

# Pitt Rivers Museum Members Magazine

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members





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Cover image: View inside the PRM

# Museum Musings

Having two small children, I've recently been through that somewhat excruciating period where they learn the recorder. So it was with some interest that I learned from BBC Newsround (another parental rite of passage) of a possible alternative: the zither. There is a zither orchestra in Manchester of over twenty 4-15 year-olds making wonderful music. In a zither strings are stretched across a resonator which are played with the fingers directly, with a plectrum, hammers or even a bow. There is no neck and, typically, they are played horizontally on the seated player's lap or on a table, strings upwards.

Music is often described as a 'cultural universal' i.e. something we all do albeit in diverse ways. This is reflected in musical instruments themselves, where common mechanisms of noise-making are elaborated into culturally unique versions based on available materials and aesthetic preferences. Just so the zither, and the PRM is just the place to find out more.

In the Museum is a Czech zither from 1880, reflecting the typical form of European instruments. There is an early example from the UK and another version still is the 'epinettes des Vosges' from France. From present day Thailand are several examples where the resonator comprises a section of bamboo. There is a beautiful Chinese version, to be played with hammers, and where, somewhat

rarely, there is an exquisite description in the Museum record of the sound it makes: "it can sound like pearls crisply falling down a jade plate, the sound of a tinkling mountain spring, or like gurgling water when played fast." Wow! In Africa gourds are often used to construct the resonator and there is a fascinating example from Madagascar with a resonator made of dried palm fronds. From Nigeria is an example made entirely from reeds and where, according to a hand-written note attached to the instrument, pebbles were to be put into the instrument to rattle when played. True, the recorder has an ancient and diverse lineage, but so too has the zither. And it sounds rather easier on the ear!

**Anthony Flemming, Member**



Photo © Anthony Flemming



Czech/Slovakian zither from 1880, 1968.23.2.1

## Editorial



Photo © Dawn Osborne

When a museum has been in place for a hundred and fifty years or so, has an international reputation and an established collection, links to a world leading university and is famous for its own idiosyncrasies, it might be easy for it to rest on its laurels. However, as I look over the Magazine content this issue all I see is progress and a vitality that reaches out to many corners of the earth.

The Museum has been criticised in the past for looking backwards to a world order that no longer has any relevance. While we must remember the past and learn from it, the awards the Museum has just received for making a difference globally and partnering with living cultures (see our Director's

article on the next page) and the work it has done with the Maasai, the Naga (see page 4) the indigenous people of America (see page 6) and small collectives in Africa, Siberia and Hawaii (see page 11) to name but a few instances, shows that, while there is always much work to do in these areas, the PRM is a shining beacon of endeavour, mindful presence and hope for the future.

Facilities are being improved to make history more accessible including for the dispossessed and victims of war (see page 3 and 11). I am sure this is only a start in improving mutual understanding in a fractious world. The article on Page 7 on General Pitt Rivers, the original owner of the foundation of the collection, helps us to understand that he, in his own way and for his times, had some progressive ideas and I am sure he would still be proud of the Museum today.

**Dawn Osborne, Editor**

## From the Director



Photo: © John Cairns

Laura Van Broekhoven, Director, receiving her award

both awards as the competition was very (very) stiff and the awards hugely prestigious!

The annual Museums + Heritage Awards celebrate the best in the world of museums, galleries and cultural-heritage visitor attractions; it describes itself as the 'Oscars' of the Museum world. Winning this award indicates the scale of the Pitt Rivers Museum's influence on the global cultural stage.

Winning the VC's Award was a humbling surprise, particularly because of the strength of the nominees. Among them were groups who are using a multidimensional approach to eradicating global poverty, who are building sustainable paediatric surgical capacity to save thousands of children's lives in Tanzania (co-winners) and who are helping to end the death penalty in Zimbabwe, Ghana and

Sierra Leone. On the 15th of May 2025, the Pitt Rivers Museum was declared winner of two awards for which our 'Maasai Living Culture' project had been nominated: the University of Oxford Vice-Chancellor's Award in the 'Making a Difference Globally' category and the Museums + Heritage Partnership of the Year Award 2025. We never imagined that we would win

Praise for the 'Maasai Living Culture' project has been heart-warming. Two comments that we particularly appreciated were "Brave, sensitive, and internationally significant, this partnership sets a new standard for genuine collaboration" and "Through exceptional dialogue and deep mutual respect, it has delivered outcomes with impact far beyond the project itself — offering vital lessons for the sector at a pivotal moment in museum practice."

We, together with our Maasai partners (the Pan African Living cultures Alliance) and our amazing donors, the Staples Trust, are over the moon and deeply grateful to the University, the Museum + Heritage Awards, UK partner museums, and colleagues across the world for their generous support of the 'Maasai Living Culture' project.

**Laura Van Broekhoven, Director**



Maasai delegation visiting the PRM

Photo: © PRM

## From the Museum



Photo: © PRM

Summer has arrived once again, and with it the Museum is buzzing with life. Visitors and school groups fill our galleries, and the joyful energy of the holiday season is well and truly in the air.

Behind the scenes, our team is just as busy, with the added excitement of three new projects now underway — each made possible by recently awarded funding.

We're especially pleased to share that the University has provided funding to enhance safety and accessibility in Robinson Close, our rear and accessible entrance. The improvements will offer a safer, more welcoming experience for visitors and staff arriving through this route. Design and

planning are already underway, with construction set to begin in November.

Inside the Museum, we are delighted to have received a Clore Duffield Foundation Award to refurbish our learning space on the Clore Balcony, an important space where we host range of learning programmes for schools and visitors. We have also been awarded funding that will allow us to enhance technical access in both the Lecture Theatre and Seminar room improving experiences for audiences and presenters alike. These works are scheduled to take place over the summer months.

As always, we have a range of activities across summer, from talks, Behind the scenes and workshops. Why not try something new? We would love to see you!

Thank you for your continued support. Have a wonderful summer!

**Karrine Sanders, PRM Senior Administrator**



# Visit from the Naga Delegation



Photo: © PRM

Naga Delegation

Nagaland is a state in the extreme north-east of India, bounded by Assam in the north and west and Myanmar in the east. The geographical homeland of the Indo-Mongoloid Naga people is much greater, spanning the area between the Brahmaputra and Chindwin rivers, including parts of Myanmar, China and Bangladesh. This diffuse spread of an indigenous population within a mountainous region perhaps explains how their 17 tribes have each developed and maintained their own languages.

The colonisation of Nagaland by the British in the 19th century robbed them of thousands of traditional artefacts, including ancestral human remains that are now held by many museums including the Pitt Rivers, where they were on display until 2020. The PRM holds the largest Naga collection in the world. Altogether, around 219 Naga ancestral human remains are under its care, of which 41 are skeletal human remains. For several years, the Forum for Naga Reconciliation ('FNR') has been working to repatriate these items. Progress towards this goal was achieved in June 2025, when a delegation of Naga tribal leaders, elders and cultural experts came to the PRM for a week-long visit at the invitation of the Director, Laura Van Broekhoven. Their visit culminated in a moving session of talks in the lecture theatre of the Oxford Natural History Museum.

Professor Arkotong Longkumer, professor of Anthropology and Modern Asia at the University of Edinburgh, initiated the session by inviting Kumsang Bendangtoshi and Tongor Luden Ao Senden to dedicate the proceedings to the Naga ancestors and spirits. This was followed by an electrifying chant by Naga elder Dr Visier Sanjü: it described the separation of a Naga ancestor from the Creator, and expressed a hope that through repatriation, the ancestor would return to its rightful place and aid in healing past wounds.

The PRM has made tremendous strides towards recognising that the Museum holds many items that were looted without consent from other cultures during

the colonial period, causing subjection, humiliation and spiritual pain to the peoples from whom they were seized. Director Laura Van Broekhoven has been a leader in this movement, earning much criticism in the process, as she acknowledged in her address. One of the PRM's strengths is the organisation of its displays, according to the different ways in which common human practical needs and cultural interests have been met. The next stage, exemplified by our welcome to the Naga delegation, reflects an even greater acceptance of the common humanity of all peoples.

Dr Akum Longchari developed this theme by recognising that healing the trauma that is passed down from one generation to another requires truth-telling, forgiveness and redemption: these qualities are essential to reclaim identities, histories and destinies. The Rev Dr Ellen Konyak Jamir described the work of the '*Recover, Restore and Decolonise*' initiative that was recently inaugurated by the FNR.

As the Angami region president Thejao Vihienuo explained, the delegates had undertaken this sacred journey to achieve a profound restoration of dignity, identity, and sacred trust. He read out '*The Naga Oxford Declaration on Repatriation*': this expresses gratitude to the ancestors, acknowledges the delay in return of the cultural items and pledges a united Naga effort to repatriate them with dignity. It also expresses solidarity with other Indigenous communities around the world. The declaration was signed by Thejao Vihienuo and senior Naga representatives on behalf of the FNR. The whole audience was included in the significance of the event when, in categories beginning with the Naga tribal elders, we were asked to stand in solidarity with the declaration. The signed document was then handed to Dr Van Broekhoven. Professor Dolly Kikon concluded the proceedings, stating that "through the repatriation process we are creating a new truth and marching towards new promises of peace and a shared future".

**Gillian Morriss-Kay, Member**



# Interview with Shahin Bekhradnia



Shahin Bekhradnia

On the 29th March, the PRM held its annual Kenneth Kirkwood day on 'Who owns museum collections?' This was the 25th KK day and each topic with its speakers has been chosen by Shahin Bekhradnia. This year was her swansong and she was thanked by the Director of the PRM, Professor Laura Van Broekhoven. The cheers and the flowers that she then received was testimony to the appreciation of the Membership for all that she has done. The following week, we met up over a cup of coffee and I was able to learn more about her.

## **Your name is clearly not English?**

Absolutely not! My mother was a midwife and her father was an Iranian Zoroastrian priest and poet. My father was an Iranian peasant who became a distinguished officer, but was blinded during the war (Shahin and her brother have written Shahriar, his biography). The Shah made arrangements for my father to come to England for medical treatment and a bit later mum joined him with my brother. I was born here and brought up speaking Persian and Zoroastrian Dari. I loved languages and studied them at Oxford.

## **Are you still involved in the Zoroastrian community?**

Absolutely! My thesis was on the changing identity of Iranian Zoroastrians over the 20th century, and this gave me the opportunity to consider the interface between modern and traditional Zoroastrian practices, and to think about how long our small community can continue. My interest will never stop: I am now the Religious Affairs Spokesperson

for the World Zoroastrian Organisation and I talked about Zoroastrian death rituals at the 2022 KK day.

## **How did you get involved with the Pitt Rivers Museum?**

After University, I went travelling and later I found myself a job in Iran/Persia, allowing me to visit my granny in the desert village where she still lived. As a student I had met wonderful people as a student, particularly Peter Parkes, an anthropologist, who introduced me to Schuyler Jones, the then Director of the Pitt Rivers Museum. Under their influence and supervision, I wrote an M. Litt. thesis on change and identity among Zoroastrian communities in the 20th century. At the same time, I was teaching, founding my own school in Oxford, bringing up my son and travelling round the world. The Pitt Rivers Museum was my sort of place!

## **What were the origins of the Kenneth Kirkwood Day?**

Kenneth Kirkwood was Oxford University's inaugural Professor of Race Relations and one of the founders of the Friends of the Pitt Rivers Museum in the early 1980s. After he died in 1997, a group of us that included Felicity Wood and Liz Yardley felt that his wonderful work should be remembered so we set up a fund in his name to support the research of the PRM staff and organised a day of talks to support it. We all mucked in with the organisation, publicity and refreshments and, for reasons that I forget, I organised the topic and speakers. I just seem to have carried on doing this.

## **Are there any KK-day highlights that you particularly remember?**

The first in 2001 was on Africa, the fifth was on hunter gatherers and there have been days devoted to food, animals, children and death rites. I have loved them all but have particularly fond memories of Peter Parkes' brilliant talk on the topic of 'Tying the Knot' (amongst the Kalasha) in 2001 and of the 2016 KK day on the role of magic when Dr Alexander Sturgis (a.k.a. The Great Xa), Director of the Ashmolean Museum, included practical magic in his talk.

## **Why are you stepping down from organising the KK day?**

While the appreciation has been wonderful, things are changing. In the past, organising the KK day was informal and easy. Today there is a lot more administration and one has to be aware of all the nuances of health and safety. All that is not for me, and I am happy to hand over the reins to the next generation.

I should say that what is written above is just a summary of the words, histories, memories and thoughts that flowed from Shahin. The deeper truth is that her energy and enthusiasm carried the KK day for a quarter of a century. It is also worth remembering that group of early Friends of the PRM who first helped make the PRM such a welcoming place. They were almost all women, and it is wonderful that Shahin, Felicity, Liz, Linda and Barbara are still with us.

**Jonathan Bard, Member**

# Texas: Community Archaeology at Paint Rock

Back in 2023 I was lucky enough to meet Dr Jeremy Elliott, associate professor of English at Abilene Christian University (ACU), Texas. Dr Elliott was in Oxford where ACU have a house in North Oxford for their students to enjoy study abroad programmes. As an English professor, I was surprised to hear that he was involved in an archaeology project back in Texas at Paint Rock. We got talking and Dr Elliott was interested to discover what objects we had in the collection from Indigenous Native American Nations.

The collections of the PRM include many objects from North America, amongst which is a ceremonial shield belonging to a Comanche warrior. The shield can be found on display in the Upper Gallery. It was taken during battle between Comanches and Osages in 1854 and is decorated with feathers, a medicine bag, a scalp, and a rattle snake rattle. The nature of the decoration indicates that the shield, whilst used in battle, would have also been considered a sacred object understood by the Comanche as both powerfully protective and potentially dangerous. Jeremy pondered if the Comanche Nation knew that this shield was here in Oxford. He knew members of the Comanche Nation well, having worked with them for several years at the ceremonial site of Paint Rock where as an English professor he was interested in reading the stories in the rock art. I shared information with him about the Comanche material we have in the collections, and he returned to Texas to share with community members there.

We kept in touch and Jeremy invited me to Paint Rock to meet with Comanche elders and knowledge holders during the annual community archaeology project he had been running with archaeologist Dr Eric Schroeder and students from the University of Texas, Austin. The project is nothing short of inspirational. Not many archaeological digs would start their day with indigenous prayer and song, but at Paint Rock, a site which has been frequented by indigenous American tribes for thousands of years, that is exactly how the day begins.

The site is on a private ranch owned by the Campbell family. Located just north of the Concho River the



*Comanche shield, 1886.1.821.*



*Painted rock art on the limestone bluff. The painting depicts the 1758 Comanche attack on the Spanish Mission Santa Cruz de San Sabá, 90 miles east of Paint Rock.*

impressive limestone bluff, seventy feet high is a tremendous display of Native American history. The site hosts over 1,500 pictographs in a variety of colors that include animal, human figures, geometrics, and hand prints with some depicting Comanche stories and historical encounters with Spanish missions and white colonisers. A rough date places the earliest pictographs around a thousand years old, but the site was used repeatedly over the millennium. Throughout the weeklong dig members of the Comanche, Lipan Apache, Coahuiltecan, Payaya and Otomi Nation led the project just as much as the professional archaeologists. During the dig, indigenous knowledge and understandings are generously shared by tribal members to contextualise and understand the archaeology. Stories are shared and the rock art is explained in relation to indigenous cosmologies. Indigenous youth learn archaeological methods and are inspired to become the next generation of archaeologists.

A special memory of my time spent at Paint Rock was witnessing the sunrise ceremony during the solstice between two hills at San Angelo and taking part in a water ceremony at two of the dried up streams at either end of the

site during which we gave the land water and sprinkled tobacco with Comanche Nation elder Phyllis Narcomey and Matilde Torres, member of the Lipan-Apache Native American Church and the Pakahua/Coahuiltecan Peoples of Mexico and Texas.

During the week, I gave a presentation to the team about the PRM, fostering relations to improve the way in which we display the American west, prioritising indigenous epistemologies. I also explained the repatriation process and have since met with the Comanche Nation to discuss the possibility of returning the shield to the community. I am very grateful to Dr Jeremy Elliott for part funding my travel and accommodation, members of the Texas Archaeological Society, students at the University of Texas, Austin and ACU and members of the Comanche, Lipan Apache and Coahuiltecan Nations for being so generous and kind during my stay.

**Faye Belsey,**

*Senior Assistant Curator and Deputy Head of Collections, PRM*



# Pitt Rivers and His Models



Wooden, hinged model of Roman mines at Cissbury commissioned by Pitt Rivers, SBYWM:2A2.5

Scattered about the remoter parts of the Isles of Lewis are so called Beehive Shielings. These are stone igloos, once covered in turf, of unknown age which seem to have been used as temporary dwellings. Much remains mysterious about them, and they are very remote and hard to find. Holidaying there with my family some years back, I became determined to seek one out and in my brief research I came across an illustration of a group of beehive shielings sketched not from the structures themselves, but from a model housed in the Pitt Rivers Museum. I was intrigued.

Pitt Rivers is known not only for his ethnographic collection, but also as a founder of modern archaeology, much of which was done from his Wiltshire estate. Not for him the treasure-hunting instincts of his forebears, Pitt Rivers carefully noted all objects found, not just the valuable or attractive. By 1882 he was the first Inspector of Ancient Monuments, following the passage of the Ancient Monuments Protection Act of the same year.

At the PRM are a set of models of archaeological remains, including 'Wayland Smith's Cave' (now Wayland's Smithy) the neolithic long barrow not far from Oxford. They were made by Alfred Lionel Lewis, in 1869 - an antiquarian whose obituary mentions the quality of his models. They are on painted wood bases, with rock structures carved in cork and vegetation represented with moss.

They seem to have been an inspiration to Pitt Rivers, as he subsequently became a fervent model maker himself or, more accurately, a commissioner of others to make models for him. Many are a record of archaeological remains and excavations in and around his Wiltshire home, now kept at the Salisbury Museum. Many of these are essentially relief maps of archaeological excavation sites, carved from mahogany and detailing find locations. One beautiful

example is of barrow 24 on Handley Hill, Dorset and even records the name of the carpenter as R Davidge. Another is of the Roman mines at Cissbury. This hinged model, when closed, shows the surface topology of the site and can then be opened to reveal the underground shafts and passages of the mine.

In an 1890 paper read to the Society of Antiquarians, Pitt Rivers gives a fascinating summary of his views on models. He was presenting some he had had made of Scottish monuments as part of his Inspector role, including many Celtic crosses in which he had a particular interest. He raises several issues. Would portable items (like Celtic crosses) be better preserved in a museum? But how would this be funded? If assembled in a museum, would ownership, funding and space constraints lead to an incomplete collection and a skewed record? Would artifacts be more accessible if transferred to a museum? On the other hand, would local communities be deprived of

their history and the objects themselves shorn of their cultural context? His discussion reads like a very modern gazetteer of museum keepers' concerns and he is sensitive to all these arguments in a way that belies any suspicion that he was simply an avaricious hoarder. He sees these issues as a conundrum which, importantly, is resolved through the creation of accurate models. Thus, a complete, accessible and relatively inexpensive record can be made, while leaving the objects in situ. A rather enlightened view and one we still see playing out for some of the contested contents of museums around the world today.

But what of Beehive Shielings, did I find any? Not those Pitt Rivers modelled, they were a touch too remote for the little legs of my children. We did find others though after a tough, pathless passage over bog and heather, at the foot of Sron Smearasmal.

**Anthony Flemming, Member**



Beehive Shieling at Sron Smearasmal, Harris

# Painting With Fire: Syrian Objects in the PRM



Detail of Tobacco Box

An hour or so into a visit to the Pitt Rivers Museum's research room with Oxford-based artist Tom de Freston, blind Syrian drama professor Dr Ali Souleman asked for a description of the next object in front of him.

Ali had brought Tom to the research room to introduce the painter directly to the material culture of Syria. The pair were collaborating on an artistic project, in which Tom was attempting to put on canvas Ali's internal world of memories, dreams and experiences. Ali lost his sight to a terrorist bomb at 26 and, after rebuilding his life, was forced to migrate with his family to Oxford in 2014, when the war in Syria became too dangerous. To get 'inside Ali's head' involved crossing generational, cultural and experiential divides, and Ali thought time at the Pitt Rivers with objects from his home would be a useful bridge in their work. I was filming that afternoon, as part of a feature length documentary, *'Painting With Fire'*, that follows their six year journey.

Tom picked up an ornate tobacco box, marked "Damascus 1918", which had been fashioned from an old artillery shell. He read the details of the provenance to Ali and described the Arabic script around the box's circumference, noted the colours and commented that it was beautiful.



Ali and Tom investigate a musical instrument - L-R: Ali Souleman, Tom de Freston



Ali and Tom looking at masks. - L-R: Ali Souleman, Tom de Freston

Ali took the box and felt its weight. He turned it over in his hands. He rubbed the surface inside and, after a pause, quietly commented:

"I can feel now it's beautiful. But inside it's really ugly. Here. Look, it's the remainder of the detonator of the shell. An object to kill. I don't know how I can cope with these contradictions."

When filming, there are moments that are charged with some sort of energy: you know there is a high likelihood that what's just been captured will survive the cutting room and end up in the final film. This was one such moment.

Ali noted how holding this object felt like holding a geological fragment of a history. Working his way through the layers, Ali commented:

"It's impossible to know how many places this object has destroyed, how many people it killed. And it reminds me of the explosion in which I lost my sight. And of the war that's going on in Syria, in which I lost friends, and hundreds of thousands of people have been killed by an object like this."

The shell/box revealed itself as an arresting metaphor for the violence that marks Ali's individual story and the geopolitics of the region. But Ali was quick to balance the dark with light:

"This is a weapon to kill. So to transform it into a tobacco tin, an artistic object to enjoy, is an act of love. Love is a way to resist everything. You can't survive war without love."

An acute consideration of the material facts, with senses other than sight, revealed what Ali called "the true face of the object", not that the inside is 'true' and the outside is 'false', but the unresolvable tension between apparent opposites.

Towards the end of the session, with many more objects explored, Tom asked Ali how touching these objects from Syria, many of which were over a hundred years old, made him feel.

Ali responded, "I'm just trying to reach home, the lost paradise", and ended with a laugh.

**Mark Jones, Film Director**

Thanks to Faye Belsey and Bryony Smerdon for hosting us at the Pitt Rivers. To find out more about the film, visit [www.paintingwithfirefilm.com](http://www.paintingwithfirefilm.com), where you can subscribe to our newsletter to keep up to date with the film's release.



# Ivory



Photo: © Ian Cartwright, School of Archaeology

Images of ivory spoons in the handling collection showing growth lines to help identify the material as elephant ivory, but also use marks such as bites from teeth

In 2018, the UK Parliament passed the Ivory Act, which bans anyone from dealing in elephant ivory – essentially, banning the sale or profit from elephant ivory (Ivory Act 2018). In January of this year, the Ivory Act was extended to encompass four new species: killer whale, narwhal, hippopotamus and sperm whale (Ivory Act 2018 Regulations 2025). There are a small number of exemptions allowed for ivory items considered rare and important. The Act calls on UK Museums, including the Pitt Rivers and Ashmolean in Oxford, to assess rare and important exempted items. For the last 18 months, Ashley Coutu (PRM), Mariam Rosser-Owen (V&A) and Matthew Winterbottom (Ashmolean) have led an Ivory Challenge Fund project with funding from the Oxford University Public Policy Challenge Fund. The project has worked with DEFRA, Border Force, CITES, Wildlife Crime Unit, university researchers, and 10 different museums across the UK to increase the number of curators and wildlife enforcement officers who can value and assess ivory that falls under the legislation of the Ivory Act.

This project and training also have direct connections with continuing on a part of Pitt Rivers Museum research history. From 1939-1963, Thomas K. Penniman was the second curator of the Pitt Rivers. One of Penniman's research interests was learning how to distinguish objects made of different animal materials, such as ivory, bone, antler, and horn. He was fascinated by technology and materials, which led him to commission a range of thin sections to be cut from various raw materials so that it was possible to see the different structures and way the animal tissues grew. The result was Penniman creating a reference collection of objects with their thin section or transverse section on slides. He also published extensive notes and photographs of this reference collection. So much of the knowledge of ivory identification is made through physical handling of reference collections, so we have made full use of the Penniman collections at each of our training sessions, to offer our colleagues hands-on access to the full reference collection, which they can also then refer back to through the photographs and information on our online catalogue.

Part of this project has also been to give the Penniman publication *'Pictures of Ivory and Other Animal Teeth,*



Photo: © PRM

Stephanie de Roemer (University of Cambridge Museums), Edward Johnson (Glasgow Museums), Mark Murray-Flutter (Royal Armouries Leeds) and Ian Guildford (National Wildlife Crime Unit) working together to identify ivories as part of a training workshop.

*Bone and Antler : With a Brief Commentary on Their Use in Identification'* a digital update by including Penniman's images as well as new images taken of the objects in the reference collection by Ian Cartwright, photographer in the School of Archaeology. Ian's enhanced images take object photography to a whole new level, by offering surface detail, enhanced spectral imagery, and tool mark use (see image for tooth mark on ivory spoon). Using Penniman's archival images and new images of ivory in the collections, we are creating a digital guide to ivory identification with the Oxford Sustainable Digital Scholarship 'SDS' which will be open access and hopefully of use to curators and Border Force officials alike. When Penniman put together this collection some 50 years ago, would he have envisioned them being used to fight wildlife crime?

**Ashley Coutu**, Research Curator (African Archaeology) and Deputy Head of Research at the Pitt Rivers Museum



Photo: © PRM

Curator from the Royal Armouries Museum in Leeds, Iason Tzouriadis, looks at details on ivory from the PRM handling collection as part of the training workshop.



# Fakers and Makers: How copies, replicas, casts and fakes 'make' museum collections

Museums, even the Pitt Rivers, contain many objects that are neither originals nor conventional fakes, having been made, for instance, to demonstrate a technique. The pot shown here (1) was made by Henry Balfour to show how the coiling technique enabled pots to be made without a pottery wheel. Balfour also made a hybrid genuine/faked tool by hafting the broken blade of a neolithic polished axe onto a modern carved wooden club (2). General Pitt Rivers himself hafted an ox scapula to a wooden stake (3), apparently to show how neolithic man could have constructed a spade. These and many other items were shown to Friends by Dr Beth Hodgett on April 6th as part of “April Fakes Week”, a programme of events across Oxford organised by Professor Patricia Kingori.

The PRM also contains “genuine fakes”, i.e. items made specifically to deceive. The catalogue description of a “bronze dagger” (4) acquired by the PRM in 1894 includes the words “apparently a forgery” and that it was made by William Smith and Charles Eaton. The history of these two youths and the question of the integrity of their many artefacts is fascinating. In 1845, “Billy and Charley”, two illiterate mudlarks around 11 years old, lived in what is now Tower Hamlets. They entertained themselves by searching the Thames mud at low tide for interesting items, which were bought by a local antiques dealer. Realising the financial potential of their activity, they set up a workshop to fake objects from lead and pewter (an alloy of tin and lead) using plaster of Paris moulds, which they made by hand. They sold them as mediaeval “finds”.

Over the years the two boys made and sold several thousand artefacts including medallions, daggers, and statuettes. Professional archaeologists disagreed as to whether their items were

genuine mediaeval originals or fakes (see the fascinating article by Robert Halliday, ‘*The Billy and Charley forgeries*’: *Antiquaries Journal*. 102: 447–469, 2022). Their deception was discovered in 1861, when the archaeologist Charles Read bribed a sewer hunter to break into their workshop and steal some of the moulds (*Proc Soc Ant Lond* 2 ser 1, 361–5 (1861)). Surprisingly, Billy and Charley continued to produce and sell their forgeries until 1869; this fits with the date of manufacture “circa 1865” logged for the dagger, but the designation “bronze” is problematic. Bronze is typically an alloy of copper (88%) and tin (12%), sometimes with the addition of other elements, but not lead. Late on, according to Halliday, Billy and Charley used “cock-metal”, an alloy of two parts copper to one part lead: the PRM designation “bronze” needs analytical confirmation. Charley died of TB in 1870, aged 35; Billy changed his name, and disappeared from the records.

A more recent fake item on display in the PRM, described in Michael O’Hanlon’s book *‘The Pitt Rivers Museum; A World Within’* (2014) is also fun to learn about. One of the many items of firearms provided by General Pitt Rivers when he founded the collection was a prototype revolver made circa 1700 by the London gunmaker Annely: it was of such interest to a gun enthusiast that he was allowed to study it closely on several visits in the 1960s. In 1969, the PRM was contacted by the police to ask whether this item was missing: they confirmed that it was in its case, but on picking it up found it to be too lightweight to be a gun! The enthusiast had had a copy made in Hong Kong and substituted this for the original. The genuine and fake guns are now displayed together (5), logged as “Donated by General Pitt Rivers and Thames Valley Police respectively”!

**Gillian Morriss-Kay, Member**



1. Pot made by Henry Balfour to illustrate the coiling technique 2004.206.2



2. Ox Scapula Hafted to a wooden stake with cord and pitch 1884.118.245



3. Neolithic Axe hafted onto a modern wooden club



4. 'Bronze Dagger' made by 'Billy and Charlie' 1894.25.2.1



5. Smooth Bore Revolving Pistol 1884.27.87 (above) and forgery 1969.4.1 (below)



# PRM Shop

If you haven't been in the Museum shop for a while you will have missed some exciting changes. Sourced from new and existing suppliers the collections have been reviewed, new products introduced and old favourites enhanced with new displays.

Since the winter, shop sales have been growing, helped along by events like the Intrepid Women launch as well as the late-night Hawaiian event in November where the kapa Jewellery collection was launched.

Before Easter the summer collection was introduced, featuring tiffin tins hand-painted in India, recycled cotton throws, and felted silk and merino scarves which reuse sari fabric to create unique designs. A range of baskets and fans hand woven by small collectives in Kenya and Ghana have also been selling well.

Now available is a collection of traditional bronzes made by new PRM collaborator Phil Omodamwen. Phil is a sixth-generation craftsman, working with local materials to create one-off pieces. His family is one of only eleven that have held a royal charter since 1200 to cast altar pieces and devotional items for the Benin Kingdom royal family. The sale of these beautiful works of art helps to sustain the traditional crafts industry in Nigeria.

Look out for more new lines in the autumn including bespoke jigsaw puzzles of the treasures hidden in the Museum's drawers. Working with local as well as international makers there will be new pots, prints and postcards appearing.

## Meet the Makers

These amulets are hand made by Galina Veretnova, one of our international collaborators. They are crafted from Czech glass beads on reindeer hide.

Galina Veretnova is an Evenki culture carrier ('носительница культуры' - a special status for Evenki artists and elders who are deemed suitable for transmitting old dances and songs to others by their communities) from Strelka-Chunya in Evenkia. She is a traditional singer and dancer who also leads a contemporary performance practice and works with the Tura Museum. She seeks to raise awareness of Evenki language and culture through her art practice.

She completed an artist residency at the Pitt Rivers Museum in October 2022



Necklace made by Galina Veretnova, from Czech glass



Above: Necklace made by Galina Veretnova, from Czech glass beads on reindeer hide

Right: PRM Poster advertising the work of Phil Omodamwen

## Pukoa Studios

Expertly crafted in Hawaii by Puko'a Studios, the Puko'a jewellery collection showcases traditional kapa materials and locally-sourced Wauke. Each piece is individually hand-cut and assembled, creating a unique work of art that pays homage to both cultural heritage and natural beauty.

Kapa, or tapa, is a traditional, sustainable textile made from Native Hawaiian and other natural materials. Taking care of it will ensure longevity, but with substantial wear these pieces will begin to fade, degrade and can eventually be composted.

The first Hawaiians carried wauke here, to the most isolated island group on the planet. They developed a kapa industry full of farmers, kapa tool makers, kapa pounders, dyers, and designers.

## How It's Made:

Kapa is made by stripping, pounding, and fermenting the 'mo'omo'o'-inner bark, or bast fibre, of the Wauke tree. The practice begins with planting and tending Wauke and many other plants used for colour, 'waiho'olu'u'. It begins with mālama 'āina and working in the māla. After harvesting the Mo'omo'o, it is pounded, then fermented. Once fermented and soft and squooshie, it is pounded into sheets of kapa.

Jo Boyes, Retail Manager



## CONTEMPORARY BRONZE ART BY PHIL OMODAMWEN

These one-off bronze pieces are made using traditional materials and methods by Phil Omodamwen a sixth-generation bronze caster whose family have belonged to the Benin bronze guild since 1504. The sale of these sculptures supports the craft industry in Nigeria as well as the work of the Pitt Rivers Museum.

See more of Phil's work @omobronze



Photos: © Galina Veretnova

Poster: © PRM



# INFORMATION SHEET

The Members' Magazine is published three times a year

## INFORMATION

### Members

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

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**Patrons of Members of Pitt Rivers:**

Alexander Armstrong, Danby Bloch,  
Professor Sir Barry Cunliffe, Dame Penelope  
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Sir Philip Pullman.

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

Open: Tuesday-Sunday 10.00 - 17.00

Monday 12.00- 17.00

Admission FREE.

**For details** of all current & forthcoming  
events & exhibitions,

see [www.prm.ox.ac.uk/events](http://www.prm.ox.ac.uk/events)

**Refreshments.** The Horsebox Coffee  
Company on the lawn is open from 9.00 -  
17.00 daily, serving hot and cold drinks and  
homemade cakes. With delicious locally  
roasted coffee, scrumptious brownies,  
flapjacks and cookies, the Horsebox Café is  
the perfect place for a coffee break!

**All museum events:**

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

### Magazine

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

## Membership

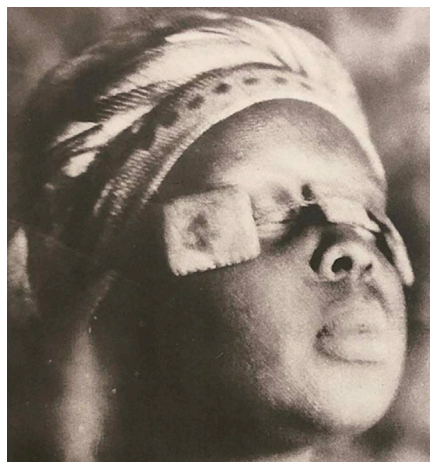
**Membership:** 01865 613000  
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**Annual Subscription:** £36 (Joint:  
£50); Student: £20 (18-25, in full  
time education). Life £500 (Joint  
£750) Benefits: Priority booking for  
Museum events and courses, Private  
views, Behind the scenes visits.  
Members only: Shop 10% discounts,  
Members' Magazine posted to you  
three times a year, Members' lecture  
series.

## MUSEUM DIARY DATES

We look forward to welcoming you to  
the galleries, exhibitions and events.

### Exhibitions and case displays



Khadija Saye

### Upper gallery installation Dwelling: In This Space We Breathe

The Upper Gallery exhibition presents a  
series of nine silkscreen prints by artist  
Khadija Saye (1992-2017) exploring her  
fascination with the 'migration of traditional  
Gambian spiritual practices' that formed a  
part of her childhood experience growing  
up in London with Gambian parents.  
In the images, Saye uses ritual objects, such  
as amulets, beads and horns, to explore her  
connection to these spiritual practices as  
a member of the African diaspora, as well  
as how 'trauma is embodied in the black  
experience'.



Galina Veretnova in traditional costume with her drum

### Display Case C.22.A (Court) Wandering in Other Worlds

We invite you, through this display and a  
360 degree film (available to view online) to  
wander in another world, an Evenki world.  
Find out more about Evenki cosmology and  
shamanic tradition and how these relate to  
objects in the Pitt Rivers Museum.

## MEMBERS' DIARY DATES

### 2025

**Friday 3 October or Saturday 4  
October**

**10.00 - 16.00 (one day course)**

**Band Weaving Workshop**

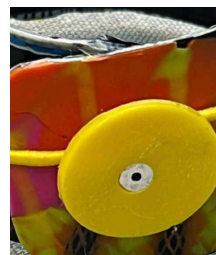
**Tickets: £70 (Members £56), includes  
lunch & refreshment**



Join expert weaver Susan J. Foulkes to  
get inspiration from weaving equipment  
in the Museum and learn how to do band  
weaving using reproduction heddles  
based on those in the collection.

**Friday 14 November or Saturday 15  
November 10.00 - 17.00**

**Plastic Smithing Workshop**



Waste Plastic  
is an inspiring  
material and in  
plentiful supply.  
Experiment, play  
and learn new  
skills in this one-  
day workshop

teaching how  
to make bold, contemporary jewellery  
out of discarded plastic. Booking details  
coming soon.

### 2026

**Saturday 31 January 10.00 - 16.30**

**Passementerie: Tassel Making  
Workshop**



Step into the  
world of Elizabeth  
Ashdown, one  
the UK's last  
remaining  
Passementerie  
makers. Officially  
classified as an  
'endangered' craft

in the UK, making this an extraordinary  
opportunity. Working with traditional  
hand-making techniques, learn how  
to make these wonderful tassels and  
adornments for your home. Booking  
details coming soon.