CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Friday 5 July  
*Fictional Anxieties? Truth and Lies in the Ancient Novel*
Professor Richard Hunter, University of Cambridge
8.15 pm          Building X5B          Lecture Theatre

Friday 26 July  
*Greek Drama Festival - State Finals*
9.30 am - 3.00 pm  Macquarie Theatre  Macquarie University

Saturday 3 August  
*HSC Ancient History Study Day - Roman Topics*
9.00 am - 1.30 pm  W5A  Macquarie University

23-25 August  
*MAHA Annual Residential Weekend Conference*
Chaldercot, Royal National Park

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ANCIENT WORLD MYSTERIES AT MAHA’S ANNUAL WEEKEND CONFERENCE

It’s that time of year again! MAHA devotees and ‘new chums’ are invited to participate in the annual great escape from work and winter blues to a sunny, not-too-far-away hideaway where you can indulge your passion for the past with like-minded people!

This year’s annual residential weekend conference will be held, for the second year in succession, at the magnificent venue of Chaldercot, just an hour’s drive south of Sydney in the Royal National Park. If you have not yet attended one of our weekend conferences, then we urge you to come along and enjoy the delights of Chaldercot. Situated on the banks of the Hacking River, it is an idyllic retreat, surrounded by bushland, with panoramic water views.

The theme for this year’s conference is ‘Mysteries of the Ancient World’. The weekend begins with dinner on Friday evening 23 August and activities for Saturday and Sunday include guest speakers on topics related to our theme. There will be time too, for pursuits such as bushwalking and punting on the river - the latter a popular choice with last year’s conference participants. Saturday evening’s entertainment includes the opportunity for fancy-dress (as ad hoc as you like!) with quizzes for the competitive-minded.

Full cost of the weekend is $105 per person. The Punt Ride will be an additional $5 per person.

For further information contact Jim Hamilton, MAHA Secretary (02) 9850.9965 or Anne Irish (02)9850.8833

Please send your cheque (by Friday 9 August) made payable to ‘Macquarie University’ to Jim Hamilton
MAHA Secretary, Division of Humanities, Macquarie University, NSW 2109
MAHA ACTIVITIES

MAHA’S TRIBUTE TO PROFESSOR KEVIN LEE

MAHA members and friends are reminded that Professor Richard Hunter will give his talk, Fictional Anxieties? Truth and Lies in the ancient novel, at Macquarie University on Friday evening 5 July. Richard Hunter is Regius Professor of Greek at the University of Cambridge and a Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge.

The visit to Australia of this distinguished guest to attend the Third Greek Drama Conference at Sydney University being held in honour of Professor Kevin Lee, is being funded by the Macquarie Ancient History Association as part of its tribute to Professor Lee.

DEBORAH DINNEN’S FIELDWORK REPORT

Deborah Dinnen, (photo below) a Macquarie undergraduate student has recently returned to Macquarie from her participation in the Hebrew University’s 7th season of archaeological excavations, led by Professor Itzhak Hirschfield, at the site of Ein Ged, a small village on the shores of the Dead Sea. The village flourished from the early Roman to the Mameluke period. Debbie’s participation in the dig was supported by MAHA and on Monday evening 13 May, she gave an illustrated report to MAHA.

Debbie’s presentation was judged by those present to be the best report on archaeological field work that MAHA has so far enjoyed. It was especially gratifying that Professor Tessa Rajak, a visiting world authority on Josephus and Jewish-Christian relations in the ancient world, was able to attend and participate in the discussion following the talk. She will take back with her to Reading University, a very clear appreciation of the work being conducted by Macquarie undergraduates in Israel.

Debbie has provided a summary of her MAHA talk which is included in two parts on pages 3 and 4 of this Newsletter.

Postscript

Professor Tessa Rajak came to Macquarie University as a distinguished visiting Fellow but, we are happy to announce, left with a personal chair awarded to her by the University of Reading in her absence here in Australia. MAHA congratulates Professor Rajak on her appointment and wishes her every success in her new chair.

ANCIENT HISTORY HSC STUDY DAYS

The response to MAHA’s Study Day program for HSC students has been very positive with over 200 students attending the Egyptian and Greek Study Days held in May and June. Details of the program for the Roman Study Day to be held on Saturday 3 August are now in the post on their way to schools.

If you wish to be on Macquarie University’s email list for news of study days and conferences, please send your email address to Anne Irish, Secretary, Ancient History Department at the email address below, and you will receive the information as soon as it is available. Email to: anne.irish@mq.edu.au

GREEK DRAMA FESTIVAL

Twenty five schools from city and country NSW registered for this year’s Greek Drama Festival, including a number of schools new to the competition. The regional finals were held during June and the following entries (in alphabetical order) were selected to proceed to the State Finals in July.

Catherine McAuley, Westmead, Electra
Gosford High School, Oedipus
Macarthur Girls’ High School, Orestes
Normanhurst Boys’ High School, The Knights
North Sydney Girls’ High School, Orestes
Oakhill College, Castle Hill, Oedipus
Shoalhaven High School, Oedipus at Colonus
Sydney Boys’ High School, Agamemnon
Waverley College, Medea

MAHA congratulates and thanks all schools who participated in the regional finals and especially the following host schools who conducted the competition: Homebush Boys’ High, Oakhill College, Normanhurst Boys’ High and Smith’s Hill High, Wollongong.

All schools and interested persons are cordially invited to attend the State Final to be held in the Macquarie Theatre, Macquarie University on Friday 26 July, 9.30 - 3.00 pm.

Nola Thompson, Coordinator

MAHA
BRITISH MUSEUM FACES FUNDING CRISIS

Dr Andrew Gillett of the Macquarie Ancient History Department has received the following letter and request for support from Gareth Williams, curator of coins at the British Museum:

Dear Colleague,

You will probably be aware from the recent media attention that the British Museum is facing a financial crisis. The museum already has an annual deficit, and it is estimated that on current funding levels this will rise to £35 million p.a. by 2004-5. This situation has arisen through a combination of factors, but while poor management and the downfall in British tourism have both played a part, by far the largest single factor has been a long-term decline in government funding. Government funding has declined by 30% in real terms over the last 10 years, while the opening of the Great Court in 2000 has added £34 million p.a. to the running costs.

The response of the management and trustees has been to propose a series of savage financial cuts, aimed at a total saving of £36 million p.a. These cuts include reducing the total acquisitions budget to £3100K, making it impossible for the Museum to continue to acquire more than a handful of objects each year, but the bulk of the money will be found by cutting around 150 jobs (14% of the staff). Posts to be cut include 10 curators (primarily in Coins and Medals, Medieval and Modern Europe and Ethnography) and cuts of over 25% in the departments of Conservation and Scientific Research. Other areas targeted for cuts included the Photographic Service, Education and gallery staff. The impact of the cuts will mean: reduced access to collections, care of the Collections will be compromised, fewer new exhibitions, fewer educational events, fewer public services, fewer loans to other museums. Expertise crucial to the Museum’s reputation as a leading centre for scholarship will be lost for ever and the Museum’s position as a central resource of expertise on which many other museums rely will be seriously damaged.

As part of our campaign to limit the impact of these proposed cuts, the unions at the British Museum have organised a petition against the cuts, which urges Government to provide proper funding not only for the British Museum, but also for other national museums and galleries, since the problem of underfunding applies to the sector as a whole. On the first day of this petition we gained 1,500 signatures, and we hope that a widespread public response may cause Government to reconsider their approach to funding in the cultural sector.

I hope that you may be willing to support this petition by signing it yourself, and encouraging friends and colleagues to sign it too, then return it to me.

A copy of the petition is available on request to Dr Andrew Gillett, email: andrew.gillett@mq.edu.au or: agillett@hmn.mq.edu.au

DEBORAH DINNEN’S EIN GEDI REPORT - PART ONE

The Ein Gedi excavation I participated in was the final of seven seasons excavating a village that backs onto an ancient synagogue, and which was excavated by Hebrew University in the 70’s. The purpose of the excavation was to uncover as much as possible about the daily lives of the villagers and to determine the nature of the village’s wealth, whether through industry or other sources.

What was found to be certain about the village was that during its 700 years of use, it was an entirely Jewish village for long periods of time, particularly during Roman times. Historical sources refer to it as such and the excavations proved this through artefacts and installations uncovered. The village is built to incorporate the ancient synagogue. The "street" on section D of the site ends in a "gate" structure which is derived directly from the specifications in the "Mishna" and "Talmud" as requirements allowing Jews to carry within the village on the Sabbath. The waterways throughout the site were sporadically covered by paving stones, open to the air, built through and between brick walls or under a "window", also to the specifications required by the "Mishna", an ancient text which specifies the details of Jewish law. This allowed the villagers to draw water from waterways and pour into drains on the Sabbath. There were two mikva’ot (ritual baths) in the site and another one (perhaps two) close to the synagogue. Artefacts were found made of Jerusalem stone, a material that was used only for ritual purposes. The religious nature of the village - direct application of the ancient laws - was fascinating and gave real insight into the life of an ancient Jew during the 2nd temple period.

Deborah’s report continues on the next page
The other focus of the excavation was determining the industry of the village, and from where it derived its wealth. Installations and artefacts indicate that the village was a major part of a lucrative industry, as there were scores of gold coins found, vessels of marble and imported materials, and indeterminate installations throughout the site. Today the area is used by the local Kibbutz as a date palm plantation, and it was suggested that this may have been the cause of the village's wealth in ancient times as well. It was also suggested that this village was a part of the balsam industry. Whatever the industry, it was the close connection that the village had with the King - it was referred to as the "King's village" that would ensure its prosperity. A Herodian Palace is thought to be somewhere in the area, although it is assumed that many of its structures were dismantled and reused as material in local buildings.

It was a wonderful excavation - a fantastic, friendly, knowledgeable team of volunteers and academics. The setting of Ein Gedi is absolutely breathtaking. The excavation itself was an amazing application of the knowledge and skills I had learned and studied through 3 years of the Macquarie Ancient History degree. I really enjoyed the hands-on approach - digging, determining the nature of my finds, learning to sort and classify pottery sherds. I am looking forward to participating in further excavations in the future - the Hebrew University team is planning Tiberius 2004!

Debbie Dinnen