Students excavating a Roman building at the archaeological site of Sidi Moulay Abdeslam, near Larache, Morocco. Zoe Smith (UTK) is showing off her one-hand shoveling skills (photo Stephen Collins-Elliott).
Our beloved department saw momentous changes last year. As we were emerging from the COVID pandemic and returning to in-class teaching and seeing colleagues live again, we found ourselves saying good-bye to three faculty. Associate Head Robert Sikerien, interpreter extraordinare of Latin poetry, and Maura Lafferty, medieval Latinist and superb manuscript scholar, decided to retire to retire to make more time for other pursuits. Greek historian and prose specialist John Friend took a difficult decision to resign and move his family back to New Zealand in order to take care of his elderly parents. We are sad to see them leave, but we wish them the best and will stay in touch.

Fortunately we were able to hire two advanced assistant professors last spring. Salvador Bartera, who was a lecturer in our department before accepting a tenure-track position at Mississippi State, was hired back through a national search in the Latin prose position vacated by Chris Craig upon his retirement in 2020. Bartera is an expert on the Roman historian Tacitus, and he has thrown himself into his new job with great energy and enthusiasm. Already last spring break, before actually starting his position, he set up a program of student recruitment in local high schools. As a part of this, he created a Latin club at Fulton High School together with Keith Leonard, head of the English department at the school and an aficionado of Latin. Fulton has a diverse student body, and we would very much like to recruit their students into our department.

At the end of spring, there was more good news, as we received permission to hire distinguished lecturer Jessica Westphol as a tenure-track assistant professor of Latin poetry, replacing Robert Sikerien. Westphol is a specialist on Ovid and other Augustan poets. She will continue organizing our annual Latin Day, and she is helping Bartera in high-school recruitment. Together, they have visited all Latin programs in Knox County department at the school and an

For the final publication in the next few years, and their level-by-level investigations of the settlement's remains for her MA thesis on child frailty at Mitrou. (Mississippi State University) examined burial architecture. The team plans to write its manuscripts involving taking students. Georg Nightingale of the University of Mississippi, who will return to the field. As the study of Mitrou's excavation finds is nearing its end, Aleydis Van de Moortel organized a very small study season in summer 2022, and this did not involve taking students. Georg Nightingale of the University of Salzburg began his research on beads and vitreous materials from Mitrou, and Caroline Belz (UCLA) and Amanda Iacobelli continued their study of the surface survey finds. Kaitlyn McKenna (Mississippi State University) examined burial remains for her MA thesis on child frailty at Mitrou. Van de Moortel and Giuliana Bianco are finishing a national search in the Latin prose position vacated by Richard L. Sias, who predeceased him, were long-time friends and benefactors of Professor Gesell's Kavoussi project and our department. They were instrumental in creating the Rutledge Archaeology lecture fund, and Dick established the Dr. Geraldine C. Gesell Endowment with the intention that it will lead to the creation of an endowed chair in Aegean Prehistory. We are eternally grateful for Dick and Jeannette's wonderful generosity.

From May 29 to July 2, 2022, students from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, participated in the excavation season of “Gardens of the Hesperides: The Rural Archaeology of the Loukkos Valley” near Larache, Morocco. This is a joint Moroccan-American archaeological project directed by Aqmar Alavarez (Institut National des Sciences de l'Archéologie et du Patrimoine) and Stephen Collins-Elliott (UT), which examines the rural economy around the city of Loukco, the oldest city in northwestern Africa. More specifically, we are investigating whether the Roman period saw any major changes in its development.

Mitrou 2022: Study Season

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Gardens of the Hesperides:
The Rural Archaeology of the Loukkos Valley
Elisabeth Peulauk

Travelling often involves moving around quite a lot, so it was a privilege to be able to stay in one location in Larache, Morocco for five weeks during the Gardens of the Hesperides field season and be able to get a feel for the community that lives there. While everyone else toiled bravely at the dig site, I spent the majority of my days in a small museum with a set of Medieval human remains from one of the project’s sites, cleaning, measuring, writing inventories, taking pictures for research, and analyzing the bones for demographic information. These remains were found during the 2019 field season and will form the center of my MA thesis.

After my research was complete, I was able to travel more throughout Morocco before briefly visiting Portugal and Spain. Given my interests, I spent most of my time visiting every museum and historical site that would have me. This helped me to develop a sense of the cultural diffusion that occurred in the western half of the Mediterranean during the Middle Ages - particularly through viewing a certain kind of architecture. This style, which is a combination of Christian and Islamic aesthetic principles, involves beautiful wooden ceilings, intricately carved arches, and brightly colored ceramic tiles and is termed Mudéjar in Spain.

Although I have spent some time in multiple European countries, visiting Morocco this past summer was my first time in Africa. I can honestly say that I have never been to a country quite like Morocco. The blending of Berber, African and Arabic cultures is fascinating to see and manifests itself in everything from the food to the architecture and, not least of all, the people who live there who were very kind and welcoming. I am very grateful for the Susan Martin Excellence Scholarship and Haines-Morris Travel Scholarship from the Department of Classics, which funded my travel and research.

Cooper Phillips

My participation in the 2022 Field Season of the Gardens of the Hesperides project was a fantastic experience that I will surely never forget. The work was strenuous, and the hours were long, but the feeling of uncovering cultural remains that were thousands of years old was a hugely rewarding experience.

Beyond supplying first-hand field and lab experience, this project also provided me with exposure to a culture unlike any I had ever encountered before. Living in Larache, as opposed to a more widely visited city, gave us a truly authentic Moroccan experience that introduced us to all kinds of new foods, customs, and ideas. Our weekend travel excursions were certainly a highlight of this trip, as almost every week we went and visited a new city and any nearby archaeological sites. My favorite memories from these trips have to be visiting the souks and medinas of cities like Tanger and Melknes, and also seeing the famous (albeit reconstructed) Arch of Caracalla at Volubilis. Overall, this year’s field season was an immensely gratifying experience, and I am extremely grateful to have received a Haines-Morris Travel Scholarship from the Department of Classics, which made it possible for me to participate.

Zoe Smith

Thanks to an Athena Travel Scholarship from the Department of Classics, I was able to partake in the Hesperides Archaeological Project in Morocco. I found this excavation to be exceptionally exciting in regards to both its technological advancement and modern methodology. I loved working with the modern applications that the project employs, such as GIS mapping and photogrammetry, both of which create a detailed interactive database that allow researchers to recreate and re-excavate the trenches. Excavating in Morocco with the Hesperides Project allowed me to observe the inner workings of a modern excavation as well as experience a culture that is unknown to most. The rich culture of Morocco surpassed my expectations. I will never be able to forget the memories I acquired in Morocco such as watching caravans traveling alongside roadways, exploring the narrow alleys of the medieval souk, enjoying the tea served in our 17th century CE riad, and experiencing the sheep sale on tea served in our 17th century CE riad, of the medieval souk, enjoying the roadways, exploring the narrow alleys watching caravans traveling alongside

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Kavousi Report

The publication of the Kavousi Excavations is progressing. One volume, Kavousi IV: The Early Iron Age Cremations at Vronda is in page proofs and should be printed early in 2023. This will be a two-fascicle work: one containing the text, the other the figures, plates, charts, and tables. The next volume, Kavousi V: The Tombs around the Kastro, is nearly finished but not yet at the press. The volumes on the Kastro settlement and the Vronda shrine are still in process. The publication of the Kavousi Excavations is progressing.

Classics Undergraduate Conference

The 11th Annual Tennessee Undergraduate Classics Research Conference took place at Strong Hall on February 19, 2022. The conference was sponsored by the Classics Enrichment Fund of the Department of Classics, with generous encouragement by Betsey Beaumont, the College of Arts and Sciences, the Chancellor’s Honors and Scholars Program, the Office of Research and Engagement, the UT Humanities Center, and the Departments of English, History, Philosophy, Political Science, and Religious Studies.

This year’s conference began with the opening remarks from John Zomchick, provost and senior vice chancellor. Next, Vassiliki Panoussi, professor of Classics at the College of William & Mary, delivered the Beaumont Keynote Lecture. Her fascinating and incisive presentation, “Celebrating Isis: Ritual and Ethnicity in Apuleius’ Metamorphoses,” was a model for students and scholars alike on how to achieve innovation through curiosity and careful research.

Twenty students from 14 colleges and universities throughout the United States and Canada presented their research to an enthusiastic audience on a wide variety of topics. Examples include “Horus’ Use of the Myth of Icarus in the Odes,” “A New Narrative? Gender and Ethnicity in Apuleius’ Metamorphoses,” “A Low Cost Model for Students and Scholars alike on how to achieve innovation through curiosity and careful research.”

ALUMNI NEWS

Classics Advisory Council member Patrick Biddix (’01), has been honored with the first Jimmy and Ileen Cheek Endowed Professorship at UT. Patrick is a national expert on sororities and fraternities, student mental health issues, alcoholism, and hazing. He has written or edited ten books and was two, of which are now standard textbooks. Kudos and congratulations on this amply deserved honor!

Magister Sandy “Harenosus” Hughes (’05) from Bearden High bought a condo last year, and is a first-time homeowner. Besides his on-going hobbies of Speaking Latin and Latin composition, he has worked with Marco to develop a Medieval Studies class in Knox County Schools. His current project is to develop a Greek Studies class next year. It is a lot of hard work and a lot of rewarding.

We were delighted to hear from Aaron Mullis (’07), who has developed into a fireball of entrepreneurial activity. After graduating, he went to law school, where he helped low income clients settle tax debts with the IRS. He then focused his legal practice primarily on income clients settle tax debts with the IRS. He has written or edited ten books and was two, of which are now standard textbooks. Kudos and congratulations on this amply deserved honor!

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VI Classics Undergraduate Conference

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Thanks to the generosity of our many friends and benefactors, we have been able to establish a wide variety of funds over the years. Our new Christopher Craig and Ann Robinson-Craig Excellence Fund provides scholarships for students training to be Latin teachers. Other funds support student study and travel (Athena, Classics Diversity, Susan Martin Excellence, Mediterranean Archaeology Fellowship, Moser, Rapp) or archaeological excavations (Hesperides, Kavousi, Mitrou). With the establishment of the Geraldine Gesell Aegean Prehistory Endowment, the late Dick Sias wanted to promote research and teaching in that field. It was his wish that others would contribute to this fund so that it will grow and eventually enable us to establish an endowed chair in Aegean Prehistory in Dr. Gesell’s honor.

Information on how to contribute to these and other classics funds can be found on the envelope enclosed in this newsletter. Information and online giving portals are also available on our website at classics.utk.edu.