secretary - Helan Beard

Treasurer - Neville Potter

Members: Philip Finley; Roger Fisher; Sue Jorgensen; Margo Geering; Robyn Holt;

Elizabeth Minchin; Hugh Preston

Ex Officio: Dr Georgia Pike-Rowney

I want, at the outset, to recognise the tremendous achievements of our part time Friends' Fellowship Lecturer and Curator, Dr Georgia Pike-Rowney. Since taking up the position in August 2022, Georgia has made a great impact on the museum and its activities. Notable among her achievements have been the outreach to teachers and school students, her initiation of plans to foster higher degree study within Classics, and the commencement of a complete relabelling system for the collection.

However, her major achievement has been her sensitive and diplomatic handling of the repatriation issues facing the museum and the ANU, about which the Friends have been notified throughout the process. Along with Claire Sheridan and Maggie Otto, she has negotiated most professionally with the Italian Government through the embassy, leading to the offer of a very successful loan agreement for the two objects where a resolution has been reached. Media launches have taken the story to the world, increasing interest in the museum, and reflecting favourably on the ANU's reputation.

Georgia was also a key speaker at the University Museums and Collections Conference at Sydney University in 2023, where the ANU's handling of the repatriation matter and our supportive Friends association created great interest.

And then, just when the relabelling project was well underway, hail remediation work on the roof of the A D Hope Building was suddenly announced. This has resulted in the temporary closure of the museum until mid-year, with Georgia and others having to pack up the collection for its transfer to a secure location, and to relocate her office and other museum activities to another building on campus. We wish her well in this mammoth and unexpected task for 2024.

## **Program of lectures and events**

The AGM was followed by a well-attended illustrated lecture on Wall Painting in Pompeii by Estelle Lazer. Over 100 attended, with about 60 returning to the museum for refreshments.

Friday 14 April – A highly successful Roman Themed Dinner, catered for by renowned chef, Janet Jeffs, was held in the foyer of the Research School of Social Sciences. Professor Alastair Blanshard of the University of Queensland presented a most entertaining talk about Ancient Roman food and eating habits. The dinner was extremely popular with the 80 available places selling out within a few days of promotion. A raffle raised \$665, and I would like to thank Hugh Preston for his donation of an ancient coin, and Georgia Bray for once again donating an excellent hamper. These made very acceptable prizes. Overall income from the dinner was \$1,417.

Wednesday 28 June – A special Happy Hour event was held to update Friends on developments in the Italian repatriation issues which had been explained to Friends in 2022. It also included an opportunity for Friends to view the new Graeme Clarke Teaching Collection and Object-Based Learning Room. 40 attended.

Saturday 5 August – “Jebel Khalid on the Euphrates”. This was a special afternoon event in honour of the late Emeritus Professor Graeme Clarke AO. Instigated and chaired by our curator, Dr Georgia Pike Rowney, it comprised a number of speakers including Associate Professor Caillan Davenport, Emeritus Professor Elizabeth Minchin, Dr Tom Clarke, Dr John Tidmarsh, Mr Martin Rowney and Dr Heather Jackson who illuminated Graeme’s distinguished archaeological career and contribution to Classical Studies at ANU. The event included afternoon tea in the AD Hope Building and was well received by the 80 + attendees.

Thursday 24 August - Dr Tom Geue of the Centre for Classical Studies presented a lecture entitled The Enslaved Muse which sparked lively discussion among the 35 attendees about anonymous authorship in Latin literature.

Thursday 30 November – Our final event for the year was a Happy Hour with refreshments in the RSSS foyer at which some 50 attendees enjoyed a highly entertaining talk by Dr Meaghan McEvoy on Teaching Late Antiquity with the ANU Classics Museum Collection.

## **Volunteer Guides**

The guides have had an eventful year with growing interest in the museum contributing to the regular monthly public tours. Other interest groups have booked tours, including a hands-on and descriptive tour for the Royal Blind Society. The guides have also begun an outreach program where two guides conduct PowerPoint presentations, with the aid of some hands-on material, to interest group meetings such as Probus and Spiral. These have been well received and have generated considerable interest in the museum.

Their now-annual July presentations proved so popular in 2023 that a repeat event was held over two Mondays in January 2024. This event was booked out within three days of promotion, with 35 participants, and their generous donations (\$680 to date) will contribute towards the activities of the museum.

The guides continue to meet regularly and conduct training sessions and guide-initiated research presentations. They are a highly dedicated and committed group and I commend them for their service, hospitality and assistance to the museum and its activities. A recent statistical analysis has shown that in the last year the guides have engaged with 281 people in public or private tours and presentations. Thanks to Jan Finley and Susan Chessell for recording and analysing this information.

### **Merchandise.**

There have been several appealing new items added to our offerings, including new cards (so useful for many occasions) and a beautifully designed white china mug, very popular so far and sure to become a collector's item. \$660.55 has been raised from merchandise sales.

My thanks to Robyn Holt, Helan Beard and Margo Geering for their endeavours on behalf of our museum's pop-up shop!

### **Acquisitions and Use of Funds**

Friends will be pleased to know that we have a new acquisition! The purchase of a coin was suggested in 2022 to honour the contribution of a much-valued former museum guide, Randall Falkiner, who died in 2022. The acquisition was deferred while provenance and repatriation issues were being resolved. But recently a gold Solidus from the era of the Late Antiquity emperor, Heraclius, has been bought with the guidance of Associate Professor Davenport. This coin will relate well to future courses in Late Antiquity; and donations from the January guides' event were dedicated to this purchase. The coin will be officially welcomed into the museum at a gathering when circumstances permit.

However, future purchases will be extremely restrained, mainly due to the global provenance climate, and also to the lack of space for expansion of the collection. The committee has therefore been pleased to support, on your behalf, a number of initiatives generated by our highly energetic curator:

1. The Friends of the ANU Classics Museum Grant for Collection Research (\$2000). This will support Honours and MA students in thesis research, involving study of objects in the collection, their provenance and collection history, benefitting both their research and the museum's knowledge of our collection. Official announcements to come.
2. The ARTefacts Project in which six Higher Degree by Research students in art and art history will respond to the collection, resulting in an exhibition and a series of presentations in late 2024. The Friends of the Classics Museum Creative Bursary will provide \$500 each towards four artists' creative works, and \$250 each towards two scholarly written responses.
3. Volume 7 of Graeme Clarke's 'Jebel Khalid on the Euphrates' was purchased to complete the collection of publications and to enhance teaching resources in the Object Based Learning Room. (\$580).
4. Importantly, the Committee agreed to the transfer of \$15000 from the Classics Museum Fund to the Friends' Fellowship Fund to support the Curator's position in 2023-2024.

In addition to the amounts contributed by the Friends, our Curator also raised over \$5000 through school tours, talks and teacher training programs. This fund has provided the museum with an essential budget for day-to-day operations and the purchase of teaching resources, and has been particularly vital for the Object Based Learning Room housing the Graeme Clarke Teaching Collection. Funded resources also include labelling, printing, mounting of maps from Jebel Khalid and signage.

### **Friends of the ANU Classics Museum Fellowship Fund.**

Georgia's position was made possible by all those who contributed to the Friends' Fellowship Fund for which the Committee is extremely grateful. You can see from this report how critical her role is, and how greatly she has developed the activities of the museum. We cannot afford to lose her!

All Friends would have received the letter from Associate Professor Caillan Davenport about the ongoing Fund targets. On behalf of the Committee, I sincerely thank all those who have already made donations or commitments, or who intend to continue contributing to this important avenue for securing Georgia's essential position within the museum and Classics at ANU. We are very grateful to Andrea Morris, Head of CASS Advancement, for her efforts in raising initial and subsequent funds for the Curator's position. The suggestion from the Committee is that, in the present circumstances, you might consider making your generous donations to the Fellowship Fund, rather than to the Museum Fund, which is currently quite adequate for our needs. Caillan has set an impressive example and has given the link below by which this can easily be done.

<https://engage.anu.edu.au/giving/give-now?id=8370ce27-7949-4594-b9b4-3e977f90b1da>

### **Conclusion**

I extend sincere thanks to my colleagues on the Committee who fulfil so many individual roles. I am so grateful that they continue to accept nomination to their positions.

Finally my special thanks on behalf of the Committee go to you, our valued Friends, for your continuing generous support of the museum and its activities. Despite the temporary closure of the museum space we are developing an interesting program for the rest of the year, including our annual dinner, already booked at the Hellenic Club for Thursday 20 June. We hope to see you face to face at our events.

Thank you, and I ask that the report be accepted.

Ros Jackson, President.  
8 February 2024