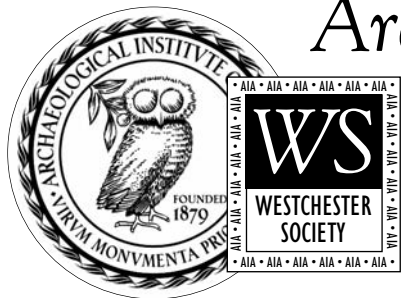




Archaeological Institute of America
Westchester Society

P.O. Box 215
Scarsdale, New York 10583

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Archaeological Institute of America Westchester Society

BULLETIN

Vol. XXXV No. 3 March 2010

BUSTRIP

Date: APRIL 15, 2010

Location: UNIVERSITY MUSEUM, PHILADELPHIA

Departs from: WESTCHESTER: 8:15 AM

Westchester Ethical Culture Society [PARKING LOT] 7 Saxon Wood Road, White Plains Located off Mamaroneck Avenue, near the Saxon Wood pool, and near the Hutchinson River Parkway Mamaroneck Avenue exit.

They will be open at 8 am and will let us use their bathroom before the bus departs.

Departs from PHILADELPHIA: 4:15 PM

PROGRAM

Enjoy a private tour of the exhibit Iraq's Ancient Past: Rediscovering Ur's Royal Cemetery with Dr. Brian Rose, Professor of Mediterranean Archaeology, Deputy Director of the University Museum, President of the Archaeological Institute of America, and lecturer to U.S troops deployed to Iraq

Hear the latest theories in King Tut Update: What Do We Now Know? A special briefing with Egyptologist Joseph Wegner on the recent discoveries from examinations of the mummies of the Akhnaton family

Learn about the Sumerian Dictionary being compiled with modern "Noah Webster" Professor Steve Tinney, director of the Pennsylvania Sumerian Dictionary Project

Explore the Museum galleries and exhibits on Amarna, Canaan and Israel, and other parts of the world.

Learn about ancient Mesopotamia on the bus ride to Philadelphia from Dr. Peter Feinman, president of the Westchester Society, Archaeological Institute of America and the Institute of History, Archaeology, and Education

REGISTRATION

Make check payable to AIA Westchester Society and mail to Treasurer, Archaeological Institute of America, Westchester Society, PO Box 215, Scarsdale, NY 10583

For additional information contact Peter Feinman, 914-933-0440, feinmanp@ihare.org

Iraq's Ancient Past: Rediscovering Ur's Royal Cemetery

October 08, 2009

PHILADELPHIA — A new, long-term exhibition, "Iraq's Ancient Past: Rediscovering Ur's Royal Cemetery," opens Sunday, Oct. 25, at the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology.

The exhibit will bring details of the famous expedition conducted by Penn Museum and the British Museum to life through field notes, photographs and archival documents and more than 220 ancient artifacts unearthed at the excavation. "Iraq's Ancient Past" looks to the present and future as well, exploring the ongoing story of scientific inquiry and discovery made possible by those excavations as well as the pressing issues around the preservation of Iraq's cultural heritage today.



Archaeologist and excavation director C. Leonard Woolley and his wife Katherine Woolley work side-by-side, surrounded by workmen, during the excavation at Ur.

(Continued, page 2)

Lectures are free to AIA Westchester Society members. A donation of \$5 from non-members is welcome.

In 1922, the same year that Howard Carter made headlines with the discovery of Tutankhamen's tomb in Egypt, Penn Museum and the British Museum embarked upon a joint expedition to the ancient site of Ur in southern Iraq. Led by British archaeologist Leonard Woolley, this expedition astonished the world by uncovering a 4,500-year-old royal cemetery with more than 2,000 burials that detailed a remarkable ancient Mesopotamian civilization at the height of its glory.

Centerpiece of the exhibition is the collection of famous ancient artifacts uncovered and, in some cases, painstakingly conserved, including five objects that art critic and former Metropolitan Museum of Art Director Thomas Hoving called, "the finest, most resplendent and magical works of art in all of America": the Ram-Caught-in-the-Thicket, the Great Lyre with a gold and lapis lazuli bull's head, Queen Puabi's jewelry, an electrum drinking tumbler and a gold ostrich egg as well as the queen's headdress and other treasures large and small.



Ram-Caught-in-a-Thicket, ca. 2550 BCE, statuette found in the "Great Death Pit"

"Iraq's Ancient Past" recounts the formation of the joint expedition to Ur, the setting up the "expedition house" for the excavation team and the many excavation challenges that Woolley's team faced.

Known today as "Tell al Muquayyar," or "mound of pitch (tar)," the site of Ur, near present-day Nasiriyah, was thought to be "Ur of the Chaldees," the birthplace of the biblical patriarch Abraham. During his excavations, Woolley hoped to uncover Abraham's home and other biblical evidence. In 1929, he interpreted a deep layer of river clay he uncovered to be the remains of a "great flood" from the biblical story of Noah. Like so much discovered at Ur, his sensational story made international headlines.

His major discovery, however, was the site of Ur's royal cemetery. With a crew of hundreds, he began this massive excavation in 1926, eventually uncovering nearly 2,000 burials. Sixteen of these he named "royal tombs" based on their style of construction, evidence of royal attendants who were interred at the same time and the sheer wealth of the graves' contents. The three most celebrated tombs were the looted tomb of a king, the remarkably preserved tomb of Queen Puabi and what he dubbed "the Great Death Pit" since it contained 74 carefully laid out and richly adorned bodies, all but six female.

The famous excavations attracted the attention and involvement of a number of personalities whom the exhibition also highlights. For example, T.E. Lawrence (Lawrence of Arabia) was instrumental in securing the excavation and Woolley's participation, while Agatha Christie, who eventually married Woolley's assistant Max Mallowan, wrote "Murder in Mesopotamia" to mark her experience on site.

Since the excavations came to a close in 1934, scholars have continued to study Penn Museum's Ur collection, incorporating new evidence from other ancient sites and using improved conservation practices and new scientific techniques to further investigate the material. For example, because almost nothing excavated from the royal tombs could have been created from locally available materials, the exhibition details how scholars are rebuilding the story of 4,500-year-old trade networks across the Near and Middle East.



Brian Rose – President AIA

The exhibition concludes with a look at the situation in Iraq today, where looting in the Iraq National Museum and at archaeological sites throughout the country has destroyed much evidence about the past. To date, the Ur excavation site has been largely preserved, having been contained within the boundaries of Tallil Air Base and under the control of allied forces until May 2009 when the site was officially returned to Iraq's State Board of Antiquities.

"Iraq's Ancient Past" is co-curated by Penn Museum's Richard L. Zettler, associate curator-in-charge of the Near East Section, and Holly Pittman, curator in the Near East Section. They are contributors to "Treasures from the Royal Tombs of Ur" (Penn Museum, 1998), a catalogue from an earlier exhibition that featured material from this site.

2010 UPCOMING SCHEDULE

May 10, 7:30 PM – The Great Mysteries at Eleusis: An Archaeological Puzzle, *Pamela Webb, Bryn Mawr*, Kendal-on Hudson, Sleepy Hollow, dinner before the lecture

May 23, 4:00 PM – Tom Lake Returns from Peru with his College Students, Dutchess Community College Irvington Library; co-sponsored by MALFA

Your gift to AIA Westchester Society is Tax-deductible.
Please Remember to Renew your AIA Membership!

**For more information on lectures and upcoming events —
visit our website www.aiawestchester.org**

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