

## EDITORIAL

As you all know, the situation in Iraq has not improved since last year's Editorial. The Iraq Museum in Baghdad is still closed, but a recent inspection of the storerooms fortunately showed that there had been little deterioration of the objects. Dr Abbas al-Hussainy proved an extremely effective director of Iraq's State Board of Antiquities and Heritage (SBAH), but recently resigned and returned to his academic post at al-Qadissiyah University, Diwaniyah. At the time of writing, Dr Emira Edan is Acting Director of the SBAH in addition to being Director of the Iraq Museum. The BSAI is once again attempting to enter into dialogue with a new administration.

\* \* \*

We are sad to announce the death of Professor Tariq Madhloom who worked as Iraqi Representative on the School's excavations at Nimrud in the 1950s. His obituary appears on p. iii.

\* \* \*

Dr Harriet Crawford retired at our AGM last December after serving the BSAI as Chairman since 2001. Our Vice-Chairman, Professor Alan Millard, also stepped down. We owe them both a huge debt of gratitude. Dr Crawford has been succeeded by Professor Roger Matthews, who served as our most recent Director in Baghdad from March 1988 until 1996, although from 1990 he was unable to return to his post in Iraq because of the political situation and sanctions. He served as Field Director of the BSAI excavations at Tell Brak, and finally took up the post of Director of the British Institute of Archaeology at Ankara. He is now Professor of Near Eastern Archaeology at the Institute of Archaeology, University College London.

Professor Matthews has assumed the chairmanship at a difficult time for the BSAI. In last year's Editorial it was announced that the BSAI had been reclassified as a Learned Society. Following the Learned Societies Programme competition for funding, our grant-in-aid is currently halved and it will cease altogether from 2009. We are extremely grateful to all those who encouraged us with their support in these difficult times. The BSAI is in the process of discussing its status with the British Academy and is drawing up a new constitution which will be presented to the membership at the Annual General Meeting in December. In this our Chairman has been ably assisted by our new Vice-Chairman, Dr Eleanor Robson, and by members of a special working group.

\* \* \*

We continue to raise money through our Iraq Appeal and in May reached the total of £115,000. Again we thank all those who have responded so generously. As a result we were able to invite Dr Donny George, former Chairman of the SBAH, and his successor, Dr Abbas al-Hussainy, to attend a conference on *Archaeology in Conflict* at University College London in November 2006. From the Iraq Museum in Baghdad we have been able to invite an archaeologist of Islam, who worked in Glasgow and Edinburgh, and a librarian of the cuneiform section, who spent time in London. A scholar from Mosul conducted research as a Visiting Scholar at Wolfson College in Cambridge and also visited London. Plans for other visiting scholars have been unsuccessful in part because of passport problems, but we hope to resolve these and be able to continue this initiative in the coming year. Unfortunately, because of security issues in Iraq, our scholars cannot be named in this report. We also continue to collect books for Iraqi museums and universities and also for the BSAI's library in Baghdad, now stored in the British Embassy.

\* \* \*

Grants have been allocated by the BSAI as follows: to Dr Joan Oates and Dr Augusta McMahon for the excavations at Tell Brak in Syria (the preliminary report is published in this volume); to Professor Farouk Al-Rawi for his work on the British Museum's collection of Sumerian administrative texts from Umma; to Dr Erica Hunter for a fourth *Christianity in Iraq* seminar and for a travel grant to participate in a conference in Amman; to Dr Nader El-Bizri for the SIHSPAI Conference on the history of Islamic science to be held in the 2008–9 academic year in Cambridge;

and to Dr Georgina Herrmann and Ms Catherine Thomas for preparation of two volumes in the *Nimrud Ivories* series on the ivories from the Northwest and Burnt Palaces, the latter under the authorship of Catherine Thomas: publication of these volumes is nearing completion. Reports on the grants will be published in forthcoming BSAI Newsletters. Alas, unless we can raise money from other sources, our involvement in the excavations at Tell Brak may have to cease, but we shall continue to honour our obligation to publish reports on the excavations we have sponsored.

\* \* \*

This year has seen the publication of *Languages of Iraq, Ancient and Modern*, edited by Professor Nicholas Postgate and based on a Study Day in 2003. We are most grateful to The Charlotte Bonham-Carter Charitable Trust for help in funding both the original Study Day (along with the British Council Iraq office) and the resulting publication. The launch of Alastair Northedge's superb *Samarra Studies I. The Historical Topography of Samarra* (published by the BSAI with a generous grant from the Fondation Max van Berchem) was reported in last year's Editorial. It is very gratifying, therefore, to be able to announce that the volume has already sold out and been replaced by a paperback edition. It will be followed in due course by two further volumes in the series. Also nearing completion is the final publication of Diana Kirkbride's work at Umm Dabaghiyah, which Stuart Campbell is preparing. Several of the grants listed above will result in publications: the Umma Project, Chagar Bazar, Nimrud Ivories and Tell Brak. Other publications are nearing completion. Our retiring Chairman, Dr Harriet Crawford, has edited the papers of a conference jointly sponsored by the BSAI and the British Academy and now published as *Regime Change in the Ancient Near East and Egypt – from Sargon of Agade to Saddam Hussein* (Proceedings of the British Academy No. 126).

Readers of this journal may be interested to know that the BSAI now has an agreement with JSTOR according to which, from 2008, there should be on-line digital access to *Iraq* from its first issue in 1934 excluding the most recent five years of the journal's publication.

\* \* \*

The BSAI has continued with its programme of outreach which has been actively supported by members. The following Study Days took place: *The Assyrians: Ancient Splendour in Northern Iraq* (on 18 November 2006, organised by Dr Fran Reynolds); *Writing in the Near East* (a joint venture with the University of Birmingham on 27 January 2007, organised by Dr Jonathan Taylor); *Christianity in Iraq IV, The Monastic Heritage of Iraq* (on 5 May 2007, organised by Dr Erica Hunter).

Our lecture programme has also been a full one. The 2006 BSAI AGM was held on 14 December, when Professor Marc Van De Mierop lectured on "The Mesopotamians and their past". On 28 March Dr Eleanor Robson gave a talk on a teaching website that she and Dr Karen Radner have set up on "Knowledge and power in the Neo-Assyrian Empire" (<http://knp.prs.heacademy.ac.uk> [new URL]). Last year we printed the obituary of Sir Stephen Egerton, a long-time friend of the BSAI, and on 3 May Dr Rosemary Hollis gave a lecture in his memory on "Europe and the Middle East: Repercussions of the Iraq War". Our Bonham Carter lecture on 14 June was given by Scheherazade Hassan on "Music of an ancient land – The art music of Iraq: Performance spaces in 20th century Baghdad".

Our Annual General Meeting on 12 December 2007 will be followed by a lecture by our Chairman, Professor Matthews, to commemorate the 75th Anniversary of the BSAI.