



CENTER FOR
NEAR EASTERN
ARCHAEOLOGY
LA SIERRA UNIVERSITY

La Sierra Digs

Newsletter of the Center for Near Eastern Archaeology | HMS Richards Divinity School | La Sierra University | Vol. 11:1 Winter 2023

Celebrating Ten Years at CNEA



2012 - 2022

SAME CENTER. NEW NAME.

Thanks to the tremendous generosity of C. Fred Cornforth, CNEA is positioned well for the future based on annual matching pledges of \$25,000 for ten years, in addition to a \$500,000 endowment. Thus, per the wishes of Mr. Cornforth, it is our pleasure to announce that CNEA is now the:

**Lawrence T. Geraty
and Douglas R. Clark
Center for Near
Eastern Archaeology**



Archaeology Discovery Weekend 2022 not only featured ancient Egyptian pharaohs, but also celebrated a major milestone for the Center for Near Eastern Archaeology—its tenth anniversary. Established in 2012 by a robust community of La Sierra University administrators, faculty, staff, and students, along with numerous local volunteers and donors from around the world, CNEA set off on a trajectory of notable accomplishments. Ten years and more than a million dollars later, the Center is recognized globally for its archaeology programs, outreach events to church and community, international research and publication, and its depth and breadth of human resources. The cover images on this issue of *La Sierra Digs* illustrate the 10th-anniversary brochure cover, an invitation to celebrate, and a game-changing note announcing a name change for the Center.

Thank you for joining us as we celebrate the 10th anniversary of the Center for Near Eastern Archaeology at La Sierra University!

Hosted by Douglas Clark, Lawrence Geraty, Friedbert Ninow, Kent Bramlett, Monique Roddy, Chang Ho Ji, Dawn Acevedo, and Rory Slattery

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Second Annual Winter Archaeology Lecture—2023

The Center is pleased to announce the 2023 Winter Archaeology Lecture, titled “Uncovering the Secrets of a Biblical City: Abel Beth Maacah on Ancient Israel’s Northern Frontier,” which will be delivered by Dr. Robert Mullins of Azusa Pacific University. This, our second annual Winter Archaeology Lecture, will be held on Wednesday 15 February 2023 at 7:00 PM in the Zapara School of Business, Room 201. As with the inaugural winter lecture in 2022, the 2023 version will allow for in-person participation as well as online options: Zoom and Livestream.

Tel Abel Beth Maacah is a large multi-layered site in the Upper Galilee of Israel, strategically located at the intersection of ancient routes connecting Israel, Lebanon (Phoenicia) and Syria (Aram). The site appears in second millennium BCE Egyptian sources, in the Bible as loyal to David in the 10th century BCE, and conquered by the Arameans and Neo-Assyrians in the 9th and 8th centuries BCE. [Nine] seasons of excavation have revealed rich remains from the Middle Bronze, Late Bronze and Iron Ages. Of particular interest is the intensive Iron Age I-IIA occupation and an assemblage of unique finds that shed light on the interaction between Arameans, Israelites and Phoenicians in this border zone. To learn more, go to the [Abel Beth Maacah project website](#) or the [AIA Fieldwork website](#).

Robert (Bob) Mullins has taught at Azusa Pacific University for the past sixteen years. He joined the faculty of APU after earning his PhD in Archaeology from The Hebrew University of Jerusalem where he also served as a research assistant to Professor Amihai Mazar and the Beth-Shean Valley Archaeological Project. In addition to Beth-Shean, Rehov, Dor, and Gezer, Bob has also excavated at Tell Atchana (Alalakh) and Zincirli (Sam’al)

in southeastern Turkey. He currently co-directs the Joint Expedition to Abel Beth Maacah with Dr. Naama Yahalom-Mack and Dr. Nava Panitz-Cohen of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. His publications include the Old Testament portion of the Fortress Atlas of the Biblical World. His research interests include Egypt and Canaan during the Late Bronze Age, early state formation during the Iron Age, and the history of Israelite religion.

Watch the [CNEA website](#) for further details and instructions on how to access the presentation via Zoom or Livestream.

Homecoming Presentation – 15 April 2023

“A Thousand Windows into the Past: The Cohen Family Collection” will be presented during Homecoming Weekend by Dr. Harvey Cohen in collaboration with Kent Bramlett and Rory Slattery. Dr. Cohen, of La Mesa, CA, has been generously donating objects to CNEA from his exquisite collection of Middle Eastern artifacts, numbering over 900 pieces, each of which provides a window into the Near Eastern and biblical past. The Homecoming presentation will feature a kind of show-and-tell format, allowing Dr. Cohen to talk and tell stories about many of the artifacts, in conversation with specialists Kent Bramlett and Rory Slattery. There will be occasion for viewing the artifacts as well as Q&A.

Check the [CNEA website](#) for more details as they appear.



THE CENTER FOR NEAR EASTERN ARCHAEOLOGY
- 02.15.23, 7:00PM PST -
ZSB 201 OR WWW.LASIERRA.EDU/CNEA

w/ Dr. Robert Mullins
Azusa Pacific University

**“Uncovering the Secrets of a Biblical City:
Abel Beth Maacah on Ancient Israel’s Northern Frontier”**

**2nd ANNUAL
WINTER ARCHAEOLOGY LECTURE**

Three in One: Shaun Eccles’ Three Excavations Last Summer in Jordan

Shaun Eccles

I had learned on my very first dig to have a wider expectation of what data could really look like. When Dr. Friedbert Ninow spent an entire season digging near a dolmen and found nothing and framed it as “even finding nothing is finding something,” my perspective shifted. However, it was very difficult to keep that in mind while working on the Madaba Regional Archaeological Museum Project (MRAMP) and digging, or rather attempting to dig, through modern concrete. Sometimes excavation can feel like you’ve won the lottery! Other times it can take two weeks and you’ve barely made it two inches. MRAMP



is an ambitious project in which a museum is being built on top of ruins in the heart of Madaba and that unfortunately had a building in the way where we needed to excavate. Before we arrived, the building had been demolished but our mission was much easier said than done. From the Roman road we could see Byzantine layers and our objective was to get down to those. It was no more than a few feet down and undoubtedly we could make it there in the short two weeks we had been given. Doubt would have been a healthy option as well, though. Since we had modern concrete on top of earlier layers of modern concrete on top of an earlier layer of Ottoman-period concrete.

It was incredibly frustrating! It was incredibly difficult even to keep in mind what Dr. Ninow had taught a few years earlier because there was not enough progress being made to even know that we have nothing to find! Which, paradoxically, would be finding something! It was hard concrete and hard not to be discouraged before remembering what Dr. Ziad Al-Saad, the former Director-General of the Department of Antiquities in Jordan, had told me about Ottoman-period sites. That often they are considered so recent that they do not register in our minds as being archaeological, and so, unfortunately, in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan we might actually know more about the Bronze Age than we do about Jordan during the Ottoman period! A cruel irony of being so preoccupied with the past that you forget more recent history. This, to Ziad, is such a shame it is almost criminal and it is with that in mind that I saw the silver lining to this dark cloud of two weeks of minimal progress. That pounding away at this modern concrete and this Ottoman concrete not only contributes to the archaeological record in ways that it may desperately need but also contributes to a larger philosophical conversation about when does archaeology begin? How old does something have to be before it becomes archaeological?

After two weeks at MRAMP, I was off to Khirbat Iskandar for roughly three weeks. It was on this excavation that I noticed that I was the only male. Not just at Khirbat Iskandar but also at MRAMP (excluding the honorable director Douglas Clark). Archaeology, long thought of as an old boy's club was apparently trending in the opposite direction and the Khirbat Iskandar team discussed this. Without a scientific study being done, everybody's anecdotes pointed to the study of the Bronze Age especially as being dominated by women! It would be interesting for someone else to figure out if that is actually the case and why. More than being the only male, I was also one of the few who weren't Italian. And with one Italian on the team at MRAMP and one individual at Balu'a who is not Italian herself but trained by Italians, it became so obvious that every excavation going forward needs at least one Italian. The way that Italians are trained in fine detail work like that of top plans makes them leagues ahead of us... or maybe just leagues ahead of me. The goals were rather simple. Find the continuation of a particular wall on the other side of another wall that was built on top of the wall. Walls feature prominently in archaeology to begin with, but to give some context as to why these walls are especially significant, this is an Early Bronze Age site which,

when compared to all other contemporary sites, really should not exist. As one would expect with the law of superposition, the later material is found on top of the earlier material and so naturally you would expect for a settlement from EB IV to be on top of EB III. But this is the only site where you do see that! After EB III there was a collapse of urbanism in all places except Khirbat Iskandar! The implications of Khirbat Iskandar are vast and the work done there can shed light well beyond the Early Bronze Age. For example, there is a chronology issue for archaeologists working in the Early Bronze Age, just as there is for archaeologists working in the Iron Age in the southern Levant, and how one manages to work through that chronology can potentially inform how others work through the other chronology. That urbanism collapsed in all places except there could shed light on just how collapse happened at the end of the Late Bronze Age, and of course understanding the past is more valuable when it can inform our future. How can we avoid collapse now?

Finally, I made it to Balu'a for the next six weeks and after I had become accustomed to the size of the site, I learned following about a month of work there that I have very little patience for people complaining after a single week. Often when one visits an archaeological site there's a lot of imagination required to envision what the site would have been like at its peak. Balu'a requires very minimal imagination. You can walk the walls. You can see the giant city gate and see how intimidating this city would have been to those walking up to it from the wadi. The significance of this site in antiquity must have been tremendous. My square mate was more interested in biology than he was in archaeology, but thankfully that meant that he had some excavation skills from palaeontology that transferred over. Still, I think that I may have learned more about lizards than I did about Moabites. The field I worked on at Balu'a was at the wall and our mission was simple here as well. Get down below the wall to find some datable material. We were able to do that and date the wall to being a little later than we anticipated, but by far the coolest thing to happen at Balu'a was a discovery of a Persian layer near the Qasr containing an inscription of the Moabite deity's name Kemosh written in an Aramaic script. This script was only standardized by the Achaemenid Persian Empire and carries very exciting implications for future research.



Generosity toward CNEA: A Report

Douglas Clark and Rory Slattery

The Center for Near Eastern Archaeology exists because of donor generosity. It's that simple, even if not so simple actually to raise funds throughout the year. We are eternally grateful to contributors who donate, some at significant sacrifice, to help support CNEA and its mission. The first half of this fiscal year (1 July-31 December) witnessed 29 donors and \$50,045 in donations.

In addition to donations through 31 December, including GivingDay returns, CNEA is celebrating the major donation/pledge of \$25,000 per year for ten years given by Mr. Fred Cornforth in addition to a \$500,000 endowment pledge coming over the next few years. Add to this another game-changing donation by Linda Larson Clement of a \$250,000 endowment, the returns from which will be used in archaeological outreach to the community. Both of these extremely generous contributions to CNEA will make a huge difference in CNEA's capacity to maintain and expand its pace of accomplishment and contribution to the world of archaeology (especially biblical archaeology) in the Middle East.

Two additional non-artifact donations deserve special mention:

The Versacare Foundation has long supported our projects, including as the primary financial sponsor of last year's Archaeology Discovery Weekend. This is CNEA's most prominent outreach event of the year.

Marking a different kind of contribution, the family of long-time archaeophile Rev. William Broughton is in the process of donating Broughton's large and significant library to CNEA. The wealth of our library's holdings, beginning with those donated

by Larry Geraty, and then several relatively small collections, as well as the large libraries of Norma Kershaw, Brian Byrd, and Tom Levy, is becoming a rich resource for students and researchers. These expansive donations have led CNEA to conversations with the university library about restructuring the collection in line with Library of Congress guidelines and listing CNEA volumes on the main library website. More on this later.

Center staff are currently working on a comprehensive Donor Recognition List, recognizing ALL donors of ALL types of gifts, including gifts in kind and in volunteer service, during the entire history of CNEA. More about this online recognition soon.

While CNEA is enjoying the tremendous generosity of a wide range of supporters for various aspects of our work, our annual budget is still in need of funds. Thank you for continuing to donate to CNEA. Visit [this donation page](#).

SUMMER EXCAVATIONS

Madaba Regional Archaeological Museum Project, Jordan 15–27 May 2022

Douglas Clark

In the context of previous excavations at the Madaba Archaeological Park West (II), especially those by Michele Piccirillo, the American Center of Research (ACOR), Cherie Lenzen, Pierre Bikai, Ghazi Bisheh, and others, the current project stands alone, separated stratigraphically from earlier excavations on-site. The reason for this is the existence of the relatively late, small cinder-block building on privately owned property just inside the Park. It was the removal of this building to allow the land on which it stood to be included in the footprint of the new museum that opened the possibility and necessity of this excavation season.

Discussions about how much to excavate, how many seasons it would take to bring this section into phase with the surrounding settlement buildings, how far a small two-week season would take the team occupied a good deal of our time this season. Following conversations with architects, observing the keen interest among tourists to watch the excavation activities as we worked, and reflecting on recent best practices at several museums to create labs and work spaces visible to the public, MRAMP decided that the excavations beneath where the late building once stood would provide an ongoing exhibit of how archaeology works, about proper methods, about equipment and tools necessary for appropriate digging techniques. It would be entirely enclosed inside the museum, set apart by unobtrusive barriers, and visible for museum visitors to view. Whether a static display without excavation activity or an active dig, this would grant visitors a realistic view of what it takes to do scientific archaeology and the work required behind the artifacts they will see inside the display cases. This approach will contribute a strong educational component to the museum programs.

Two additional notes:

1) The layout of excavation units follows the very restricted space delimited on the west by an earlier building still stand-

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Main > Archaeology

Giving Day donations will be counted through December 31st.

LA SIERRA UNIVERSITY
giving day

Archaeology Team

\$40,749.27 Total Raised

\$50,000 Goal

27 Donors 1 Fundraiser

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CENTER FOR NEAR EASTERN ARCHAEOLOGY

ing, on the north by a dropoff to previous excavations just beyond the walls of the late building, on the east by a dropoff to previous excavations, and on the south by close proximity to the previous owner's house and adjoining property.

2) A second note comes from oral history, provided by the adjacent land owner (Mr. Malik Al-Jilad) who, before the property was purchased from him by the Department of Antiquities, spoke of a long history of ownership by his family, the first members of which settled the site following their immigration from Karak in the late 19th century. The area of the Madaba Archaeological Park West (II) was settled and developed by these new arrivals who came at a time following a thousand years of abandonment of the city of Madaba, with the exception of mostly pastoral Bedouin tribal groups in the region around the city. Upon arrival and with approval from the Sultanate in Istanbul, these settlers cleared building lots by digging up ashlar stones for house construction until they reached mosaics from the Byzantine and early Islamic periods (primarily the 6th century into the mid-8th century). Atop these ruins were constructed houses which over time were renovated and updated. A brief history of occupation provided by the previous land owner compresses the strata of our work area into several recent decades. In reverse chronological order, a kitchen remodel occurred in the 1970s. Preceding that, in 1954, the late building which was recently demolished was constructed. Also in the early 1950s, a three-room house was built by Al-Jilad's great grandfather for his (Malik's) grandfather. Three layers of overlaid cement surfaces indicated three phases of occupational history, all within the family: the top layer associated with the two buildings from the 1950s, and then, below that, another layer of cement, and then still another. Everything beneath the late cinder-block building dates to the pre-1950s, sealed over by the building itself and its construction components. Precise dates for these pre-1950 constructions await further research of municipality records accompanied by the results from the archaeology of this season.

Objects from our 2022 excavations came from the 20th century AD, a far cry from what many of us are used to: several centuries and millennia BC! So, we should not be surprised

that artifacts included modern beads, small coins, an ink jar, and numerous glass marbles, in addition to many rifle shell casings, metal implements, leather shoe soles, and even a sardine can—not our normal haul!

Balu'a Regional Archaeological Project

23 June – 4 August 2022

Kent Bramlett (author), Monique Roddy, Friedbert Ninow

Our return to Balu'a after three years of anticipation brought with it certain hopes and objectives for the 2022 season. The preservation of multiple occupation periods at Balu'a offers the potential to construct a better understanding of Iron Age Moab, as well as preceding and subsequent periods. One of our objectives is to refine our understanding of the ceramic typological developments on the Kerak Plateau. Another objective this past season was to obtain more data from the previous excavation areas to either support or modify our tentative conclusions on the sequence of construction and occupation in the main part of the city and the phasing and function of the fortifications separating it from the eastern expansion.

Work at the Qasr revealed more of the Pataikos House, so called for the figurine found there in 2019. The excavation team uncovered a doorway with an intact lintel in the eastern wall of this building. Additional pottery from the usage phase of the building supports our preliminary placement of the structure in the Iron IIB period. Further exposure of the Pithos House revealed three additional pithoi. Two had been buried upside down with the bottoms broken out, possibly to use as ovens.

The House was further exposed revealing more rooms and additional clues to the use of its rooms. By the end of the season, floors dating to the main Iron IIB phase were reached in all new areas. But our hopes of reaching the earlier surfaces must wait for another field season.

Progress in the area known as the Wall exposed more of the casemate room between the two large fortification lines. And a building west of the casemate wall was excavated to its floor and produced objects, pottery, and connections with yet-unexcavated parts of the structure.

Exploration of the Khan, or road inn, in the Islamic Village began to provide an understanding of the chronology of activity there, so far dating to the Late Islamic Period but with evidence beneath a collapse of earlier occupation.

Overall, the season was productive and leaves us anticipating our return to Balu'a in 2024. Read more detailed updates in the *BRAP Beat* at www.BRAPJordan.org



Ataruz, Jordan

23 June-14 July 2022

Chang Ho Ji

The 2022 Khirbat Ataruz excavation project was mounted to examine the area east of the acropolis (Field E) and its southeastern slope (Field G). The ancient ruins of Khirbat 'Ataruz are perched on a ridge overlooking the Dead Sea above the Wadi Zarqa Main on the north, and the Wadi Sayl Haydan on the south. It is located 24 km south of the town of Madaba, 10 km west of the village of Libb and 3 km east of the ancient site of Machaerus, in Jordan. This site once stood at a crossroads where the ancient roads coming from the Dead Sea, the Wadi Sayl Hadan and the town of Madaba met.

Previous excavation seasons exposed an Iron Age temple with many cultic vessels, a 4 x 11 – meter building oriented toward the rising sun with doorways that opened into adjacent rooms and a main doorway that opened into a central courtyard. The southern room contained a fire pit and a platform/altar and the north room with three entrances may have served as a storage area. Additional buildings on the northern side contained two raised bedlike platforms and stairs to another possible altar. The eastern side doorway of the main temple building opens directly on to a large courtyard where there are five altars and additional buildings. Four altars face an enclosure wall on the east and a large altar on the north side has a step. Abutting the eastern wall of the temple next to the doorway is a four-tiered stepped structure whose purpose remains unknown.

The 2022 season yielded the following results:

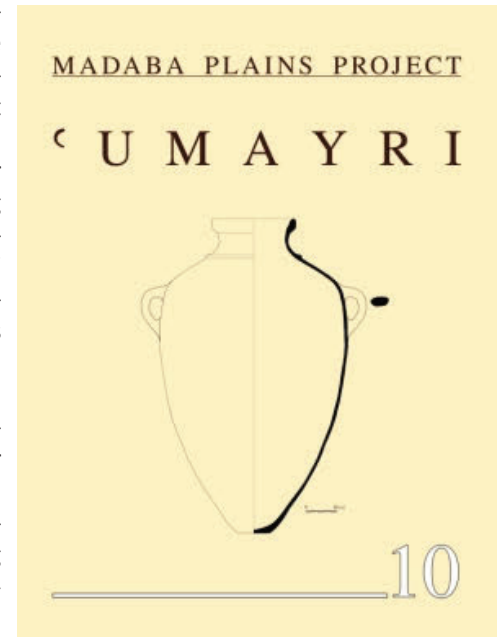
- Exposure of the likely continuation of a stepped stone structure ascending toward the acropolis of the site (the temple) from the east.
- A flat-stone plaza possibly joining the steps to the temple.
- Added support for a few theories which are helping us better understand this important religious site.



Recent CNEA/CNEA-related Publications

Rory Slattery

Sharing our findings with public and scholarly audiences through publication is at the core of our research at CNEA. In 2022, the tenth volume in our publication of the fieldwork of the Madaba Plains Project was released, detailing the 2006 season at Tall al-'Umayri. A recent review by the University of Manchester's Piotr Bienkowski in December's Society of Biblical Literature Review of Biblical Literature praised the series' impressive efforts in making available



“extremely detailed data that has contributed hugely to our understanding of the archaeology of Jordan.” Five further seasonal reports are planned; the next, which we hope to release in 2023 or 2024, will detail the 2008 season. Following their release, final volumes will be released, before 2030. Editors will include La Sierra’s Drs. Doug Clark, Larry Geraty, Kent Bramlett, and Monique Roddy, as well as Dr. Larry Herr, professor emeritus of Burman University.

Dr. Clark also co-edited the newly published volume of *The Pottery of Jordan: A Manual*, funded by the United States Agency for International Development’s Sustainable Cultural Heritage Through Engagement of Local Communities Project, implemented by the American Center of Research (ACOR) in Amman, Jordan. The manual began as a resource for the Madaba Regional Archaeological Museum Project’s 2021 Pottery of Jordan Training Workshops. The manual provides comprehensive information on Jordanian pottery industries and their histories ([see here](#)). ACOR believes that “the manual will serve



as the main reference on pottery in the country, and will be a valuable resource for researchers, archaeological museums, students, and archaeologists, as well as all those who study Jordan's pottery assemblages."

We look forward to another year of publishing rigorous archaeological research.

New CNEA Videos Available Online

Dawn Acevedo

You asked for it, and now you've got it! Videos from the 14th annual Archaeology Discovery Weekend on 12–13 November 2022 are being posted to our [YouTube channel](#) every Saturday morning. You can view the playlist [here](#). Also, be sure to check



out the [video for our virtual event](#) from La Sierra University's 3rd annual Giving Day which took place on 7 December 2022. Stay up to date with new video releases by subscribing to our YouTube channel and clicking the bell icon and by following us on Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter. The playlist for ADW 2022 will also be posted on our website once all the videos are uploaded.

Post-doctoral Fellow Dr. Ian Jones Coming in March

Dr. Ian Jones, currently a lecturer at the University of California San Diego, has been awarded a two-year post-doctoral fellowship at La Sierra, courtesy of the family of Dr. Brian Bull. He arrives on campus in March and will begin the long process of reorganizing and curating a massive collection of research materials from 20

years of excavating 20 sites in the Wadi Faynan in southern Jordan (copper-production slag and other metallurgical remains, stone implements, ceramic artifacts, bones [including a hundred human burials],



wall stones, and other types of archaeological remains). As part of Ian's assignment, he will teach a course for graduate and undergraduate students this spring on Islamic Archaeology. This will complete a series of historical archaeology classes each year: Old Testament archaeology in the fall, New Testament archaeology in the winter, and Islamic archaeology in the spring.

Visiting Scholar Earns MA on CNEA Sheep Teeth

Richard Pearson, a recent MA graduate from University College London, wrote an award-winning dissertation there on sheep teeth excavated at Tall al-'Umayri, part of the Madaba Plains Project and a CNEA excavation. Pearson spent a week last April holed up in CNEA's 'Umayri storage modular, sorting through crates and crates of animal bones excavated at 'Umayri, dating to the Early Iron Age (ca. 1200–1000 BC) and the Early Bronze Age (ca. 3600–2000 BC). With the use of strontium isotope analysis, he was able to determine that during the Early Iron Age, as pastoralists were in the process of settling down in villages, some of the sheep at 'Umayri had been transported more than a hundred kilometers either from the Negev desert in the south or the region of the Galilee, more likely the former. His research earned several awards from the university and from the UK:

- University College London Institute of Archaeology Master's Prize.
- Seton Lloyd Memorial Prize for Western Asiatic Archaeology.
- W F Grimes Prize for Environmental Archaeology.
- Also nominated for the Council for British Research in the Levant's Master's Dissertation Prize and the National Association for Environmental Archaeology John Evans Dissertation Prize.



CNEA's Partnership with the Stahl Center

Rory Slattery

We are excited to forge a new partnership this winter with La Sierra University's Stahl Center. CNEA and Stahl Center staff will join forces to prepare the Stahl collection for the proposed new campus museum. The collection of thousands of artifacts donated over the course of decades by missionaries who lived and served in diverse corners of the world will receive attentive care, enabling students and community members to better engage with and learn from the collection and the Stahl Center's mission of advancing knowledge of global cultures and social justice issues.



In Retrospect: Archaeology Discovery Weekend 2022

Rory Slattery

In celebration of the centennial anniversary of the discovery of King Tutankhamun's tomb, CNEA's fourteenth-annual Archaeology Discovery Weekend this past November focused on ancient Egyptians and their kings. Over 150 attendees gathered online and in person to hear world-famous scholars share their research. A special CNEA tenth-anniversary reception featuring Egyptian foods and words from the university president, CNEA director, and more special guests followed the Saturday lectures. After the Sunday presentations, families gathered in CNEA labs and library to enjoy activities including a kids' dig, pottery reconstruction, laser scanning of Egyptian shabti, and 3D viewing of Egyptian sites. Display cases highlighted the discovery and impact of King Tut, CNEA's collection of Second Intermediate Period (c. 1650–1550 BC) scarabs, Egypt's influence across eastern Mediterranean sites including Tall al-'Umayri, and a wide array of ancient Egyptian artifacts relating to the afterlife on loan from—and soon to be donated by—the Cohen Family Collection (La Mesa, CA). To catch videos of all presentations and the CNEA tenth-anniversary reception, as well as a photo album of the event, once they are all posted in a few weeks, visit the [CNEA website](#).



Display Case

Dawn Acevedo

Pottery was a domestic staple during the Iron Age, especially for the storage and serving of foods and liquids. While Iron Age ceramics tend to be coarser, thicker, and less well-leveled (that is, the clay had large inclusions of pebbles, straw, or minerals) than their Bronze Age predecessors, they continued to be the go-to solution for household objects. From pithoi (storage jars), cups, bowls, plates, platters, juglets, jars, stoppers, and flasks to lamps, weights, gods, model shrines, anthropomorphic and zoomorphic vessels, loom weights, beads, and possibly even toys, ceramics were cheap, easily produced, customizable, and relatively durable. It is possible that a table setting in an Iron Age home would have consisted entirely of ceramic objects such as the scene pictured here with a platter, bowls, jar, juglets, and lamp from CNEA's Biblical Life Collection. To learn more about life in an Iron Age biblical city, be

The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Bible

Archaeology Discovery Weekend 2023

The 15th annual Archaeology Discovery Weekend will take place 11–12 November 2023 and will focus on the Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS) and the Bible. Several world-class DSS scholars will be on campus for in-person and online presentations on the scrolls found 76 years ago which have transformed our understanding of the Bible's history and development. Watch for further announcements.



sure to join us for our 2nd annual Winter Archaeology Lecture on 15 February 2023 at 7:00 PM (in-person and online—see invitation elsewhere in this newsletter).



La Sierra Digs

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and Dawn Acevedo

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2023 Calendar of Events

15 February, 7 PM (ZSB 201)

Winter Archaeology Lecture:

“Uncovering the Secrets of a Biblical City:
Abel Beth Maacah on Ancient Israel’s
Northern Frontier,” by Dr. Robert Mullins

15 April

Homecoming Program featuring
Dr. Harvey Cohen

11–12 November

Archaeology Discovery Weekend on the
Dead Sea Scrolls and the Bible

SUPPORT CNEA!

As this issue of *La Sierra Digs* makes clear, the Center for Near Eastern Archaeology at La Sierra University is on the move! And it needs your support for student travel scholarships, the new university museum, and ongoing operations. Please go online at <https://lasierra.edu/donate> and click on “Center for Near Eastern Archaeology” to make your contribution. Or contact the Office of University Advancement at (951) 785-2500. Thank you!

Recent Discoveries

Assembled by Dawn Acevedo

Qumran – A Pilgrimage Site?

New research from Ben Gurion University epigraphist Dr. Daniel Vainstub proposes that Qumran may have been an annual pilgrimage site for the Jewish Essene community. Some Dead Sea Scrolls reference “a yearly ritual that coincided with Shavuot... to come together to reaffirm their covenant with God.” Read more [here!](#)

Scientists Crack the Code for Roman Concrete

An international team of researchers identified “self-healing” properties of Roman concrete thanks to the ancients’ use of quicklime (calcium oxide) and a “hot mixing” process. Dr. Admir Masic of MIT explains that heating the concrete to high temperatures produces “compounds that would not otherwise form... [and] significantly reduces curing and setting times... allowing for much faster construction.” Learn more about their findings [here!](#)

Beholding the Face of Ramesses II

The Face Lab at Liverpool John Moores University in the United Kingdom used facial reconstruction software to depict a 45-year-old Ramesses II. Because “the pharaoh died in his 90s,” the team utilized “a three-dimensional age regression process” in order to reconstruct the ancient ruler’s face “at the peak of his power.” View his visage [here.](#)

New Egyptian Queen Discovered on Tut’s Anniversary

At Saqqara, Egyptologists, including the well-known Dr. Zahi Hawass, have discovered “22 shafts, ranging from 30 to 60 feet” with as many as 300 coffins and a “huge limestone sarcophagus” all dating to the New Kingdom – rare for the area. In addition to the well-preserved mummies, “researchers found a pyramid commemorating a queen whose identity was previously unknown.” To learn more about the discovery of Queen Neith, go [here.](#)