

The Society for Libyan Studies

Professor David Mattingly, *Chairman of the Society*, describes some of its activities and achievements in recent months.

The Society was honoured in January 2001 by the award of the prestigious James R. Wiseman Book prize of the Archaeological Institute of America (AIA) to Graeme Barker, David Gilbertson, the late Barri Jones and David Mattingly, for the two-volume report, *Farming the Desert. The UNESCO Libyan Valleys Archaeological Survey*, co-published by the Society with UNESCO and the Libyan Department of Antiquities. The citation comments: 'There have been many fine archaeological projects in more well-known parts of the ancient world in recent years. But few can claim to have filled such an enormous gap in our knowledge as the UNESCO Libyan Valleys Survey.'

Two of the Society's field projects were active during early 2001. In Libya's southern desert region, the Fezzan Project (1997–2001) has been conducting survey and excavation, focused on an important urban centre at Germa, capital of the ancient Garamantian kingdom. This project, directed by the Society's Chairman David Mattingly (University of Leicester), has continued the interdisciplinary and diachronic approaches of the Libyan Valleys Survey in a deeper Saharan location, where sophisticated irrigation systems were required to make agriculture viable. The 2001 season saw the completion of the Germa excavation, with 10 main phases of activity encountered in the 4 metre stratigraphic sequence dating from c. 400 BC–AD 1935 (Figure 1). The Garamantian period (broadly 500 BC–AD 500) marked the apogee of pre-modern settlement and



Professor David Gilbertson (Bournemouth University) and Professor David Mattingly (University of Leicester) receive the Wiseman book award from the AIA vice-president Professor J. Waldbaum.

society, and the Garamantes can now be identified as a sophisticated state, practising intensive irrigated agriculture and with settlement based on a series of towns and villages. Their material culture was affected by imports from the Mediterranean world, but also included a significant manufacturing component. An important find of the 2001 excavations was a series of small terracotta figurines of human and animal form, hitherto without exact parallels (Figure 2).

Figure 1. Aerial view of the excavations at Germa, showing a Garamantian domestic quarter behind a major public temple dating to the early centuries AD.

Figure 2. Human figurine head from Garamantian levels at Germa.

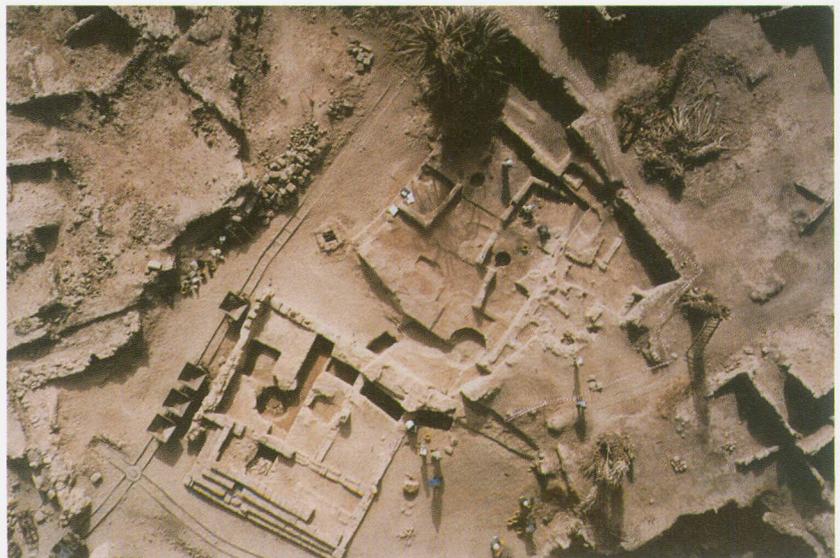




Figure 3. Amphora set in the floor close to an early pebble 'mosaic' at Euesperides.

A parallel project supported by the Leverhulme Trust and the British Academy (through its Research Readership scheme) has focused on bringing to publication earlier British work in Fezzan, carried out by the late Charles Daniels in the 1960s–70s. A series of volumes covering both the past and present work are in progress and these will form a central element of the Society's publication programme in the next years.



Figure 4. General view of main excavation area at Euesperides, showing bedding for mosaics

The second Society field project is the Euesperides (Benghazi) excavations, directed by Dr Andrew Wilson (Oxford University), Paul Bennett (Canterbury Archaeological Trust) and Ahmed Buzaian (Gar Yunis University, Benghazi). The site is one of only a handful of Greek sites not overbuilt by later occupation, meaning that Archaic–Hellenistic levels lie close beneath the surface. Fieldwork in 2001 comprised geological augering as a preliminary to study of the paleoenvironment, and excavation in three trenches, along with pottery processing and quantification. One of the excavation areas has revealed two phases of substantial buildings. The earlier phase has a pebble pavement, and seems to have been destroyed by earthquake during the late fourth century BC, as the floors are covered by a thick layer of collapsed mud-brick which crushed pots *in situ* on the floors (Figure 3). Over the levelled collapse a new building was erected around the end of the fourth century BC. This had rooms with mosaic floors in a mixed technique of smooth pebbles, split pebbles and irregular stone tessera. *Opus signinum* was also used, a cement flooring characteristic of the Punic world or Sicily at this early date (Figure 4). These are the earliest mosaic pavements yet found in North Africa, and shed important light on the transition from pebble mosaics to tessellated mosaics in the early Hellenistic period.

Excavations in a second area revealed two lines of buildings flanking a street inside the city walls. Two phases of the city defences are identifiable on diverging alignments; the second was levelled which the city expanded over them in the early Hellenistic period, and a third phase was built on an enlarged circuit.

The Society has grown steadily over the 32 years of its existence and its success has been due in no small measure to the dedication of its long-serving General Secretary, Shirley Strong. Her award of an MBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours 2001, in large part for her service to the Society, is a well-earned recognition of her achievement.

Professor Mattingly held an Academy Research Readership 1999–2001 to work on the Garamantes of the Fezzan.