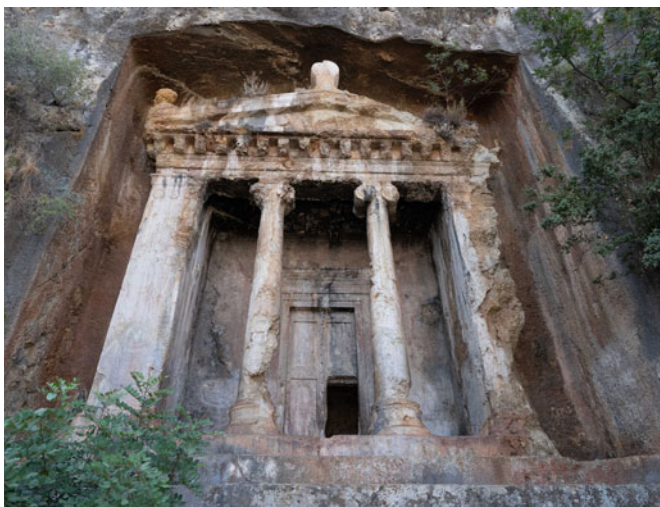


## Telmessos Survey 2022

Alan M. Greaves | University of Liverpool  
İsa Kızgut | Akdeniz University

Under the directorship of Prof. İsa Kızgut of Akdeniz University, a project team from the University of Liverpool conducted an epigraphic survey of the necropolis of Classical Telmessos (modern Fethiye) in August and September 2022. The Telmessos Survey Project is timely and important because although it is one of the largest and most important dynastic seats of ancient Lycia, the site is almost completely unexplored. This is due to the rapid rebuilding of Fethiye following an earthquake in 1957, which covered the site and made excavation and recording of its ruins difficult. This project will give critical insight into East–West cultural dynamics in Lycia by tracing the changing ethnic, linguistic and cultural character of the city of Telmessos over the past three millennia.

Building on our preliminary study in 2017, which was the first ever modern archaeological survey of the city (Greaves 2019), the Liverpool team conducted a systematic digital survey of inscriptions in Fethiye’s Keşikkapı Mahallesi. The Keşikkapı neighbourhood is home to Telmessos’ best-preserved and most iconic monuments, including the famous Tomb of Amintas. Classical, Hellenistic and Roman-period funerary monuments pepper its backstreets and range from rock-cut and built tombs to monolithic sarcophagi and grave stele. As a result of centuries of re-use and rebuilding, some tombs have become incorporated into the foundations of modern houses. Many more are in private gardens and not readily accessible to the public; for example, a number of inscriptions were used as spolia (that is, re-used stone blocks) built into the walls of the Ahmet Gazi Türbe in the grounds of the community’s Gül Cami mosque.



The façade of the Tomb of Amintas, Fethiye’s most iconic monument



A tomb built into the pavement beside a house in Keşikkapı Mahallesi.

We therefore conducted our survey using Virtual Reflectance Transformation Imaging (V-RTI), an innovative digital recording method that we developed and piloted during our preliminary season (Greaves et al. 2020). V-RTI has the advantage of being quick to use and lightweight, as it requires very little technical equipment. It is therefore an ideal digital recording method for urban settings like Keşikkapı Mahallesi, where there are issues around access to private property and working in culturally sensitive environments such as the mosque gardens.

V-RTI provides accurate 3D recordings of inscriptions, which can be used as digital surrogates in case the originals are lost or destroyed, and as a conservation baseline against which progressive erosion can be monitored. However, the real advantage of V-RTI is that it highlights fine surface details and can make barely visible inscriptions more easily legible. In some cases, it can even find new or previously undocumented inscriptions. The rapidity and efficiency of the V-RTI method means that more data was collected in a short field season in 2022 than could be fully processed in the field. Therefore, post-fieldwork processing of 3D models and V-RTI files is being conducted back in the University of Liverpool’s Archaeology Imaging Suite by student interns.

During the 2022 season, the Liverpool team recorded two inscriptions in the Lycian language and approximately 30 in Greek. Prof. Recai Tekoğlu of Dokuz Eylül University is preparing the inscriptions for publication; this will create a comprehensive catalogue of all known Lycian and Greek inscriptions from Telmessos. A number of tombs were decorated with figured reliefs, which were also recorded with V-RTI. The façades of two tombs were found to have been painted, with architectural details that are not visible to

the naked eye but were recorded by digital photography and enhanced using the DStretch digital imaging process.

In the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries CE, a number of tombs were subjected to repeated and deliberate graffiti by sailors visiting the port of Fethiye (then called Makri). These fascinating inscriptions provide dates, personal names and the names of ships, written by Ottoman, Greek, French, Austrian and British sailors, providing an important new historic archive of this important Ottoman harbour town. Dr Aslihan Aksoy-Sheridan of TED University Ankara is advising us on the translation of a large Ottoman graffito on the Tomb of Amintas. Archival research intended to provide a historical context for understanding these graffiti was conducted at the AKMED Research Centre in Antalya by Dr Alan M. Greaves. One of the most prominent graffiti is by a certain I. Speed of London, who engraved his name on the façade of the Tomb of Amintas in 1823. He names his ship as the 'Hero'. This is unlikely to have been the HMS Hero, which had been renamed by this time, and is more likely a small commercial vessel of the same name built in London in 1823 and the subject of technical drawings that exist in the archives of the Royal Museums Greenwich (HIL0221; <https://www.rmg.co.uk/collections/objects/rmgc-object-385780>). These graffiti will be fully documented, researched and included in the final publication.

In order to trace the development of the ancient community of Telmessos, both spatially and chronologically, and to understand its changing identity in response to the appearance of new cultural phenomena and historical actors, each tomb was plotted using GPS and added into a GIS map of the city. Using the results of the V-RTI analysis of the tomb inscriptions, we hope to document all erasures, palimpsests and graffiti as separate epigraphic 'events' and include these in the project database. Whenever possible, these 'events' will be

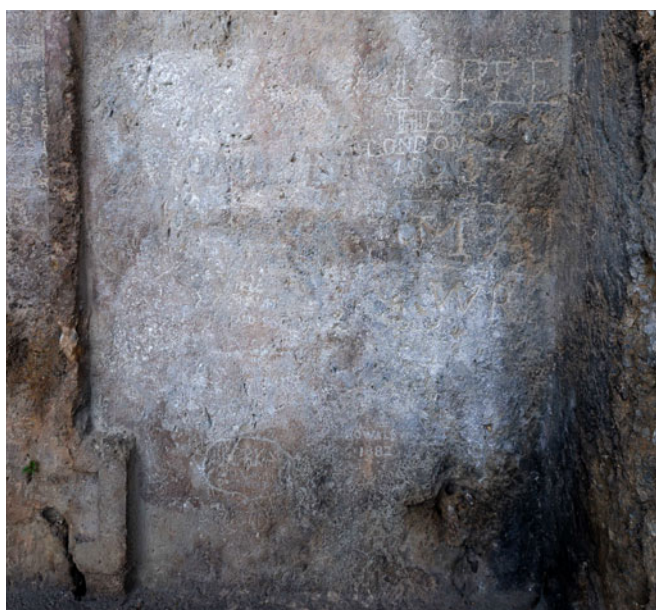
dated by epigraphic content, context or relative stratigraphy to provide relative dates that can also be entered into the database. It can then be divided into chronological data layers, to produce a longitudinal study of Telmessos' changing orientation and identity over time. Our survey will therefore establish a digital baseline of Fethiye's archaeological heritage, which is at risk from building encroachment, erosion and vandalism. Local community stakeholders will in turn be able to use it to inform future planning and policy developments.

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Graffito by I. Speed of London (1823) as it survives today and a detail of the same graffito from Benndorf and Niemann 1884.