

EDITORIAL

The war against Iraq and its aftermath have made this an eventful but tragic and very sad year. In the build up to the war, the School was approached by the American military and asked to give information regarding the sites in Iraq under threat from bombing. A list of endangered sites was provided by Professor J. N. Postgate and Dr Eleanor Robson (<http://users.ox.ac.uk/~wolf0126>) and the danger of looting was emphasised. Our Chairman, Dr Harriet Crawford, and members of the School were active in approaching the Government and highlighting in the media the risk, not only to Iraqis but to the monuments and antiquities of Iraq — our common heritage — in the event of war. Since the war, John Curtis was one of the first archaeologists to make contact with the Iraq Museum after the looting, and he has been to Iraq twice. After his first visit, between the 22 and 28 April, he came back with Dr Donny George for a press conference in the British Museum on 29 April (see the May *Newsletter* for reports on all these activities). Between 13 and 23 June he returned to Iraq with Dominique Collon and two conservators from the British Museum in order to assess the conservation needs of the Iraq Museum.

The School made a major contribution to post-war efforts to assist the Department of Antiquities and the Iraq Museum, in its secondment of Helen McDonald, who went out to Iraq from June until August and helped establish links with the Coalition administration and military in Baghdad and in the area of Babylon. In Baghdad she worked alongside Sarah Collins, also a member of the BSAI. The School donated a large microscope for the Museum's conservation laboratory and is collecting publications, as few books and journals have been received since the first Gulf War almost thirteen years ago.

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Long before there was any talk of war, it had been decided that London should host the 49^e Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale from 7–11 July 2003 on the theme of Nineveh, in honour of the 250th anniversary of the founding of the British Museum. Eight Iraqis were able to come from Baghdad, among other Middle Eastern colleagues. The School provided the funding necessary for two of them. The Iraqi contingent was able to update us on the situation in Iraq. We also heard a report on the recovery of looted antiquities by Marine Colonel Matthew Bogdanos, leader of the Iraq Museum investigation team (<http://www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk/iraqcrisis/index.html>). Since he reported, other major antiquities looted from the galleries have been recovered, namely the Warka Head, the Basetki statue base and the Nimrud brazier; some eight hundred of the ten thousand small objects looted from the stores have also been recovered.

It has been decided that in keeping with a tradition for the publication of the previous British Rencontres, held in London (1963 and 1982) and Birmingham (1976), the proceedings of the present Rencontre should be published in *Iraq*. Only those papers directly relating to Nineveh will be considered for Volume 66 (2004). Papers which have been rewritten to include substantial additional material and papers on other topics will be considered for *Iraq* 67 (2004), as usual on a first-come, first-served basis.

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A study day on “Languages of Iraq, ancient and modern”, organized by the BSAI, was held on 15 November 2003 at the British Academy. In association with the Oxford University Department of Continuing Education, the BSAI is co-sponsoring a day school on the Sumerians on 17 January 2004 (for details and an application form see the November 2003 *Newsletter*).

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The war has also had repercussions on our archaeological activities, and seasons in Kuwait, at Tell Brak and at Chagar Bazar had to be cancelled (reports on the 2002 excavations in Kuwait and at Brak appear in the present volume). However, the cancellation of the Brak season meant that Helen McDonald was free to represent the School in Iraq (see above) and to continue with work on the Tell Brak project.

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The May 2003 *Newsletter* includes reports on grants awarded in 2002 to Georgina Herrmann (Nimrud Ivory Project), Jon Taylor (study of tablets in Aleppo Museum), and to Jennifer Price and Sally Worrell for work on Sasanian and Islamic glass from Kush (Ras Al-Khaimah).

The School provided additional grants in 2003 to: Dr Jon Taylor for study of original Standard Babylonian lexical lists in Aleppo from excavations at Emar; to Dr John MacGinnis for travel to the excavations at Ziyaret Tepe, in south-eastern Turkey, where he is responsible for the excavation of the Lower Town and the discovery of substantial Late Assyrian building; to Dr Farouk Al-Rawi for the final phase of the “Umma Project”, which involves copying Umma texts of the Ur III period in the British Museum preparatory to publication; to Dr Georgina Herrmann for continuation of the “Nimrud Ivories Project”; and to the British Archaeological Expedition to as-Sabiyah, Kuwait at H3, with a grant to Dr Heiko Kallweit for work on the remaining pieces of chipped and ground stone from the site.

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Our publication programme has continued. Warwick Ball has edited the first volume of his excavations for the School: *Ancient Settlement in the Zammar Region — Excavations by the British Archaeological Expedition to Iraq in the Saddam Dam Salvage Project, 1985–86 Volume 1* (British Archaeological Reports S1096), Oxford 2003, and the volume edited by Roger Matthews in the series on the Brak excavations has appeared: *Excavations at Tell Brak 4: Exploring an Upper Mesopotamian Regional Centre, 1994–1996*, published by the BSAI in conjunction with the McDonald Institute in Cambridge (2003).

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On 13 March, Dr P. R. S. Moorey was awarded the Gertrude Bell Medal of the British School of Archaeology in Iraq for his outstanding services to Mesopotamian archaeology. He has recently retired as Keeper of Antiquities at the Ashmolean Museum, and is Viceregent of Wolfson College, Oxford. The medal was presented to him by our President, Professor David Oates, who had himself been a recipient of it in 1997, following Seton Lloyd (1979) and Max Mallowan (1976). On the occasion of the Rencontre, Dr Moorey was presented with a volume of papers contributed by colleagues, edited by T. Potts, M. Roaf and D. Stein, and entitled *Culture through Objects: Ancient Near Eastern Studies in Honour of P. R. S. Moorey*.

Another member of our Council was honoured with a volume: *Mining the Archives: Festschrift for Christopher Walker on the Occasion of his 60th Birthday*, edited by C. Wunsch.

Dr John Curtis was elected a Fellow of the British Academy in July.

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At the 69th Annual General Meeting of the School on 11 December 2002, Dr Jeremy Black, Dr John Curtis and Dr Georgina Herrmann were elected back on to the Council.

On 12 June, Dr Jane Moon presented a lecture entitled “Looking for more of Dilmun: Excavation at Saar, Bahrain 1990–99”. This was preceded by the BSAI Forum where questions about the School and its activities were addressed to the School’s officers.

The School’s 70th Annual General Meeting takes place on 11 December 2003 at 5.30 p.m., followed by a lecture by Dr John Curtis on “Balawat: The study of an Assyrian city”.