FRIENDS OF BLACKBURN MUSEUM & ART GALLERY

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Tela

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Roman Image and Identity

How did the Romans See Themselves?

In the museum now!

Britain, and especially the North West, has a rich Roman history. This history however, focuses very heavily on the military and their forts. This exhibition aims to provide a different way of looking at the Romans and seeing the social side to their lifestyles as well as considering their images and identity.

Can you work out the names of the emperors? and much harder, which reverse matches which emperor?

Answers inside.

The exhibition itself is split into two parts: Image and Identity and The Twelve Caesars. Image and Identity uses tombstones, architectural pieces and even a cavalry helmet to look at the way Romans looked and the way they saw themselves. This part of the exhibit also looks at beauty products and Roman cosmetics.

The Twelve Caesars builds on this by focusing on the images displayed on coins. It is based on the first twelve emperors featured in a book written by the Roman historian Suetonius. It uses images and coins from the Hart collection at Blackburn Museum to show the development of Rome during this period as well as a closer look at the images on the coins.

This exhibition is a joint project in partnership with the Salt Museum in Northwich and the Grosvenor Museum in Chester. It grew from a 'Renaissance in the Regions' scheme to promote Roman History in the North West of England. At Blackburn Museum, it funded research into the Hart collection of Roman coins and allowed the collection to be put on a database for the first time and be digitally photographed, front and back.

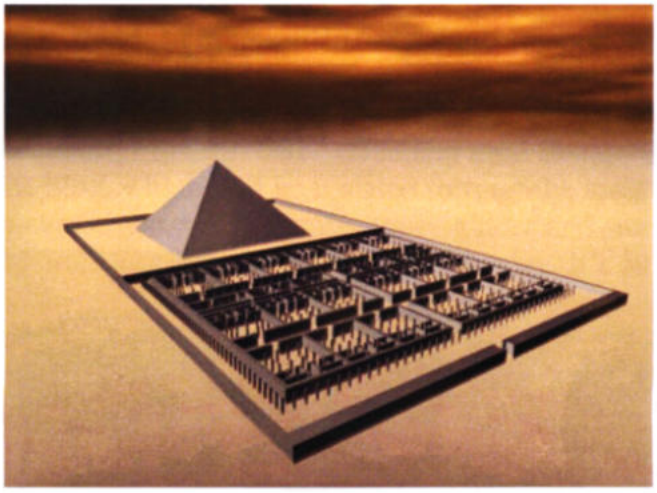
Vinai Solanki, curator

The Hawara Mummy

The museum has a small Egyptology collection, which includes a mummy with its original encaustic portrait. The mummy is of a woman from the 1st Century AD and was donated to the museum by Jesse Howarth in 1888, from an excavation of a cemetery in Hawara by Flinders Petrie.

The Hawara mummies are world famous for the portraits they carry. These are painted with hot wax (encaustic) are very well preserved and seem to be genuine likenesses, giving us a chance to gaze into their eyes and wonder. I do not have a good reproduction of our person as the museum ran out of staff and money to be able to provide one. Of the four images below you can easily guess which is ours!

On the mummy's feet are 'the enemies of Egypt' presumably so that they could still be trampled upon in death. Does anyone know who these enemies are? Are they purely conventional? As far as I am aware this was a time of peace for Egypt.



Hawara was famous in the ancient world for its labyrinth. Herodotus, that most entertaining of historians, was taken to visit it.

I was taken through the rooms in the upper storey, so what I shall say of them is from my own observation, but the underground ones I can speak of only from report, because the Egyptians in charge refused to let me see them, as they contain the tombs of the kings who built the labyrinth, and also the tombs of the sacred crocodiles. The upper rooms, on the contrary, I did actually see, and it is hard to believe that they are the work of men; the baffling and intricate passages from room to room and from court to court were an endless wonder to me□

Match the coins answers.
In order from the top: Claudius, Hadrian,Hadrian reverse, Augustus, Septimius Severus reverse, Vespaian, Septimius Severus, Vespasian reverse.

Strawberry Hill Lives!

During our 2008 visit to Horace Walpole's extraordinary home, the Friends of Strawberry Hill told us about the magnificent restorations planned for Strawberry Hill. These have now taken place and the splendidly renovated building reopens to the public this autumn.

They also told us that the V&A would be mounting a major exhibition about the house and its owner in 2010.

2010 then seemed a long, long way off but here it is, and here is the promised exhibition, *Horace Walpole's Strawberry Hill*, which recreates Walpole's eclectic collection and the décor of his summer retreat.

Nothing about Horace Walpole was ordinary or conventional. If you already know about him and Strawberry Hill this is a wonderful opportunity to learn more. If you haven't previously encountered him then you're in for a real treat. The exhibition is at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London SW7 from 6 March to 4 July. More information is available at www.vam.ac.uk

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Leighton Hall Lives

Leighton Hall, the showpiece home of Lord Leighton has just been re-opened to the public. It was built under Leighton's direction to show his status as a prominent artist and very impressive it is too with its public rooms and large studios open to other artists. It has only one bedroom, relatively stark and simple with one single bed for his lordship.
The London poor were allowed in
Leighton died childless and the house proved difficult to sell - that single bedroom perhaps? The housel was eventually used as a children's library . It has now been comprehensively restored. A Blackburn firm recreated some of the missing wallpaper. Does anyone know which firm this was?
One of Leighton's most loved paintings is Mother and Child (Cherries) which can usually be seen in the museum but until June is on loan to the Musei di San Domenico in Italy.

Blackburn Cotton Exchange to Live?

The foundation stone of the Cotton Exchange was laid in 1860 and the original plan was for a central tower, with wings on either side. The outbreak of the American Civil War and the blockade of raw cotton leaving the southern states created a cotton 'famine' in the UK, so the second wing was never built.
Since it closed as a cinema, the Exchange has remained empty and unused, being currently on offer to let as office space. It is a splendid gothic building which adds interest to the town centre which surely could be much enhanced by opening it as an attraction to the public. Small shops? Art and craft studios? A bookshop? - you are probably aware that Blackburn does not have one single bookshop.
If Strawberry Hill and Leighton Hall then why not Blackburn Cotton Exchange?

Romany in Carlisle

On the Friends' tour of Carlisle we passed the Methodist Central Hall and that rang a bell. This church was built in Fisher Street on the site of an older building, which, according to a plaque on the wall had been preached in by John Wesley in 1788 and 1790. This present Methodist Church had been erected during the ministry of the Revd George Bramwell Evens 1914-1926, and George Bramwell Evens was "Romany "of the BBC.

Romany was the forerunner and inspiration of such people as David Bellamy and David Attenborough and he used to broadcast regularly on Children's Hour during the 1930s and 40s. His broadcasts about natural history and walks in the countryside were so realistic, that in your imagination you were actually "Out with Romany"

I have joined the Romany Society of which Terry Waite is the patron. In 2003 he unveiled the plaque which is on the wall of the Methodist Church Hall. I thought that the building looked rather sad and neglected and when I enquired about it at the Visitor Centre they said it had been closed since 2005.

Joan Musgrave did not go on the evening tour as she had been brought up in the area. When I told her about the Methodist Church I had an interesting surprise. Joan had been taken to the Church as a baby, and christened by Romany!

Since returning from the Carlisle holiday, I have found out that Sarah Stevenson from Mellor, the granddaughter of a friend of mine, works at Tullie House Museum. However, she was not there on the days we visited because she had a special job to do.

Tullie House has recently had an Exhibition which finished on 9th September. It was of 3 rare bronze Roman cups or pans, discovered in different places, 2 in England and one in France. They must have been taken as souvenirs by some Roman soldiers, because they are all inscribed with the names of forts which were on the western side of Hadrian's Wall.

The French one, the Amiens Patera was discovered in 1949, and Sarah had the task of returning it to the Museum of Picardy in Amiens packed in her rucksack!

Barbara Riding

The Blackburn Museum Blog

Blackburn Museum and Art Gallery now has a blog! The blog, which will be updated fortnightly, aims to showcase some of the more amusing tales and strange objects which are unlikely to go on display. It's an informal way of talking about the collection and you can join in by adding your comments or stories to the blog entries. The blog can be found at blackburnmuseum.wordpress.com

Corporation Park

Many of our members also support other groups. There was recently a photograph in The Telegraph showing some members planting bulbs in one of Blackburn's great Victorian parks. The park is now registered by English Heritage as a Park and Garden of Special Historic Interest. The conservatory is a grade 2 listed building. The Corporation Park Supporters Group exists to promote development of the park and raise funds for restoring the conservatory. The group now has its own website (www.corporationparksupoortersgroup.com) and wants to include photos or postcards showing more of its history. At the moment we have a gap in the 1930s and 1940s - if anyone has any pictures we could scan and display we would love to see them. Contact Valerie Miles on 01254 262528.

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MEETINGS FOR THE YEAR

We are almost at the end of our meetings for this year, but there will be the usual full programme next year. If you know any possible speakers, please contact the Tela editor.

May 13th	Dick White - Sizergh and its Connections with Townley
May 20th	Visit to Lancaster University and Sizergh Castle
June 10th	Mike Millward - Four Mediaeval Churches. A visit to the these local churches will be arranged.
Sept. 16th	Trip to Ironbridge

All meetings start at 7.30 in the Museum New members are always welcome.

CONTACTS

Hon. Secretary: Mr D. Shipway, 10 Beaver Close, Blackburn, BB1 9LB
Editor of Tela: Mr J. Turkington. Email - jtvst2000@googlemail.com
Web site: sites.google.com/site/friendsofblackburnmuseum The easiest way is to 'google' us, we appear high up in the listings. Just try 'friends blackburn museum'
Blackburn Museum and Art Gallery, Museum St., Blackburn, BB1 7AJ