

Archaeological research at Aphrodisias in 2023

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Our team of students and experts from Oxford, New York and several Turkish universities made excellent progress at Aphrodisias in 2023 on major projects. Site conservation and anastylosis were our main focus in the Basilica, Urban Park and Sebasteion, while study and excavation in the Tetrapylon Street, House of Kybele and North Temenos House are part of a programme of geophysical and archaeological research into the long history of urban living, private residences and workshop structures in Aphrodisias.

Civil Basilica. The anastylosis of the four colossal double-columns of the Basilica's vestibule was completed, together with their Ionic capitals, 4-m architraves, and blocks of mask-and-garland frieze. The remaining parts of Diocletian's Edict of Maximum Prices, originally inscribed over the building's façade, were set up on 10 custom-designed metal mounts, in Latin, Turkish and English, on the line of the Basilica's west wall. They include the texts of Chapters 50 to 70 of the Edict, as well as information panels and reconstructions. A new edition of Diocletian's Edict, by Michael Crawford, studies the text as inscribed at Aphrodisias and will appear shortly as *Aphrodisias 13* in our monograph series.

Pool. In the Urban Park / Place of Palms, restoration work continued on the sensitive marble perimeter of its 170-m-long pool. The collaborative volume on the excavation and history of the whole complex is now at the publishers. It will be *Aphrodisias* volume 14.

Sebasteion. The temple at the east end of the Sebasteion stood on a tall podium and was dedicated to Livia and Tiberius. It was the culmination of the whole complex. A three-year anastylosis project was finished this year, with the re-erection of large parts of the temple's Corinthian



The Civil Basilica.



Head of Dionysos from Tetrapylon Street.

columnar façade. This has dramatically changed visitor experience of the complex. Strong progress was also made on a volume studying the architecture of the Sebasteion.

Tetrapylon Street. The excavation of this key urban artery was begun in 2008 and completed this year. We found a busy colonnaded street of the late fifth to sixth century, destroyed in the early seventh century, after which life resumed on top of its collapsed debris. In 2023, final excavation brought the last part of the baulk above the east colonnade down to the sixth-century floor, where an interesting inscribed weight standard of the late antique period was discovered. A small head of Dionysos, fallen from an apartment above the street colonnade, was found on the west side of the street. Intensive study and writing were carried out in situ for collaborative publication of the Street's excavation and history. The project has opened a whole new vision of changing city life from AD 400 to 1200.

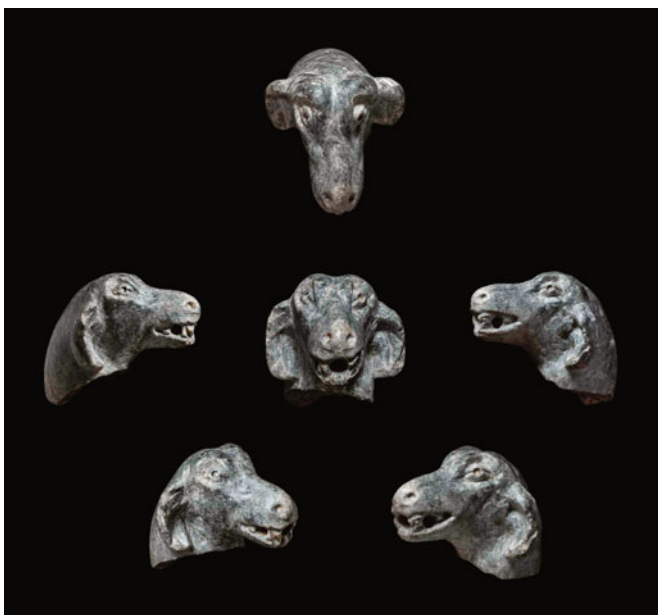
Kybele House. The House of Kybele project, begun in 2022, is investigating a city neighbourhood at the northeast City Wall that includes a warehouse, workshops, a street, a city gate and the large Kybele House itself. This year we removed most of a long, deep, and unexcavated spit of earth lying over part of the warehouse and part of the east-west street. The excavation confirmed that this city quarter remained vibrant until the second decade of the seventh century, after which it fell victim to a sudden destruction event that created a debris layer more than 1.5 m thick.

A stand-out discovery here was a small street restaurant built over the street paving near the workshops in the sixth

century, excavated with all its furnishing still inside – a cooking stand, a dozen cooking pots and their lids, several local storage amphorae, a ceramic strainer and some tableware plates, both local and imported. A (broken) cooking pot was found with bones (for a soup or stew) still inside. A marble pestle and mortarium fragment are also connected to food preparation. The room’s assemblage was completed by more than six ceramic lamps and a miniature head of a dog in blue marble found lying on the floor of the room.

North Temenos House. After a successful campaign of geophysical prospection to the north of the city centre early in the 2023 season, a new project was begun in the North Temenos House, located immediately next to the Sanctuary of Aphrodite, to investigate its extent, chronology and function. The project is part of a new programme of research into housing and living in Aphrodisias from the later Roman into the Byzantine period. In 2023, two trenches were opened at the northern limits of the house and confirmed the geophysical results and that peristyles belonging to the house extended in this direction.

Museum courtyard. Conservation work continued on marble sculptures to be displayed in new covered halls in the existing museum courtyard. In 2023, work focused on three portrait statues and 10 portrait heads and busts, many of them recently discovered. The heads and busts range in date from the first to the sixth centuries AD. They were prepared for mounting on independent pillars after careful assessment of their original postures. Three imperial statues, each badly fragmented, were also restored, together with their heads. They came from the Propylon of the Sebasteion and represented the emperor Tiberius, his mother Livia and a young imperial princess called Aemilia Lepida.



From the street restaurant, a miniature head of a dog.



Conservation of the statue of the emperor Tiberius from the Propylon of the Sebasteion.

Publication. In addition to the volumes already mentioned, on Diocletian’s Prices Edict, the Place of Palms and the architecture of the Sebasteion, strong progress was made during the season on collaborative publications of the Tetracylon Street, the Stadium, the Bouleuterion, the City Walls and the reliefs from the Basilica. Publication remains a key priority of the Aphrodisias project.

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