

Rediscovering the Past | The birth of archaeology | Lost cities and the birth of scientific archaeology

We found lost cultures, and learned how to understand the past.

Advances in geology showed the antiquity of the Earth, and of man upon it. Charles Darwin's *Origin of the Species* (1859) helped us to understand how to deduce the chronological relationship of artefacts, and inspired a search for origins. We learnt how cultures interacted with each other, and began to appreciate non-classical achievements and aesthetics. Petra instantly took a grip on the imagination, which it would never surrender. What archaeologists found did not always agree with what they had expected from classical and/or biblical sources. What did this mean for how each was to be understood? Archaeology even brought to light cultures long forgotten: the Minoans on Crete, the Nabataeans in Jordan. Fabled Troy would be located. Excavators at sites in the Arab and Ottoman world found new interpretative tools. British archaeologist Flinders Petrie was one such pioneer. He established the principles by which the objects produced by a culture could be arranged chronologically by comparing the changes in styles.



Working Number: JO 001

Name: Jerash

Holding Museum: -

Date: Prehistoric times- present; discovered in 1806

Materials: -

Curator Justification: The Roman city at Jerash (Jordan) was identified as the Decapolis town of Gerasa by German explorer Ulrich Jasper Seetzen on his journey from Damascus to Jerusalem in 1806. It is one of the better-preserved Greco-Roman provincial towns from the Roman/Byzantine period. The western part of the town was completely preserved and protected. It shows the layout of the city in detail.



Working Number: JO 002

Name: Umm Qays

Holding Museum: -

Date: Greco-Roman until present; visited by Ulrich Seetzen in 1806

Materials: -

Curator

Justification: In 1806, Ulrich Seetzen visited the Roman city of Gadara, which then as it is now was covered by the deserted late Ottoman village of Umm Qays (Jordan). Founded during the 3rd century BC, the city fell to the Seleucids, the Hasmoneans and then the Romans. From the 4th to the 7th century, it was a bishopric seat. After the Battle of Yarmuk in 636, Gadara became part of the Islamic state.



Working Number: JO 003

Name: Petra

Holding Museum: -

Date: Prehistoric-Present; identified in 1812

Materials: -

Curator
Justification:

The ancient Nabataean city of Petra (Jordan) had remained forgotten until re-discovered by Johann Ludwig Burckhardt (also known as John Lewis Burckhardt) in 1812. Burckhardt was Swiss-born, but educated in the UK (Oriental Studies at the University of Cambridge). His father had been imprisoned by Napoleon, intensifying Burckhardt's dislike of France and his desire to work for Britain.



Working Number: UA 005

Name: The Holy Land, Syria, Idumea, Arabia, Egypt and Nubia, Volume 3, title page: Temple of El Khasne
Holding Museum: Sharjah Art Museum / Sharjah Museums Authority
Date: Published 1849
Materials: Lithograph
Curator
Justification: Petra became one of the romantic fascinations of European Orientalist artists and writers.



Working Number: UA 006

Name: The Necropolis, Petra, March 9th, 1839
Holding Museum: Sharjah Art Museum / Sharjah Museums Authority
Date: Published 1849
Materials: Lithograph
Curator
Justification: The famous "Necropolis" was drawn by David Roberts, the result being published in his The Holy Land, Syria, Idumea, Arabia, Egypt and Nubia. This image, by Louis Haghe, is a lithograph from it. The so-called "Obelisk Tomb" (centre) and the Triclinium (lower right) still exist today, even if much eroded since Roberts visited Petra in early March 1839.



Working Number: UA 007

Name: Interior of the Great Temple at Baalbec
Holding Museum: Sharjah Art Museum / Sharjah Museums Authority
Date: Printed 1836–1838
Materials: Steel engraving
Curator
Justification: The Temple of Bacchus at Baalbek (Lebanon) as drawn by William Henry Bartlett in the 1830s as part of a two-volume set, Syria, The Holy Land, Asia Minor, &c. The dramatic ruins of Baalbek had attracted European travellers since the 18th century. The architectural and artistic details they recorded subsequently inspired European neoclassical architects and artists.



Working Number: UA 008

Name: The Ruins of the Temple of the Sun at Baalbec
Holding Museum: Sharjah Art Museum / Sharjah Museums Authority
Date: 1861

Materials: Oil on canvas
Curator -
Justification:



Working Number: UK 043

Name: Raft Conveying Winged Bull to Baghdad

Holding Museum: Victoria and Albert Museum

Date: 1849–50

Materials: -

Curator People wondered how Austen Henry Layard transported the massive Assyrian winged bulls from Assyria. This watercolour by Frederick Charles Cooper (based on his having witnessed similar events) shows their journey on a raft down the Tigris. Rafts were made in the traditional way of using hundreds of inflated goat- and sheep-skins supporting a wooden superstructure. Layard recruited the crew locally, as he had done with his workforce. From Basra, the British Navy took them the next 12,000 miles to England.
Justification:



Working Number: UK 044

Name: Winged colossus

Holding Museum: The British Museum

Date: 7th century BC

Materials: -

Curator One of the massive guardian figures found by Layard, which were floated down the Tigris. They weigh several tons each.
Justification:



Working Number: RO 029

Name: A Khorsabad barrel

Holding Museum: National Museum of Romanian History

Date: 721–705 BC (reign of Sargon II); discovered in 1851–1854

Materials: -

Curator French diplomat Victor Place, who spent the last years of his life in Romania, discovered at Khorsabad (1851–54) 14 inscribed barrels like this one. All but four were lost in the Shatt el-Arab waterway in April 1855. According to a letter written by a son of Victor Place, his father had received this barrel from the French government as a reward for his archaeological activity. The text records Sargon II's founding of a new capital at Khorsabad.
Justification:



Working Number: UK 069

Name: The Western Wall

Holding Museum: The Palestine Exploration Fund (PEF)

Date: 1872

Materials: -

Curator
Justification:

The Western Wall of the Haram al-Sharif in Jerusalem, as depicted for readers of the Illustrated London News, by pioneer war correspondent William "Crimea" Simpson. Simpson's sketches were turned into engravings for publication in the ILN, which, being among the most important graphic depictions, helped to introduce Western readers to the present-day appearance of Jerusalem and Jerusalemites.



Working Number: UK 070

Name: Foundations of Haram al-Sharif

Holding Museum: The Palestine Exploration Fund (PEF)

Date: 1872

Materials: -

Curator
Justification: Foundations of the south-eastern corner of the Haram al-Sharif, as revealed for the first time by Charles Warren. This tunnel was some 85 feet below ground. Warren's team were experienced mining engineers, and were assisted – as shown in several of this sequence of watercolours by William "Crimea" Simpson, sent to record the expedition for the Illustrated London News – by extremely courageous local Jerusalem residents.



Working Number: UK 071

Name: Birtles in Jerusalem

Holding Museum: The Palestine Exploration Fund (PEF)

Date: 1872

Materials: -

Curator
Justification: Sgt. Birtles, Charles Warren's chief assistant during the work in Jerusalem, climbing down into the destruction debris of Herod's Temple in the Tyropoean Valley.



Working Number: FR 012

Name: Ruins of Troy: general excavation plan by Mr Schliemann

Holding Museum: National Library of France

Date: 1876

Materials: -

Curator
Justification: Heinrich Schliemann (1822–90) was a German businessman who acquired a passion for archaeology while on his travels. In 1870, he used his considerable wealth to begin excavations in Turkey at the supposed site of ancient Troy. His spectacular success – finding "Priam's Treasure" (actually much earlier) – was marred by improper removal of objects and, ironically, the destruction of the very levels he sought.



Working Number: AT 031

Name: Frieze

Holding Museum: Kunsthistorisches Museum, Egyptian Collection
Date: 4-3th century BC; brought to Vienna by Edward Glaser in 1882–1894
Materials: Stone (Kalksinter)
Curator
Justification: Between 1882 and 1894 Eduard Glaser made four expeditions to Yemen, home to the legendary Queen of Sheba. Among the objects brought back by him to Vienna is this 3–4th century AD South-Arabian frieze of ram heads.



Working Number: AT 030
Name: Male head
Holding Museum: Kunsthistorisches Museum, Egyptian Collection
Date: Beginning of 1st millenium AD South-Arabia;
Materials: brought to Vienna by Edward Glaser in 1882–1894
Curator Alabaster
Justification: Another object brought back by Glaser was this sculpture of a male head.



Working Number: UK 088
Name: Petrie Stereo Photobook 1
Holding Museum: The Palestine Exploration Fund (PEF)
Date: 1890
Materials: -
Curator
Justification: In addition to being a pioneer photographer, Petrie was a pioneer of archaeological photography, even though at the time the technique of half-toning had not been developed, so that his photographs had to be turned into woodcuts for publication. He was a great believer in the importance of photography and, at least at this time, took all of his archaeological photographs as stereo pairs, another of his pioneering works.



Working Number: UK 087
Name: Photograph of Tell el-Hesi diggers
Holding Museum: The Palestine Exploration Fund (PEF)
Date: 1892–94
Materials: -
Curator
Justification: In 1890, Petrie excavated at Tell el-Hesi, which he identified, wrongly, as the ancient city of Lachish. This was the first proper archaeological excavation ever carried out in Palestine. He advocated controlled excavations, prompt publication, and an interest in small objects, not just large monuments. His workforce comprised men, women and children all working together. After World War II, only men would participate.



Working Number: UK 086

Name: Petrie and typology

Holding Museum: The Palestine Exploration Fund (PEF)

Date: 1890's

Materials: -

Curator
Justification: In the course of a single season at Tell el-Hesi, Petrie established the principle of dating strata by the pottery they contained. Objects could be arranged chronologically by comparing the changes in styles. He established the outlines of the archaeological sequence, a method that continues to be refined to this day. This section drawing was made by Frederick Jones Bliss, who continued Petrie's excavations from 1892–94. Bliss was born and raised in Lebanon and learned his skills under Petrie.



Working Number: TR2 119

Name: Anatolian Railways

Holding Museum: Istanbul University, Nadir Eserler Kütüphanesi (Rare Books Library)

Date: 19th century

Materials: Photograph

Curator
Justification: The construction of railways made archaeological sites more accessible to both archaeologists and tourists. Digging the ground brought to light antiquities, which the Ottoman Sultan 'Abd al-Hamid II, used as diplomatic gifts in exchange for assistance in building railways.
