

# **The Friends of the Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford Magazine**

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**2016**

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## Editorial

This is my first issue as Editor and I really do appreciate the opportunity to edit this wonderful award winning magazine. I would like to thank Juliette Gammon the former Editor for all her hard work in making the Magazine such a wonderful publication and for helping me to step into her shoes. I am pleased to say she will stay on as Deputy Editor to make sure I am doing a good job! She will also still be contributing content to the magazine such as her report on the Beatrice Blackwood Evening. Thanks to Annabel Snoxall for the photographs of the event and to Barbara Topley for organising it and raising about £2,000 in the process.

Thank you also to the PRM staff and Director Laura van Broekhoven for responding so quickly to request for content, information and photographs, particularly for this issue; Jeremy Coote for his commentary and photographs of the Nuer and Dinka case and Philip Grover for his help with the piece on the Camel Exhibition. We have very high calibre outside contributors in Roger Chapman whose photographs are those on display in that exhibition and Peter Mitchell on the fascinating topic of Bushman Rock Art.

Thanks also to the Magazine editorial team, particularly for this issue Jonathan Bard for his Migration out of Africa piece and Dorothy Walker for her report on the Geffrye Museum visit. Thanks to Sir Grimley Evans for his ongoing hard work relating to the Magazine index. So far I am enjoying this role immensely. I hope to do my bit to see the Magazine's continuing success.

**Dawn Osborne, Editor**

**Cover image:** Boy with Camel, Outer Mongolia, © Roger Chapman.

## News from the Museum

It has been an animated Spring at the Pitt Rivers Museum. On 17 May, a Maori delegation of the Te Papa Museum led the handover ceremony of the *Tupuna* (the ancestors) human remains kept at the Pitt Rivers Museum. The insistence and persistence of the Karanga Aotearoa Repatriation programme has enabled more and more Maori and Moriori ancestors to return home. Our staff were grateful and humbled to be part of the compelling ceremony.

In June, we celebrated the installation of three important exhibitions that are now on view in our galleries. Two co-curated exhibitions (*Identity without Borders* and *Syrians Unknown*) and the installation of our most recent acquisition: Christian Thompson's critically appraised artwork.

Two other pieces of wonderful news reached us in June: Firstly, that Professor Dan Hicks, lecturer curator at the Pitt Rivers Museum, has been awarded the 2017 Rivers Medal by the Royal Anthropological Institute. The Medal is one of the highest honours in Anthropology and Archaeology. Over the years, some of the most distinguished anthropologists have been awarded this medal, including founders of the discipline of Anthropology such as Evans-Pritchard and Bronislaw Malinowski. Secondly, that we have been awarded a grant from the Esmée Fairbairn Collections Fund for a collaborative project between the PRM and the Museum of History of Science. The grant will enable us to continue our work with refugees and forced migrants. Initially the project will focus on two collections: the PRM's textiles and costume collection, particularly textiles from the Middle East; and the unparalleled collection of astronomical instruments from the Islamic world at the MHS.

**Laura van Broekhoven, Museum Director**



Glass flask (Ptolemaic) Larnaca, Cyprus.  
Donated by Rev. H. Jackson; 1919.29.42

## VERVE update

THE VERVE project is entering its final stages, finishing in September. Two recent standout successes have been *Out in Oxford*, a series of events celebrating LGBTQ+ stories and identities (shortlisted for a Museums + Heritage award), and a body of work with local refugee and migrant communities, culminating in two displays, *Identity Without Borders* (Lower Gallery) and the stunning photographic show, *Syrians Unknown* (Upper Gallery). Our last big event was Pitt Fest and the gallery programme finishes with the installation of nearly 500 objects in the new World Archaeology displays. It's been a wonderful five years working with a talented team and I look forward to sharing a look back at what we've achieved in a future newsletter.

**Helen Adams, VERVE Project Manager**

## Between Friends

SINCE 17 May, when I was knocked off my bicycle by a car as I cycled up Banbury Road, I have been unable to take an active part in Friends' activities. My various duties have been carried out by others, making me appreciate to an even greater extent than previously what a wonderful organisation this is, run by people of such warmth, dedication, generosity and enthusiasm. The last event I attended was Alexander Armstrong's entertaining Beatrice Blackwood lecture on 5 May; this attracted a capacity audience in the Natural History Museum's lecture theatre, and added around £2,000 to our funds, now administered by our new Treasurer, Paul Goose. I was sorry to miss the Spring Awayday to the Geffrye Museum of the Home in Shoreditch – these outings give us the opportunity to see places and exhibitions that many of us would never have thought of visiting otherwise. The well-attended AGM on 14 June was preceded by a talk by the PRM Director, Laura van Broekhoven, describing her research with an indigenous group in Brazil. The future looks very positive: our new Membership Development Officer, Dorothy Walker, has liaised with the PRM administrative staff so that information about our forthcoming events will be integrated with those of the Museum. FPRM publicity was also on display at the 29 July Pittfest, with a new poster and bookmark (designed by Michelle Jessop) aimed at attracting family membership. I look forward to seeing many of you at other autumn events.

**Gillian Morris-Kay, Chair of the Friends**



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# Camel: A Journey through Fragile Landscapes

**The Pitt Rivers Museum's current Long Gallery exhibition premieres a major international photography project by Roger Chapman, who over more than four years has photographed nomadic communities in India, Mongolia, Sudan and the United Arab Emirates. In this article written for the Friends' Magazine, he describes the environmental motivation for his work.**



All images © Roger Chapman

**T**HE search for photographic locations for my project about camels and fragile landscapes eventually took me to the Gobi Desert in the south of Mongolia. Mongolia is known as the 'Land of the Eternal Blue Sky'. Located between China to the south and Russia to the north, it is a vast empty land with a population of only three million people. The majority of the people are either Buddhist or non-religious. This is an expanding desert with little vegetation and is easily destroyed by the overgrazing of the herds of sheep and goats kept by the traditionally nomadic people who live on the land. It is also subject to harsh climatic conditions with hot summers and extremely cold winters, with high winds sweeping across the



*Top: Traditional yurts; Above: Mongolian Family at meal time; Inset: Sipping camel's milk, Outer Mongolia*

desert. The temperatures can range from 45°C in the summer to -45°C in the winter. Then there is the battle for Mongolia's resources, mainly coal, copper and gold, with the construction of a huge mine in the middle of the Gobi Desert. Apart from the displacement of people, there is the inevitable disruption to the natural ecosystems.

My travels took me to the Gobi Desert in February 2012 during the *Tsagaan Sar*, literally the 'White Month', to mark the end of winter and the beginning of spring, a journey which I recorded in my diary:

I helped the grandmother make the meat dumplings. Made from ground-up camel meat, onions, garlic and salt, then wrapped in thin pasta to be steamed Mongolian-style. Grandmother then showed me how to make camel hair rope which she gave me as a gift.

"The party began with the obligatory rounds of vodka before the meal. We ate the dumplings and finished by chewing on large camel bones that were produced from underneath a bed in a large metal bowl. These large bones varied in length and contained very little meat. I fear they have been chewed many times before. There seems to be very little sign of vegetables in the diet, although I did have an apple for pudding. Then there was more vodka, which was presented in a beautiful silver bowl. The host filled the bowl to the rim and passed it to a member of the group to be drunk. It is then passed back to the host to be refilled to the rim and passed on. This means it is always full when presented and requires a sizeable amount to be drunk before being handed back.

"As the vodka continued to be passed around, I learnt that the eldest son of the family was a professional wrestler. He was very hands-on, with lots of hugs, arm wrestling and knee squeezing, and rather alarmingly we ended up 'play wrestling' on the floor. The wrestler began to sing and soon everybody joined in. There were pauses for more vodka and the wrestler then tried to sell me the two wives of his brothers, who looked on with strained smiles. The singing continued until late and the feast came to a natural conclusion when the three bottles of vodka were finished. One of the couples left on a small motorcycle, riding off into the icy cold night under a sky full of stars."

**Roger Chapman**

*For details of the exhibition which runs until 29 October, please see back page, column 2. Further details, and a slideshow, can be found online at [https://www.prm.ox.ac.uk/camel\\_journey](https://www.prm.ox.ac.uk/camel_journey)*

# Take a case: Nuer and Dinka

THE 'Nuer and Dinka' display on the Upper Gallery was installed in 1992, two years before I joined the Museum. Curated by Alison Petch (who retired last year) and designed and installed by technicians John Simmons and Chris Wilkinson (both still with us), it was part of the Upper Gallery project. Along with the 'Naga' display on the same wall, it was intended to serve as a counterpoint to the other typological displays of weapons.

No doubt Naga was chosen because of the extraordinary richness of the collections, among the very best in the world. The choice of 'Nuer and Dinka' was less to do with the quality of the collections, though their documentation is particularly strong, and more to do with the importance of these two neighbouring cattle-keeping peoples of South Sudan in Oxford anthropology. Famously, the Nuer were studied in the 1930s by E. E. Evans-Pritchard, Professor of Social Anthropology at Oxford from 1946 to 1970. His three books – *The Nuer* (1940), *Kinship and Marriage among the Nuer* (1951), and *Nuer Religion* (1956) – are foundational texts of not just Oxford but British and world anthropology. Put simply, therefore, our aim was to produce a display that would illustrate the ethnographic literature.

I had carried out field research amongst the Dinka in the early 1980s and in the early 1990s was writing about Nuer and Dinka aesthetics and material culture, so was asked to help. Alison and I discussed the collections, the literature, and what we thought a Nuer and Dinka display could achieve. We wanted to illustrate how the Nuer and Dinka do not live in some timeless 'black-and-white' past and so I drew on my contacts to source recent colour photographs – including some aerial views illustrating the seasonally flooded savannah grasslands environment in which

these cattle-keeping peoples live. Photographs have been used in the Museum since the 1880s, but Nuer and Dinka contains far more than any other display.

Twenty-five years on I am a member of a 'South Sudan Museum Network' that is bringing together curators from European museums with collections from the country and South Sudanese artists and other stakeholders. The next network workshop will be held at the Museum in January 2018 and I intend to use the occasion to rethink the contemporary relevance of the display. Following a long civil war, the South Sudan became the world's newest independent country only six years ago. It is now best known to the outside world, however, for the wranglings between Nuer and Dinka political leaders that have led to further fighting, famine, and displacement of populations. So, what then is the point of a display like Nuer and Dinka today? There is no way in which such a small display can adequately illustrate the way of life of more than a million people through a complex and at times, like now, terrible history. Given the environment in which the Nuer and Dinka live, there are aspects of their way of life, illustrated by the objects and photographs on display, that are likely to endure, but I cannot shake the feeling that a display designed primarily to illustrate the ethnographic literature is now of only limited legitimacy. Over the years, I have shown the display to a number of visiting Nuer and Dinka, all of whom have seemed to enjoy it, often nostalgically. This has been reassuring, but finding new ways of entertaining and educating the Museum's varied publics, while doing justice to the place of the Nuer and Dinka in the world – as opposed to in the ethnographic literature – will not be easy. Finding ways of doing so, however, are essential if the Museum wants such cultural 'counterpoints' to its 'typological' displays to continue to have contemporary relevance for its visitors and for the peoples represented.

**Jeremy Coote,**

*Curator and Joint Head of Collections*



*Left: Close-up view of part of the 'Nuer and Dinka' display. Below: Photographs in the 'Nuer and Dinka' display*

*Left: View of 'Nuer and Dinka' display in the Upper Gallery*





# Bushman rock art: Pitt Rivers Museum

**T**HE Pitt Rivers Museum houses several early records of Bushman (San) rock art, most notably almost 100 copies of paintings from the Giant's Castle area of KwaZulu-Natal made in 1893 by Louis Tylor, nephew of Oxford's first academic anthropologist, Sir Edward Tylor. Part of the uKhahlamba-Drakensberg Escarpment that separates KwaZulu-Natal from Lesotho, this is one of the richest areas for Bushman rock paintings anywhere in southern Africa.

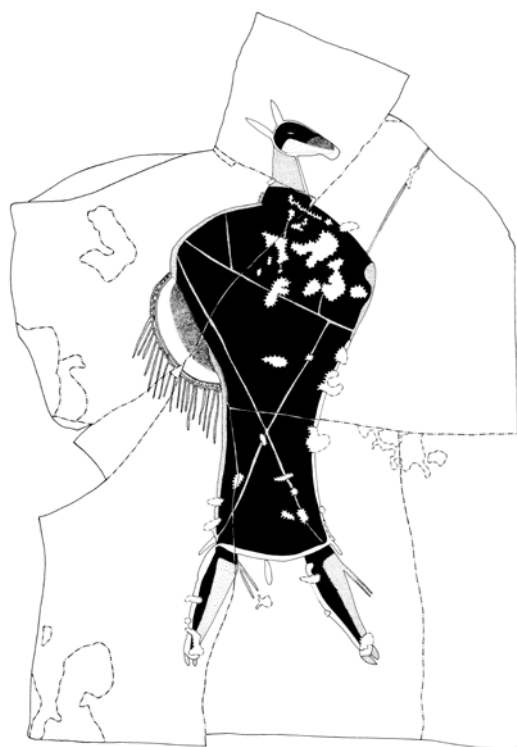
In a rare exercise of its kind, and with financial support from the PRM which previously had a long tradition of supporting southern African archaeology via the Swan Fund, Patricia Vinnicombe and Patrick Carter used Tylor's records in 1965 to identify all but one of the sites from which he made the copies now in the PRM. Later, Valerie Ward was able to use Tylor's records, Carter's photographs and her own observations, to track changes in the physical condition of many of the original rock art paintings since the 1890s, to assist in securing their survival for future generations.

As well as making copies of the original Bushman paintings, Tylor also removed elements of a few original pieces of rock art from the sites on which they had been painted, depositing them in the PRM. Six such pieces of painted rock survive and have since been professionally traced by Professor David Pearce, now Director of the Rock Art Research Institute at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg. Among the figures present is an antelope-headed individual wrapped in a skin cloak or kaross from a site known as Wildebeest Shelter. This particular therianthrope (part human-part animal creature) has the head of an eland, Africa's largest antelope and an animal of enormous supernatural potency for Bushmen. Indeed, when a Lesotho Bushman, Qing, was asked in 1873 where the Creator dwelt, he responded by saying "where the eland are in large droves like cattle", a clear testimony to the eland's spiritual importance. With this in mind, the therianthrope may represent a shaman who has entered an altered state of consciousness ('trance') to acquire eland power, or one who wishes to do so. His skin cloak and the skin bag that he carries are also significant since we know that Bushmen believed that artefacts retained the qualities of the animals from which they were made.

Thanks largely to the work of David Lewis-Williams and his colleagues, the rock paintings and engravings made by southern Africa's Bushman hunter-gatherer peoples are among the best understood in the world. Although other perspectives are relevant, no serious researcher doubts that they are best explained by reference to Bushman ethnography or that they express a fundamentally shamanistic view of the cosmos and of the actions of medicine people within this.

Other paintings collected by Tylor depict baboons and smaller antelope that are most likely mountain reedbuck or grey rhebuck, all of them animals with known supernatural powers, as well as a line of people arranged in what may be some kind of procession. Interpreting any of these fragments is extremely difficult since so much of this depends on their context in relation to other figures and to the surface on which they were painted. Nor can we be sure of their date. However, recent work using the University's radiocarbon dating facility has now directly established for the first time that some paintings in the broader Maloti-Drakensberg region of which Giant's Castle forms part are as much as 3,000 years old. The broader tradition of making rock art in southern Africa is certainly much older than this and we hope that future dating projects will allow us to investigate this further.

**Peter Mitchell,**  
School of Archaeology  
St Hugh's College/School, University of Oxford



*Above: Tracing of the kaross-wearing therianthrope from Wildebeest Shelter by David Pearce, Rock Art Research Institute, University of the Witwatersrand; Right: Kaross-wearing therianthrope figure from Wildebeest Shelter, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa PRM 1894.15.2; Below: Tracing of the Baboons and seated person by David Pearce, Rock Art Research Institute, University of the Witwatersrand; Bottom: Baboons and seated person PRM 1894.15.5*



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# Out of Africa – The many human exoduses

At the back of the top floor of the Pitt Rivers Museum is a case of stone hand axes and tools (case U60A, Fig.1) made by early humans. Some from Africa date back to well over a million years ago (Mya) and are probably the oldest exhibits in the PRM. We now know a great deal about the African origins of modern humans and their various exoduses over the last million or more years (Fig. 2). The most important occurred about 50 thousand years ago (Kya) when a small population of about 1,500 people left Africa. Today every non-African, other than the Australian Aborigines, is one of their descendants.

The most obvious evidence for an early human presence comes from fossilised skeletons, which can be dated using radioisotope technology; analysis of their DNA and information about their artefacts fills in the details. The oldest fossils are from Africa and date to about 6 Mya, soon after a line of great apes separated to give the *panin* group (today's chimpanzees and bonobos) and the *hominins* (these includes *Homo sapiens* and every group on the way). Hominin fossils show how, as forest slowly gave way to savannah, early ape-like ancestors who lived in trees slowly evolved, trait by trait, to become bipedal, land animals with an enlarged brain (Fig. 3). We can, for example, follow how a hand with long digits suitable for tree climbing had, by perhaps 3 Mya, evolved to have shorter digits and an opposable thumb suitable for using clubs and throwing rocks.

There is no evidence that the earliest members of the *Homo* line (known as archaic hominins) left Africa or indeed even

made tools. It was not until about 2.5 Mya that *Homo habilis* (a pre-modern human groups, Fig. 3) first started to make stone hand-choppers. It probably took the best part of another million years before *Homo erectus* (upright man) left Africa for Asia and Europe (even the UK). Their fossils have been widely found, the first being Java man who was identified by Eugene Dubois in 1891. This original find was incidentally the cause of many arguments about the origins of humans that were only resolved when the remains of much earlier hominins were discovered in East Africa by the Leakey family. The *H. erectus* colonisations all seem to have ended in failure.

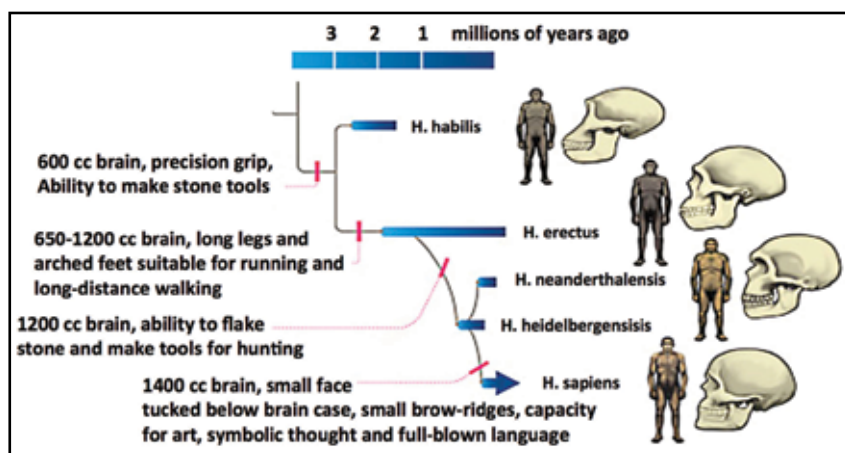
It was probably about 5-600 Kya that the second major migration started, and went on for some time. This was by *Homo heidelbergensis* who had modern limbs, a relatively modern face and an enlarged brain. Those who migrated northwards and westwards colonised Europe as far as Britain (Fig. 4), and became the Neanderthals, themselves tool makers (Fig. 5); those that migrated north then east became the Denisovans.

## Homo sapiens

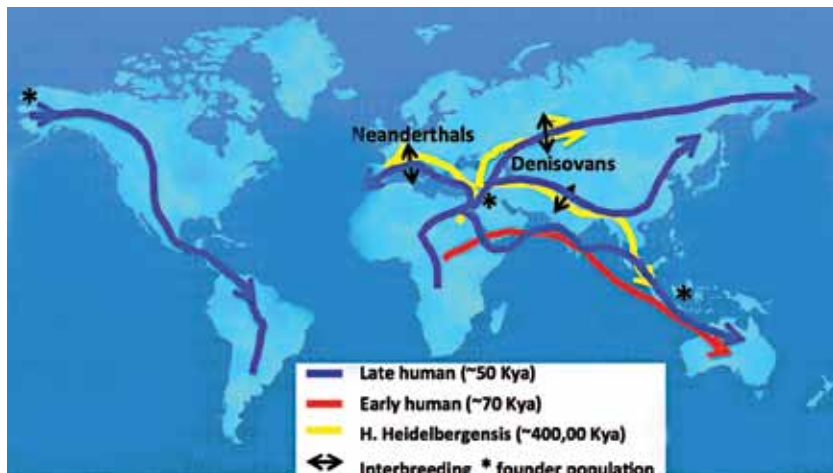
The fossil evidence suggests that *Homo sapiens* (anatomically modern humans), together with other *Homo* groups such as the recently discovered *H. naledi*, was living in southern Africa around 200 Kya and had soon colonised the whole of the continent. Although fossil and artefact evidence, such as tools and hearths, suggest that other groups left Africa for the Levant



Above: Fig 1. Part of PRM Case U60A showing early hand axes. Number 41 (1947.2.1) is from the lower Palaeolithic and could be some two million years old. It was presented to the Museum by Louis Leakey



Above: Fig 3. Diagram showing the evolution of man over the last 2.5 million years (from The Entangled Bank: an Introduction to Evolution, courtesy of Carl Zimmer)



Left: Fig 2. A map of the world as it is today showing the three major migrations out of Africa that led to today's population distribution. Because of the effects of the ice age, sea levels were lower at the time of the migrations



Photo: Jonathan Bard



Photo: Jonathan Bard

Left: Fig 4. A Clactonian crusher made of flint dating to about 400 Kya that was found in Suffolk, UK. It is some 6cm across and the hole on the top has been worked on to improve the grip (from a private collection)

Left: Fig 5. A spearhead about 4cm in length (1923.59.8) from Le Moustier, a village in France that was inhabited by Neanderthals some 45 Kya



perhaps 120 Kya, these seem to have died out. By about 70 Kya, however, a small group of *H. sapiens* had crossed the few miles of sea separating Somalia from the Arabian peninsula and was soon making its way southeast, across the entrance of the Red Sea, then just a swamp, following the coast to Indonesia, a trip that could then be made mainly by land (Fig. 2).

These differences with modern geography were due to the effects of the last ice age (110-11.7 Kya). During this period, huge amounts of water were relocated as ice to the northern and southern regions of the world, causing sea levels to fall more than 140m. As a result, the level of what is now the Timor Sea between Indonesia and Australia was lowered to the extent that land was never out of sight (Fig. 6). Nevertheless, the subgroup of those early humans that reached Australia some 50 Kya, becoming the present-day Aborigines, would still have needed boats for the crossing.

Another key event also took place around then: a further group



Fig 6. Map of southeast Asia (Sunda) and ancient Australia (Sahul) showing how the land area expanded during the last ice age to the extent that travelling between them involved only short boat journeys. (From [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wallacea](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wallacea))

of perhaps 1,500 *H. Sapiens* with relatively lighter skins than their more equatorial brothers left Africa, probably through the Sinai peninsula. Some of their descendants went south, east and then north, slowly colonising Asia. On their way, they met, interbred with and eventually supplanted the Denisovans. After reaching Siberia, the small founder group mentioned above that colonised all of the Americas crossed what was then the Behring lands.

We can use computer techniques to analyse DNA diversity within specific contemporary populations to track them back in time. Such methods allow us to estimate the size of the founder population from which they came and the number of generations since it separated from its parent group. Such work has, for example, shown that the founder group that left Siberia to colonise the American continent some 20 Kya (some 1,000 generations) was only about 1000-2000 individuals (Fig. 7).

Progress of the original group north from Turkey into Europe was held up by ice masses so it was not until these had started to melt, about 40 Kya, that some of their descendants could migrate up through Greece to Germany and the earliest carved figures and flutes found there date to soon after (Fig. 8). They then crossed the northern Mediterranean coast to the Iberian peninsular, encountering the Neanderthals with whom they interbred and, within ten thousand years, supplanted. By 30 Kya, *Homo sapiens* was the only member of the *Homo* family left, and by 10 Kya had

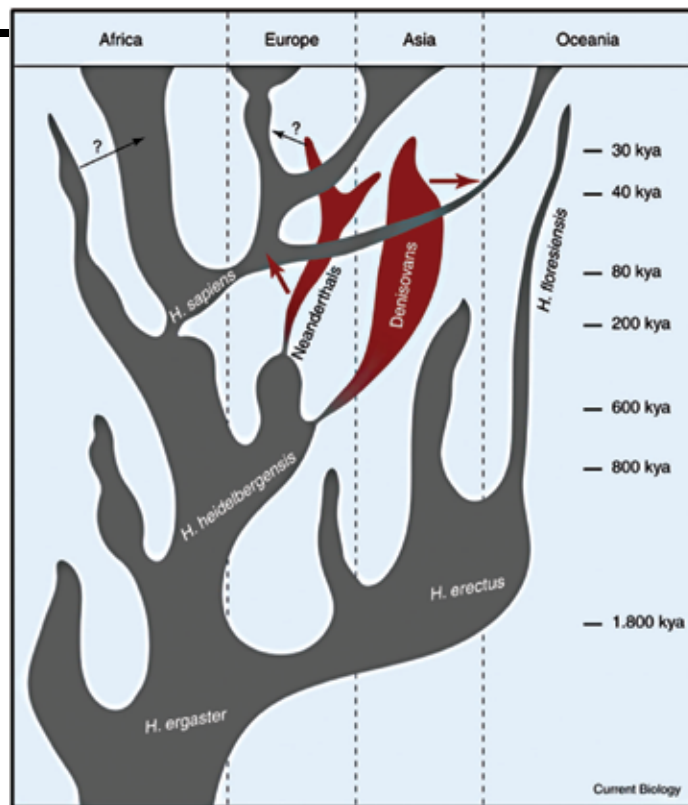


Fig 7. A diagram showing the relative sizes of the various human population over the last 2.5 million years together with details of their migrations and interbreedings (? implies interbreeding is likely but not proven. Courtesy of Lalueza-Fox, C. & Gilbert, M.T., *Paleogenomics of archaic hominins*. *Current Biology*, 2011, 21:R1002-9.)

colonised the whole world, apart from Antarctica.

We know that *H sapiens* bred with Neanderthals and Denisovans because there is now sufficient DNA, a surprisingly tough molecule, from these two ancient *Homo* groups for us to be able to compare their genomes with ours. These show that some 5-10% of humans DNA sequences are, depending on the population, typical of Neanderthal or Denisovan sequences.

Other genetic information comes from measuring the diversity of specific DNA sequences in various contemporary populations. Diversity comes from mutation and is widest in Africa; the further a population is from Africa, the less its genetic diversity turns out to be. This is hard evidence for groups of humans originally leaving Africa, with successive founder subgroups of their descendants, whose appearance reflected their increasingly limited genetic diversity, moving onwards to colonise more distant regions.

What does all this tell us about the many human societies whose objects are represented in the Pitt Rivers Museum? First, humans really are all members of a single species: we can all talk, read, write and interbreed. Second, that the minor differences in appearance between societies outside Africa derive from the limited diversity present in successive founder groups

General Pitt-Rivers made a sensible choice when he catalogued his material by type: there is little genetic differences between the many groups represented in the Museum but major differences in their environments. It is not therefore surprising that they produced similar solutions to common problems.

Jonathan Bard, Friend



Fig 8. The Willendorf venus, a limestone female figure some 11cm high that was discovered in Austria and has been dated to about 26 Kya. (Courtesy of Don Hitchcock, and published under the Creative Commons-3.0 license)

# Travellers' Tales – Qumran and the Dead Sea Scrolls

**2**017 marks the 70th anniversary of the discovery of the 900 Dead Sea Scrolls that were written over a roughly 300 year period starting in about 250 BC. They were discovered in the 1940s and '50s in 12 caves in the Judean Desert at Khirbet Qumran, a mile or two north-west of the Dead Sea, by shepherd boys looking for lost sheep. Some of the most important scrolls were initially sold to a cobbler, but have since been recovered. Most are now in the Israel Museum in the Shrine of the Book, although a few are in Jordan and the United States.

The scrolls are considered priceless for the insights that they give into Jewish history and the history of the Bible as all the books of the Old Testament are represented except *'Esther'*. About 25 percent are copies of Old Testament books and these scrolls allow scholars to look at early versions of these texts before later editing and rewriting. The texts have demonstrated greater diversity in biblical texts prior to 100 BC than previously thought. Many other scrolls are commentary on scripture, while the remainder are largely sectarian in nature and cover the rules and practices of the Jewish religious community at Qumran which occupied the site from about 135 BC until about 68 AD. Around

then, the Jews had split into three religious groups, the Pharisees the Sadducees and the Essenes. The group at Qumran were almost certainly Essenes as they had rejected such mainstream practices of the Jewish priesthood as animal sacrifice. They had instead become an apocalyptic sect who practiced communal property ownership, had a long initiation period, wore white garments and took frequent purification baths before meals and after visiting or using the toilet.

I was extremely privileged to visit Qumran in January 2017 and take photographs of the remains of the community structures and the landscape with the famous caves including the site of the first discovery. The Essenes were ascetic and slept in caves and tents while the remains of buildings appear to have included communal dining rooms, ritual baths and a pantry, a 'scriptorium' dedicated to document creation and copying containing tables and inkwells, and workshops to make pottery. About 50 metres east there is a cemetery of shaft graves of individuals, almost exclusively men.

**Dawn Osborne, Editor and Friend**

See <http://orion.mscc.huji.ac.il> for a virtual tour



*Left: Close up of a scroll; Above: Caves at Qumran*

## Guest Museum – Shrine of the Book, Jerusalem, Israel

**I** ALSO visited the 'Shrine of the Book', the part of the Israel Museum in Jerusalem that displays the majority of the Dead Sea Scrolls. It is underground with a white roof sticking



*Museum roof made to look like a container for the Scrolls*

above ground designed to look like the lid of a jar in which the documents were stored. Scrolls are displayed on a rotating basis for 3-6 months at a time and are made of parchment and papyrus (the famous copper scroll found in Cave 3 is in Jordan). The famous Isaiah scroll, 24 feet long has the Book of Isaiah in its entirety; it is thought to have been written by three scribes working at around 100 BC.

Five of the most famous scrolls can be seen on the Israel Museum's website at <http://dss.collections.imj.org.il> These include the Isaiah Scroll, the commentary on the Habakkuk Scroll, the Temple Scroll, the Community Rule Scroll and the War Scroll.

**Dawn Osborne, Editor and Friend**



*Central display of a whole scroll*



# Beatrice Blackwood report: Alexander Armstrong entertains



Photo: © Annabel Snoxall

Laura van Broekhoven, Alexander Armstrong and Barbara Topley enjoy the party

**A**NTICIPATION was in the air as Alexander Armstrong, made his way to the stage for May's Beatrice Blackwood Lecture. The Friends' newest Patron is a ubiquitous fellow – comedian, mimic, documentary and classical music presenter, game show host and Pitt Rivers enthusiast. A sellout all-age audience were ready to be entertained. He didn't disappoint them.

Alexander's chosen topic – the British

Stiff Upper Lip – led us on a merry dance from dressing up in his father's old bowler for family theatricals, through a lesson in how to compose your face to mimic a major-general to a digression on the similarity between Geordie and Norwegian accents – discovered when making a documentary in the Arctic Circle. After his rendition of a Geordie song in an impenetrable accent, The Natural History

Museum's lecture theatre rang to applause, cheers and tears of laughter.

We bounced through his Northumbrian childhood, a choral scholarship to Cambridge (where he actually read English and joined the Footlights) and fatherhood. Bombarded with questions, nothing fazed him: "Would you like to play King Lear?" Not with four sons under 10 but, hey, "one day!"; "Was his time at Cambridge *Pointless*" a reference to the game show he hosts before the BBC six o'clock news. "Pretty much".

At the following party he stood in the Museum Shop and patiently chatted, signed autographs – including a cuddly toy – posed for selfies and only left when reminded of babysitting duties, making sure to shake all the hands remaining in the queue as he went.

"It's the first time I've given a talk in an academic setting," he told me. "They were the most wonderful audience and I loved every minute."

**Juliette Gammon, Friend**

Barbara Topley once again performed a magnificent job of organising and publicising the evening which attracted a much wider and younger audience than usual. Afterwards a team of Friends led by Rosemary Lee and Colin Langton served sandwiches, sushi and wine.

## Pitt Fest: a fitting end to VERVE

**"W**HICH way to the poo?" was one enquiry the Museum's gallery staff have probably never encountered before, but were soon dealing with deftly, along with queries about spoon dolls, kora performances, snake bone bracelets, dance workshops, behind-the-scenes tours and specialist talks. Watching budding archaeologists dissecting coprolites (fossilised faeces) was just one highlight of Pitt Fest: Remixed on Saturday 29 July, the final large-scale public event of VERVE, the Museum's Heritage Lottery Funded project which ends in September 2017.

The first Pitt Fest in 2013 (then called 'Need Make Use Day') on the Museum's lawn attracted 1,660 people. Since then, visitor numbers to this summer event have increased each year, along with the variety of performances and interactive opportunities on offer and the confidence of Museum staff to deliver an event of this scale. After 2016's torrential rain, this year the VERVE team decided to 'remix' the event by moving 80% of it indoors. This had four tangible advantages: beating unseasonal weather; knowing that attendees were intentional visitors rather than casual Natural History Museum/Parks Road traffic; tying activities more tangibly to the collections (e.g. shield-making on the Upper Gallery) and creating a sustainable model that might be repeatable post-VERVE.

The Friends were a visible presence at the event, offering a quiz trail and an engaging game of 'guess how many covies in the jar' – with estimates ranging from 50 to one million! The cooperative nature of Pitt Fest is what helps make it such a



Photo: © Suzy Prior

African Dance Oxford perform on the balcony

success – staff, Friends, volunteers and other collaborators (some travelling over 100 miles to take part) – all giving up their time to help visitors not simply to 'look' but also 'do'. One of the primary aims of VERVE has been to find ways to bring the collections to life and Pitt Fest is a wonderful example of that.

**Helen Adams, VERVE Project Curator & Engagement Officer**

# FPRM Annual General Meeting 2017

THE AGM of the Friends of the Pitt Rivers Museum was held on 14 June in its lecture room. The standard business of the meeting was lightened by two important contributions from Dr Laura van Broekhoven, the Museum's Director. The first was a pre-AGM talk entitled *Unruffling feathers* and the second was a review of what is currently going on in the Museum.

The Director was asked to talk about some of her own work and spoke on *Unruffling feathers*, a fieldwork project from her time at Leiden University. For this, she lived with and studied the Ka'apor, an indigenous and very underprivileged group in Brazil and the north-eastern region of South America. This project included an important area of contemporary post-colonial museum work, the reuniting of indigenous people with the artefacts that these museums hold (Fig. 1). In the case of the Ka'apor, some of the items held in Leiden were made of, or included, feathers. These, like facial decorations, spears and clubs, are important symbols both of their culture and of their sovereignty rites.

Laura talked about bringing Ka'apor representatives for a meeting in Belém (Fig. 2) a local Brazilian city. This turned out to be problematic as the white population wanted nothing to do with them, even objecting to the Ka'apor and

their accompanying children staying in local hotels. Not unexpectedly, Laura persevered and everything worked! The next step was getting the funding for two of them to visit the famous anthropology museum in Leiden and see the Ka'apor collection of artefacts (Fig. 3).

A key part of the talk was a short film showing the two working in the Leiden museum with some of their neglected feathers. It was lovely to see the care with which they stroked and manipulated the vanes of the feather and disentangled the barbs (Fig. 4), not only rejuvenating the feathers, but also empowering those handling them. It was a simple example of how the wider public benefit from this reuniting of peoples with their artefacts, pieces that tribe members are often proud to see in museums, because they show the work of their small indigenous groups to the world.

For the record, the Annual General Meeting of the Friends heard reports from all the Council officers, and accepted with thanks the detailed accounts prepared by the outgoing Treasurer, Terri Costain. Felicity Wood then thanked and presented presents to the two major office holders who were stepping down: Terri Costain, who has presided over four successful financial years, and Juliette Gammon,

who for six years edited our magazine turning it from a newsletter to an award-winning publication. Finally, the AGM voted unanimously to elect to Council Paul Goose, the new Treasurer, and Dawn Osborne, the new Magazine Editor, and to ratify the positions of Dorothy Walker as Membership Development Officer and Jonathan Bard as Secretary.

During the AGM itself, Laura van Broekhoven summarised some of the major activities that are going on behind the scenes to help the PRM deal with the demands of the 21st century. Substantial grant applications are now being submitted (including one to enable representatives of indigenous groups to work with the traditional material that the Museum holds); an audit is being conducted to see if more space could be made available to the public, and all the archive material is being moved to a new store. This is a gargantuan task, but about 50,000 (about 50%) of the pieces have already been wrapped. Listening to Laura and appreciating the energy that she is bringing to the PRM, I was reminded of the comment of Don Fabrizio Corbera, the leopard in Giuseppe di Lampedusa's book of that name: "Everything needs to change, so that everything can stay the same".

**Jonathan Bard, Friend**



Photo: Laura van Broekhoven

Above: Fig. 1. Trio and Kari'na elders are working on collections held at the National Museum of Ethnology in 2009. This was part of the project, Yesterday's knowledge, tomorrow's future: Learning from the Elders



Photo: Laura van Broekhoven

Above: Fig. 3. Members of the Ka'apor and staff in the storeroom of the Rijksmuseum Volkenkunde in Leiden (part of the National Museum of World Cultures). Ka'apor artefacts are laid out on the tables to be worked on as part of the project *Compartilhando Coleções, Compartilhando Histórias*: the Ibermuseos-funded Research project with the Museo Goeldi, Belém do Pará

Right: Fig. 2. Community leader and co-curator, Valdemar Ka'apor's speaking at the opening of the 'Festa do Kawim' exhibition at the Museo Goeldi, Belém do Pará. The quote says "Teach your children not to invade, as we are human beings just like you"



Photo: Laura van Broekhoven

Left: Fig. 4. Indigenous leader Valdemar Ka'apor unruffling feathers in the Stores in the Leiden Museum



# A younger view



**M**y favourite objects in museums are objects with stories behind them, and obviously, every object has its own story but funny, mysterious or magical ones take me with them the most.

My favourite object in the Pitt Rivers Museum is the one with the witch in a bottle... the story behind it is amazing. However, I was

told I was not to choose that object as it had already been drawn by someone else. So, I went to see in the Pitt Rivers database if there were any other objects with witches. And, I found one that was even more interesting and wicked. It was collected from a professional witch in 1897 in Naples, Italy. When I think of a witch, I think of the stereotypical woman in a black dress with a cat and hat. When I think of Italy I think of beautiful piazzas, pizza, pasta, lots of culture. So, they do not really match but Italy has its mysterious side and some unknown secrets... and professional witches seem to still lurk around.

Three different coloured cords border three objects pinned on a board: a dried lemon, a dried potato both stabbed with nails and needles and a beautifully decorated little blue bag. Each nail and needle driven in was meant to hurt the designated person, the little bag was filled with sand (and the witch had to count each grain of sand before she could wear the amulet). The cords are coloured brown, orange and white. Each represent something that they needed to do: brown/black was to cause illness in the head; orange/red to cause illness in the heart and white to prevent cheating. A fascinating object. We will be going to Italy this summer, and I will be on the lookout for witches!

**Nandana, (12 years)**

## Friends' Spring Away Day

**A** SMALL group of Friends visited the Geffrye Museum, Shoreditch, on a hot day in early June. This charming museum has two aspects. The first is the building itself, which was originally a row of almshouses established following a bequest by Sir Robert Geffrye, a Cornishman, who had come to London at 16 and had been very successful in the ironmongery trade, going on to eventually be Mayor of London. The second aspect is the galleries, which contain a series of 11 period rooms that recreate everyday domestic interiors 'of the middling sort' from the Elizabethan period through to the present day.

The first part of our visit was a guided tour of one of the almshouses, which has been restored downstairs to show a dwelling as it might have been in the 1780s, and upstairs, one as it might have looked in the 1880s.

Inside the main building, a sequence of room displays follows the evolution of the interiors of middle class London homes from the 1600s to the 21st century. They provide an intriguing picture, not only of changing style and taste, but also of the fundamental shifts in social and domestic life over the centuries.

After lunch in the pretty, airy café overlooking the beautiful gardens, we attended a private talk by Eleanor, one of the curators, who very interestingly described for us the history of the buildings and the plans for the imminent refurbishment of the museum. It is due to be closed for two years from the autumn for a complete restructuring.

Outside we independently explored the museum's award-winning herb and period gardens. These show how urban domestic gardens have changed over the past four centuries.

We all agreed that it was a fascinating visit and were most grateful for the welcome extended by the museum's staff.

**Dorothy Walker, Friend**

## New Friends

We are delighted to welcome Gordon Thorpe, from Peterborough as a LIFE MEMBER. Other new Friends are: Kevin Alton Honeywell, Brackley; David Bond and Carolyn McCommon, London; Joan Brasnett, Woodstock; Simon and Mary Jones, Moreton-in-Marsh; Nick and Marleen Phipps, Brill, Buckinghamshire; Carol Turner, Little Milton. And from Oxford: Caroline Blease; Jean-Marc and Mrs Judith Bonavia Boillat; Professor and Mrs Jonathan Bowen; Rachel Cairns and Duncan Talbot-Ponsonby and family; Julia Condor-Vidal; Richard and Rupmani Makepeace; Cheryl Trafford. To learn more about the benefits of becoming a Friend, or if your details change, please contact Membership Secretary Rosemary King:

**rhking17@gmail.com or 01367 242433**

## Jean Flemming

**After 33 years of guiding primary school children around the Pitt Rivers Museum, Jean Flemming has decided to hang up her torch as an Education Guide. We would like to say a huge thank you to Jean who has played a crucial role in the development of the Education Service. In the 1980s she was one of Hélène la Rue's first recruits to the Guiding Service and remembers devising her own trails for schools. When Hélène took on responsibility for the Bate Collection in 1995 and stepped back from managing the Guides they revealed their indomitable spirit by organising themselves. Indeed, Jean remembers running the bank account and nipping out to the printers on Holywell Street early in the morning to get trails prepared! It is thanks to Jean and her colleagues that we have the Education Service as they wrote to the previous Director, Mike O'Hanlon, and explained they needed someone**



to help run the Guides. This led to the arrival of our current Head of Education, Andy McLellan, in 2000, and the steady development of the Education Empire!

Not only is Jean a pioneering member of the Education Guides but she has also set the tone for subsequent Guides who have joined through her warm welcome to everyone. This is epitomised by her advice to new guides: 'Keep Smiling. Be nice to the children. Be warm and welcoming and listen to what they have to say.' This attitude, combined with her background as a teacher, has benefited thousands of children who have visited.

As the Primary School Education Officer I have also gained from Jean's experience. Whenever I announce we are preparing a 'new' trail Jean will dig out a folder and show me trails and notes produced on the same topic a few decades earlier. Sometimes it is quite reassuring that things don't change too much! We will miss Jean – her support, her hospitality, her genuine delight in everyone she meets – but we will work hard to retain her warm welcome of everyone.

**Becca McVean**  
Education Officer (Primary)

# INFORMATION SHEET

The Friends' Magazine is published three times a year

**Bafm**  
First Prize  
Newsletter  
Awards  
2016

## INFORMATION

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**Annual Subscription:** £22 (Joint: £30)

Family: £30; Over 60; £15 (Joint: £22)

Student: (18-25); £10

**Life Membership:** (for 65+): £125

Subscription year from 1 May.

First subscription paid after 1 January valid to 30 April of following year.

**NB** The Family subscription is only for two adults, all their children under the age of 18, all living at the same address. If a child reaches 18 and is in full-time education until the age of 25, the Student subscription of £10 can then apply.

### President of Friends of Pitt Rivers:

Professor Chris Gosden

### Patrons of Friends of Pitt Rivers:

Alexander Armstrong, Sir David Attenborough, Danby Bloch, Professor Sir Barry Cunliffe, Dame Penelope Lively, Michael Palin CBE, Philip Pullman CBE.

### Museum

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Email: [www.prm@prm.ox.ac.uk](mailto:www.prm@prm.ox.ac.uk)

Open: Tuesday-Sunday 10.00-16.30

Monday 12.00-16.30 Admission FREE.

### Highlights tours

**Wednesdays 14.30 and 15.15**

Volunteer-led introduction to the Museum.

Approximately 20 mins. No booking required.

### Saturday Spotlight

**Third Saturday of the month 14.30**

A programme of general interest events, FREE.

### After Hours

Occasional themed evening events.

**Family events:** see [www.prm.ox.ac.uk/family-friendly-events-activities-and-workshops](http://www.prm.ox.ac.uk/family-friendly-events-activities-and-workshops)

### Magazine

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The views expressed are not necessarily those of the Museum. All contributors to the Magazine are Friends unless otherwise stated.

## MUSEUM DIARY DATES

### Exhibitions and case displays

#### Long Gallery

**Camel: A Journey through Fragile Landscapes – photographs by Roger Chapman**

**15 May to 29 October 2017**

**Red Wind of Change: Tito's State Visits of Africa, 1961/1970**

**13 November 2016 to 8 April 2018**



**Lower Gallery, Didcot Case**  
**Folklorist Percy Manning**  
**20 February to 30 September 2017**

© Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford

Collection of objects presented to PRM highlighting folk traditions of Oxfordshire including Morris dancer's outfit, whit horns, lighting appliances and a lacemaker's dick pot.

#### Upper Gallery

##### Syrians Unknown

**15 June to 30 September**

John Wreford's large-scale photographic portraits of people displaced from Syria, now surviving and thriving in Istanbul. Includes powerful testimonies about their experiences, in English and Arabic.



© John Wreford

### Events

**Friday 29 September, late**

#### Carnival of Curiosity in PRM/MNH

Cross-University event showcasing Oxford's contribution to European Researchers' Night, a celebration of academic research for the public supported by EC. Live experiments, debates, bite-sized talks and other activities.

#### Museum Takeover: Night at the Museum

**Saturday 14 October, 19:00-21:00**

**(£2 – ticketed entry only)**

An after-hours social event organised by the Pitt Youth Action Team. All welcome. Full programme details and online booking available from September.

### Family Friendly Events

Come and enjoy a wide variety of free family friendly events, activities and workshops. All children must be accompanied by a responsible adult. [prm.ox.ac.uk/events](http://prm.ox.ac.uk/events)

**Object Handling, Saturdays 11.00-13.00**

#### Museum Family Backpacks

Available from the info point 10.00-16.00 every Saturday. Borrow a backpack full of activities and become a family of Museum explorers.

For further information see:

[prm.ox.ac.uk/whatson](http://prm.ox.ac.uk/whatson)

## FRIENDS' DIARY DATES

### Spider divination practice; evidence from the Cameroon

**Wednesday 11 October 18.30**

**David Zeitlyn** of the Institute of Social and Cultural Anthropology, University of Oxford, demonstrates the meaning of divination cards and how they are used in practice. With video and simulation.

### A future for graffiti

**Wednesday, 15 November 18.30**



*Banksy (and others), Bloomsbury, 2010*

**Jeremy MacClancey**, Professor of Anthropology, Oxford Brookes. Now street art is a career choice for budding artists, what status is left

for graffiti? Threatened by urban gentrification strategies and the rise of the net, can it still pack a political punch?

**Show and Tell: textiles and embroideries**  
**Wednesday, 24 January 2018 18.30**

20 Friends will bring an item with personal meaning for them. They should know something of the history of the item and the method of its creation.



*Embroidered parachute silk blouse*

© Gillian Morriss-Kay

### The Caliphate: past and perhaps future

**Wednesday 21 February 2018 18.30**

**Hugh Kennedy**, Professor of Arabic at SOAS, chronicles the rich history of the caliphate, from the death of Muhammad to the present drawing on his recently published book.

**Kenneth Kirkwood Memorial Lecture Day**  
**Saturday 10 March 2018 10.00-16.00 2018**  
**SAVE THE DATE**

Contact: [shahinbekhradnia@hotmail.com](mailto:shahinbekhradnia@hotmail.com)

### Small Chinese villages

**Wednesday 21 March 2018 18.30**

**Kirsty Norman**, Institute of Archaeology, UCL and **Paul Bolding** take a look at the history, variety and current approaches to management of the fortified houses and towers of this UNESCO World Heritage site.

### The Kiln at Wytham Woods

**Wednesday 23 May 2018**

Details to follow.

### Summer Away Day

**Tuesday 6 June 2018**

Vineyard visit and tour to include lunch. Details to follow.

### Origins of human artistic creativity

**Wednesday 13 June 2018 18.30**

**Gillian Morriss-Kay**. Followed by **AGM**.

See [prm.ox.ac.uk/friendsevents](http://prm.ox.ac.uk/friendsevents) for more information about these Friends' events.