

Archaeological research at Aphrodisias in 2022

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It was great to be back at Aphrodisias with a full team of students, colleagues and experts. We had a very successful season with a lot of good progress on our major projects: Basilica, Pool, Street, House of Kybele and Sebasteion.

Priestess. The most eye-catching find, typically Aphrodisian, is a beautiful marble portrait of a young Antonine priestess of the imperial cult, found in the Street excavations. She wore a tiara-like headdress that once carried several little busts (now broken off) of the imperial figures whose cult she served. The young woman wears an elaborate fashion hairstyle, modelled on that of Faustina the Elder, wife of Antoninus Pius (AD 138–161). Her hair has been tightly plaited and wound around her head six times. The resulting coiffure is superbly carved all round. The idea was to demonstrate that it was achieved with her own real hair (it must have been very long) and that it was arranged with a complexity that needed skilled slaves.

Basilica. In the Civil Basilica we set up five more panels of Diocletian's Edict of Maximum Prices in Latin, Turkish and English. They describe the strange world of the late Roman economy. At the same time, we worked on the anastylosis (or accurate reconstruction) of the four colossal columns of the building's vestibule, repairing and mounting their 4m-long architrave blocks.



The Antonine priestess.



Civil Basilica anastylosis.

This work involved bringing the large architectural members from the Basilica to our Blue Depot (marble workshop) where they were repaired, joined, supplemented, dowelled, glued and made good, after which they were taken back to the Basilica for mounting in their correct positions.

At the same time, work for Michael Crawford's volume on Diocletian's Prices Edict was completed: it is now at the printers and will be *Aphrodisias* volume 13 in our monograph series. We made a 3D reconstruction of the inscribed edict on the Basilica's façade for the book's frontispiece.

Pool. In the pool of the Urban Park / Place of Palms (formerly known as the 'South Agora') strong progress was made with the restoration of its sensitive marble perimeter, which carried a super-abundance of graffiti. The major collaborative volume on the excavation of the pool and its historical riches (by 16 specialist authors) was finished at the site this summer and will also soon be on its way to the publishers (it will be *Aphrodisias* volume 14).

Street. We pursued work in different parts of the excavated Tetrastylon Street, with new sondages to investigate continued life on the Street after the seventh-century urban collapse. Parts of our Dark Age Complex that jutted into the street, in regrettably unsustainable forms of medieval construction, were dismantled and allowed further inspection of its long life and connections to the earlier street constructions behind it.

The portrait head of the priestess was found here, re-used as rubble at the foot of the west street wall after it had fallen from an apartment above during the collapse. It has significant traces of fire damage and was probably a victim



Tetrapylon Street excavation.

of the early-seventh-century disaster, a major fire followed by a serious earthquake, dated by coins to ca 615–620. Our Street investigations have put a lot more detail and texture on the long, changed and difficult life of the area in the period after 600. The detailed collaborative write-up of the Street excavation is scheduled for the 2023 season.

Kybele. Our big new project in the House of Kybele is producing excellent results. This Late Antique mansion, just inside the northeast City Wall, was part of a neighbourhood that includes a warehouse, a street and a city gate. This season we cleared and cleaned the house, and documented the whole area in a new state plan. Careful research reconnected the earlier finds in the museum with their contexts in the house. For example, we were able to reconstitute the assemblage of late Roman lamps and ceramic vessels that were found with the exquisite marble statuette group of Kybele and Zeus in front of a large niche in Room 10 in the private northwest section of the house. The layout, history, and functional components of the house are coming into focus. The heyday of the house was the fifth and sixth century, when Aphrodisias was a thriving provincial capital.

Sebasteion. New anastylosis work was begun to restore parts of the Corinthian columnar façade of the Sebasteion’s temple. The temple stood on a tall podium, was dedicated to Livia and Tiberius, and was the culmination of the whole complex. We want to recreate some of its effect in ‘closing’



The House of Kybele.

the sanctuary’s east end. This season, we repaired the temple platform and trial-mounted parts of two columns and column bases in their positions. They already dramatically change a visitor’s experience of the complex.

Museum. Conservation work began in our Blue Depot on the marble sculptures to be displayed in a new hall and court that will be built inside the existing museum courtyard. We worked first on the most challenging items, a set of badly fragmented mythological reliefs from the Basilica and the Propylon of the Urban Park (formerly known as the ‘Agora Gate’). They are typically vigorous Aphrodisian compositions that have been brought back to life by their sensitive restoration.

Publication. A major new monography, Hugh Jeffery’s *Aphrodisias 12: Middle Byzantine Aphrodisias, the Episcopal Village, AD 700–1250*, was published in September, and Joshua Thomas’s study of the colossal figured consoles from the Hadrianic Baths is in press, with *Istanbuler Mitteilungen*.

It was a most rewarding season, with really good results, carried out at full strength.

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Centaur relief under conservation.