



Walking the Pisidia Heritage Trail, October 2023.

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The 75th anniversary of the BIAA, 2023

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In January 1948, the ‘British Institute of Archaeology at Ankara’ (BIAA) was inaugurated in the presence of the Turkish Minister of Education Reşat Şemsettin Sirer and the British ambassador Sir David Kelly.

Seventy-five years have now passed and the institute, still BIAA, is now known as the ‘British Institute at Ankara’, a name that better reflects the wide range of disciplines currently studied under its auspices. The BIAA now welcomes scholars from across the Humanities and Social Sciences and is a very different institute from the early days. But the central focus of its mission remains the same: the BIAA aims at enabling UK-based scholars to undertake research on Türkiye and the Black Sea Region and strengthening collaboration between academics from the UK and Türkiye. It continues to welcome scholars from the UK and the wider world to work with the research collections, from the rich library to squeezes and archaeological materials, housed at the Institute. The BIAA has also become a research-generating institution, and a variety of projects are conducted by its staff and fellows in collaboration with UK and Turkish HEI.

The terrible earthquakes in the southeast of Türkiye in February 2023 shook everyone in the country and beyond. As a result of the tragic loss of life and scale of damage across a

wide part of the country, there was an inevitable impact on academic life, with universities moving to online teaching, and a number of events, including some planned by the BIAA, were postponed or cancelled. Thanks to the support of the Cultural Protection Fund and the British Academy, the institute was able to welcome eight emergency research fellows from universities in the affected region, supporting them to relocate and restart their research activities in Ankara.

The series of events to mark the anniversary was kicked off with the launch of the guidebook to the Pisidia Heritage Trail, led by Işıl Gürsu, BIAA Assistant Director of Cultural Heritage Management. The book is a culmination of three decades of archaeological work in southwest Türkiye, bringing together a wide range of knowledge extending from archaeology to geography, and from botanical to intangible cultural heritage. Within the 75th-year anniversary programme of the BIAA, two Pisidia Heritage Trail tours (in May and October 2023) were organised by Equinox Travel and endorsed by the BIAA. Members of the Institute and of the interested community took part.

The most ambitious cultural heritage project of the institute during these 75 years was the SARAT Project (Safeguarding Archaeological Assets of Turkey), winner of

2020 Europa Nostra award. The project came to an end at the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, forcing us to postpone its closing meeting. As part of the 75th anniversary programme, a meeting was organised at the Erimtan Museum, Ankara, in March 2023, with the participation of SARAT's various stakeholders and heritage experts in attendance. The institute has been very active in the cultural heritage field in the last decade and currently, thanks to a British Academy Mid-Career Fellowship, Işlay Gürsu is bringing together the data, results and insights from this research in a monograph entitled *Public Understanding of Archaeology in Turkey*.

Cultural heritage has also featured regularly on the events agenda, with topics ranging from 'What's the meaning of Stonehenge? An exploration of public perceptions & public engagement' to the screening of the documentary *Olive*.

The BIAA's 75th anniversary coincides with the 100th anniversary of the declaration of the Republic of Türkiye, and so the year 2023 is particularly important for the study of modern Türkiye. The Institute has been closely engaged in such contemporary research since the early 2000s, as witnessed by the appointment of a series of assistant directors from the fields of modern history and social and political science, and the expanding remit of the institute's event organisation and grant giving.

The year has also seen the 100th anniversary of the Treaty of Lausanne, signed on 24 July 1923, which resulted in international recognition of the state's new borders and paved the way for the declaration of the Republic just over two months later. Professor Jay Winter, retired after an illustrious career at the universities of Yale and Cambridge, delivered an important lecture at the BIAA based on his recently published book on the Lausanne conference.

The Treaty of Lausanne included provision for the withdrawal of British, French, and Italian troops from Istanbul, where they had formed an occupying force for close to five years following the end of hostilities between



Işlay Gürsu (the Institute's assistant director for cultural heritage) at the event with SARAT stakeholders, discussing SARAT and other BIAA cultural heritage management-related projects.



Marking the 100th anniversary of the declaration of the Republic of Türkiye at Anıtkabir, Ankara (above) and on the Bosphorus, with a view of Kız Kulesi (below).

the Allies and the Ottoman Empire. The occupation has been the long-term research focus of the BIAA's Assistant Director from 2019 to 2023, Daniel-Joseph MacArthur-Seal. Throughout the year, an exhibition curated by Daniel and former BIAA post-doctoral research fellow Gizem Tongo has been on display at the Istanbul Research Institute, documenting the life of the city's residents and occupiers during this unique period (<https://www.iae.org.tr/Sergi/Mesgul-Sehir/209>). When it is published later this year, the Institute will host the Ankara launch of the exhibition catalogue.

The pains of occupation set Turco-British relations off to a rocky start, but subsequent decades witnessed a rapprochement that eventually led to formal alliance within the framework of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Tracking the transformation of this relationship was the goal of the BIAA research project *From Enemies to Allies: Turkey and Britain, 1914–1952*, a series of four workshops held over the years 2015–2019 which resulted in three journal special issues and culminated in the publication of an edited volume late last year.

Under the BIAA's Strategic Research Initiative on past and present UK-Türkiye relations, numerous other projects examining the topic have been supported in recent years, on such subjects as migration to the UK and Turkish perceptions of Britain.

In another anniversary event, a panel discussion on Turkish foreign policy over the past 100 years took place in London, chaired by Sir Dominick Chilcott, recently retired ambassador of the United Kingdom to Türkiye and newly elected president of the BIAA. Panellists included Prof. Yaprak Gürsoy, chair of contemporary Turkish studies at London School of Economics, Dimitar Bechev, author of *Turkey under Erdoğan* and analyst at Oxford Analytica, Dilek Barlas, Professor of International Relations at Koç University, and Selim Yenel, former diplomat within the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and current president of the Global Relations Forum.

Current research in what are often considered the more 'traditional' areas of expertise of the BIAA was equally well represented among the events. Topics of lectures ranged from a presentation of results of the ongoing interdisciplinary excavation project at Seuleukeia Sidera to a talk on hunting and early herding strategies in Neolithic sites of the Konya plain, based on archaeozoological analysis, and on genomics in the study of animal domestication. These topics reflect the wide range of approaches currently applied in archaeological research. The lectures are available via the BIAA YouTube channel (<https://www.youtube.com/@theBIAAnkara/videos>).

In addition to evening events, a number of workshops and conferences took place throughout the year. First in line was the conference linked to the project *Water in Istanbul and Beyond: Past, Present and Future*, which marked new approaches to research in the humanities by merging archaeological research with STEM disciplines and social sciences focusing on the contemporary needs of water management in Istanbul (see pages 24–26). The project illustrated that disciplines like archaeology can contribute to solutions to present (and future) problems. The same can be said of the project *Fragile Landscapes* (see pages 28–29), which also focused on past practices in water management and their potential importance in informing present and future challenges in the Konya Plain. These issues were discussed with stakeholders from a variety of regional and national authorities at a workshop at the BIAA in August.

In May, the conference 'Integrated Approaches to the Political Geography of Southern Anatolia, 1650–550 BCE', took place, co-organised by Bilkent University (Ankara) and the BIAA (<https://bilkentnews.bilkent.edu.tr/?p=4644>). The aim was to create an interdisciplinary platform to engage with the political geography of southern Anatolia between the mid-second and the mid-first millennium BCE.

A totally different workshop took place in July. This year was also the 750th anniversary of the death of the

BIAA British Institute at Ankara

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Jalal al-Din Rumi and his Legacy: Religion, Literature and Culture between Medieval Anatolia and the Persianate World, 13th-14th Centuries

Panelists: **Mohammad Estelami** | McGill University
Matthew Lynch | Oregon State University
Alan Williams | University of Manchester
İktil Selçuk | Ozyegin University
Ali-Asghar Seyed-Ghorab | Utrecht University
Zarifa Alikperova | University of Oxford
Scott Redford | SOAS, University of London

Sara Nur Yıldız | Middle East Technical University
Richard Piran McClary | University of York
Roderick Grierson | Near East University
Murat İnan | University of Victoria
Zeynep Oktay | Boğaziçi University
Andrew Peacock | University of St Andrews
Maarten Holtzapffel | Utrecht University

6-7 July 2023
The British Institute at Ankara
Atatürk Blv No: 154, Çankaya, Ankara

Registration required, limited places
<https://biaa.ac.uk/events/jalal-al-din-rumi-and-his-legacy/>

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Poster for the workshop on Jalal al-Din Rumi that took place at the BIAA in July 2023.

poet and religious scholar, Jalal al-Din Rumi, known in Turkish as Mevlana. In July, an important in-person workshop on Rumi's life and work was held at the Institute (<https://biaa.ac.uk/events/jalal-al-din-rumi-and-his-legacy/>). The event was a collaboration between the BIAA and the British Institute for Persian Studies, one of the BIAA's sister BIRI institutes. The conference brought experts from all over the world together to discuss Rumi, a figure who represents the long history of interaction between Persia and Anatolia.

Finally, a conference on the Konya plain in December 2023 celebrated 60 years' of BIAA-backed projects in the area and illustrated how sharing results and enabling overarching research on DNA or isotope analysis, for instance, adds up to much more than the sum of the data involved and changes perceptions on developments in the Neolithic period that are of importance for a much wider area than the plain alone.

All of this shows that the BIAA is very much alive and looking towards the future and exciting projects to come. We also anticipate continuing to share research with the international research community and the wider public through a wide range of events.