

Ankara, November 2020

Dear Members,

I think we can all agree that ‘a year like no other’ is a fair description of 2020. I hope that you and your loved ones are fine and have escaped the COVID-19 virus. Here, at the British Institute at Ankara, we have managed to do exactly that so far. All of us staff and our close relatives are well. That said, the pandemic has had a serious impact on the Institute and its activities. The premises in Ankara, for instance, have been closed to the public since mid-March. After several months of complete closure, there has been a skeletal staff presence since June, but most of us are working from home. You will read more about the impact of the pandemic on the activities of the Institute and the research it supports throughout this edition of its magazine.

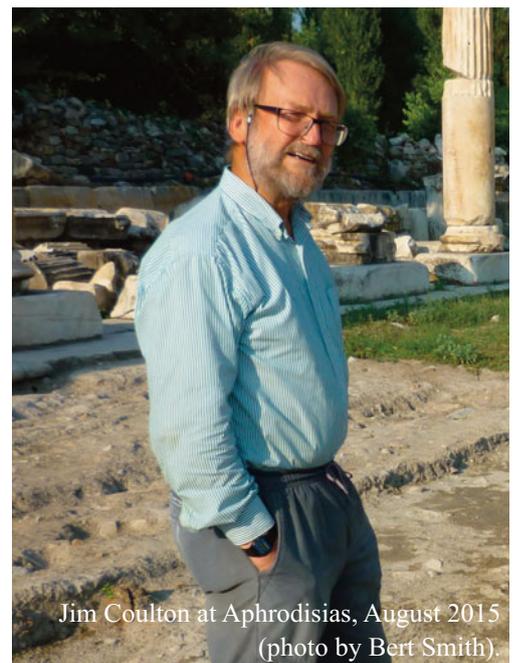
Of course, working from home does not mean that research is not thriving! Three postdoctoral fellows started work at the Institute in September 2020. Umut Parmaksız is the 2020–2021 BIAA Postdoctoral Fellow. He is a specialist in the social and political sciences and holds a PhD from the University of Bristol, where he was also a lecturer until the end of the academic year 2019–2020. Umut will be working on secular migration from Turkey to the UK during his time at the Institute, and you can read more about his research on pages 25–26.

I am pleased to be able to share with you that both 2018–2020 BIAA Postdoctoral Fellows have taken further steps on their career paths. Ben Irvine (see pages 15–17) has been awarded a DAI-ANAMED Joint Fellowship in Environmental Archaeology. We wish him and his young family good luck in Istanbul! Gizem Tongo Overfield Shaw (pages 18–19) is still with us at the Institute, but in a different capacity. Thanks to ‘Special Projects’ contingency funding from the British Academy, Gizem is one of two newly appointed postdoctoral fellows who will be at the Institute until the end of March 2021. Gizem is now working on a project with the BIAA’s Assistant Director, Daniel-Joseph MacArthur-Seal, which focuses on armistice-era Turkey (1918–1923). Ender Peker holds the second new postdoctoral position. As a specialist in urban development, he works on water management and related issues in Turkey, and more specifically in Istanbul. His work forms part of the larger British International Research Institutes’ initiative on water-management issues, of which the BIAA is the lead partner (pages 27–29).

Although Işıl Gürsu, BIAA Senior Cultural Heritage Fellow, has moved to Chicago, where her husband Michele Massa has recently taken up a position at the university (you can read his report on the work of the Konya Regional Archaeological Survey on pages 40–41), she remains employed by the Institute until the end of the year in order to finalise reports and publications. We miss both of them! Finally, we have been able to engage Gül Pulhan as a part-time Cultural Heritage Management Fellow. If that name, too, sounds familiar, it is because Gül was formerly Project Coordinator of the SARAT project (see pages 6–8). Clearly, the Institute would have been a busy place, if it were not for the Coronavirus pandemic.

Throughout the past year, we have also continued to build the digital repository, and the results of this work should start appearing in the next few months. At the same time, the Institute’s website will be redesigned. Please keep an eye out for these changes. We will, of course, also announce them in our regular BIAA e-updates. If you have not done so already, I would like to invite you to subscribe (<https://biaa.ac.uk/about-the-biaa/biaa-newsletter>).

On a less positive note, the Institute experienced a deeply felt loss with the passing of Jim Coulton on 1 August 2020. Those of us who knew Jim have lost a much admired and valued colleague and friend, who was always kind hearted and ready to help. Classical archaeology has lost a renowned specialist in architectural studies and the Institute has lost a trailblazer in the field of modern archaeological survey in Turkey and a long-term Trustee and Monographs Editor. Through his work at the sites of Oinoanda and Balbura Jim introduced a new direction to the work of the BIAA. The two-volume publication of his research at Balbura is an expemplary achievement and of crucial importance for current research on the history and archaeology of southwestern Turkey. As a Trustee and the Institute’s Monographs Editor, Jim never sought the spotlight, but he achieved a great deal over the many years during which he volunteered his services and skills. All of us are very grateful for his enormous long-term contribution and support.



Jim Coulton at Aphrodisias, August 2015
(photo by Bert Smith)

Returning to more positive news, I would like to draw your attention once again to the Safeguarding Archaeological Assets of Turkey (SARAT) project. Since the project officially ended on 31 March 2020, it is thanks solely to one of its partner institutions, the Research Center for Anatolian Civilizations, Koç University Istanbul (ANAMED), that the online course, ‘Safeguarding and Rescuing Archaeological Assets’, can be offered for another year. The number of applicants for the latest session was as high as during the active period of the SARAT project, which demonstrates both continuing interest in the programme and its value. Furthermore, I am proud to report that SARAT won a Europa Nostra 2020 Award in the category Education, Training and Awareness Raising and was runner-up in the 2020 European Archaeological Heritage Prize of the European Association of Archaeologists. Please see the article on pages 6–8 to discover more about these achievements.

Last but not least, you may have heard about the removal of the Institute’s seed collections by the Turkish authorities in early September. Both the palaeobotanical collection and the contemporary reference seed collection were taken. The 108 boxes of palaeobotanical samples and the four cupboards containing the reference collection were removed to a museum in Ankara, where they are now being kept temporarily in storage in the depot. Collections from other institutions and archaeological excavations have also been requisitioned.



Top: the Institute’s palaeobotany laboratory before and after the requisition of the seed collections by the Turkish authorities. Bottom: seed reference collection samples in their specially designed storage system, before their removal from the Institute.

We have been told by the Turkish authorities involved that the collections will be incorporated into those of a soon-to-be-established national institution. It is not clear where this will be located or when it will be opened. We have been assured that scholars will be granted access to the institution and that the Institute’s samples that were previously accessible to the international scientific community will remain labelled as they were when they were held at the BIAA. Naturally, the Institute is in close contact with the Turkish authorities about this issue. Unfortunately, the story broke in the press, and this prompted a wave of coverage from very different points of view. I hope to be able to report in next year’s *Heritage Turkey* that the collections are once again available to the Turkish and international scientific communities, and that palaeobotany is once again a valuable functioning element of contemporary archaeological fieldwork in Turkey.

I hope that you will enjoy the articles in this year’s magazine, which report on the wide variety of work funded, facilitated and supported by the Institute. I am very proud of what has been achieved – a huge amount, despite the current pandemic.

With best wishes – and stay safe!

Lutgarde Vandeput, Director of the British Institute at Ankara