

THE BRITISH INSTITUTE FOR LIBYAN
AND NORTHERN AFRICAN STUDIES

ANNUAL REVIEW

2023-24



BILNAS
BRITISH INSTITUTE FOR LIBYAN
& NORTHERN AFRICAN STUDIES

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ABOUT THE BRITISH INSTITUTE FOR LIBYAN AND NORTHERN AFRICAN STUDIES

The British Institute for Libyan and Northern African Studies (BILNAS) was founded as The Society for Libyan Studies, an unincorporated association governed in accordance with its Rules, in 1969. Its aims are to encourage and co-ordinate scholarship on Libya and Northern Africa and to foster relations between scholars in the region and those working outside the region. To this end, it seeks through its activities:

- to support and undertake research relating to the history, antiquities, culture, languages, literature, art, institutions, customs and natural history of Libya and Northern Africa;
- to organise and promote missions in the region for these purposes;
- to co-operate with other organisations sharing the same fields of interest;
- to arrange for the publication of research in these fields;
- to hold lectures and meetings, to publish an annual journal (*Libyan Studies*) and other publications which will enhance and promote public knowledge of all aspects of Libyan and Northern African culture and society.

BILNAS receives the major part of its funds from the British Academy, to be used 'to benefit the UK research endeavour'. It is therefore incumbent upon the Council to confirm that the grant payments from the British Academy have been applied in accordance with the agreement between the Academy and BILNAS, and the aims and objectives of BILNAS as stated in its rules and declared to the Charity Commission. Council confirms that, in respect of the accounts presented herewith, this is so.

The President is elected at the Annual General Meeting for a term of four years; the Director is elected for a period of three years, which may be extended to a maximum of five years; the Assistant Director, the Treasurer, the Head of Mission, the Honorary Collections Officer and the Editor of the BILNAS journal are elected annually and may be re-elected without limit; the remainder of the Council is composed of up to eight Ordinary Members who are elected annually and may be re-elected, subject to a maximum continuous period of service of four years. In proposing Ordinary Members for election, the Council seeks to secure as wide a range of skills within its fields of interest as possible. The Officers and Council, who constitute the trustees of the charity, confirm that they have referred to the guidance contained in the Charity Commission's general guidance on public benefit when reviewing the Institute's aims and objectives and in planning future activities and setting the grant-making policy for the year.

The address of BILNAS is:

c/o The British Academy, 10-11 Carlton House Terrace, London SW1Y 5AH.

BILNAS maintains a website at <http://www.bilnas.org>.

The General Secretary may be contacted by email at gensec@bilnas.org

Constitutional Changes

In 2023 the Council members of BILNAS made an application to the Charity Commission for England and Wales to form a Charitable Incorporated Organisation, or CIO, with the same name; the new charity was formally registered by the Charity Commission on 20 June 2023. In order to keep the changeover simple, and to avoid the need to produce two annual reports, the old charity continued to be the vehicle through which BILNAS operated until 31 March 2024; the new CIO was dormant during this time. From 1 April 2024 BILNAS has operated through its new CIO structure and a formal application has been made to the Charity Commission to merge the old and the new charities. The old charity is registered as number 259262 and the new one as number 1203646.

This change means that BILNAS is now governed by its new Constitution rather than the old Rules. It also means that this Annual Review is for the old charity, which operated for the whole of the year to 31 March 2024, and that next year's Annual Review will be for the new charity. By synchronising the changeover from the old entity to the new one with the accounting and reporting year end, the Council hopes that readers of the Annual Review will find the changeover to be seamless.



COUNCIL AND OFFICERS

The Officers and Council on 31 March 2024 were as follows:

Officers

President:	PROFESSOR NICHOLAS BARTON, BA, DEA, DPhil, FSA
Vice President:	PROFESSOR GRAEME BARKER, MA, PhD, CBE, FBA, FSA, FRGS
Director:	PROFESSOR CORISANDE FENWICK, BA, MA, PhD, FSA, FRHistS, FYAE
Honorary Treasurer:	OLIVER KIMBERLEY, MA, ACA
Assistant Director:	NICCOLÒ MUGNAI, BA, MA, PhD, AFHEA
Head of Mission:	PAUL BENNETT, MBE, BA, Hon. D.Litt, FSA, MCIFA
Honorary Collections Officer:	VALERIA VITALE BA, MA, MA, PhD
Editor, Libyan Studies:	VICTORIA LEITCH, BA, MPhil, DPhil

Council:	PROFESSOR DAVID ATKINSON, BSc, PhD SALEM EL-MAIAR, MPhil, FRGS PROFESSOR HISHAM MATAR, FRSL NICHOLE SHELDRIK, BA, MA, DPhil BARBARA SPADARO, PhD
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General Secretary:	PAULINE GRAHAM
Honorary Librarian:	DAWN WRIGHT, BA, DipLib
Publications Manager:	VICTORIA LEITCH, BA, MPhil, DPhil

Research Grants Committee

The Director
The Honorary Treasurer
The Assistant Director
The Head of Mission
PROFESSOR ALICE STEVENSON PhD, FSA (Committee Chair)
TIM REYNOLDS, BA, MA, PhD, FSALY

Publications Committee

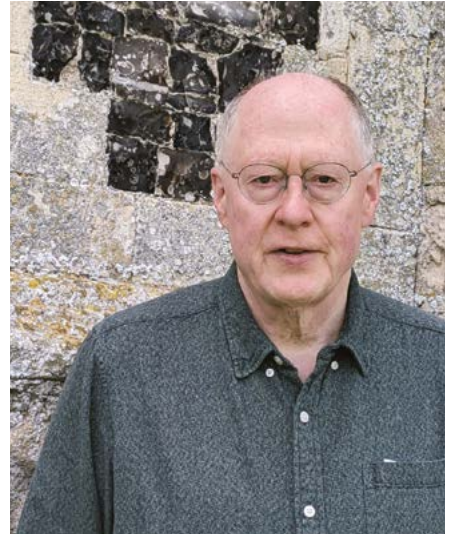
The Director
The Honorary Treasurer
The Assistant Director
The General Secretary
Editor of Libyan Studies – Publications Manager

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

In a highly successful year, we transformed from a Society into a renamed Institute. This entailed a number of small but important changes to our charitable status and financial arrangements that now bring us into line with the seven other British International Research Institutes. As you may know, most of our funding comes from an annual grant from the British Academy and we are pleased to report that this year we were able to maintain our activities on a broad number of fronts, illustrating how we continue to 'punch well above our weight' in terms of our organisational size. While we celebrate these achievements, at the same time we also acknowledge our concerns about the continuing struggle to secure a sustainable future in these times of financial stringency.

This year was marked by two major natural disasters in Northern Africa, the devastating earthquake in Morocco in September quickly followed by the flooding in Libya. As someone present during the earthquake, though fortunately well away from its epicentre, I witnessed some of the aftermath of its destructive forces and would like to pay special tribute to my colleagues at the Institut National des Sciences de l'Archéologie et du Patrimoine who are beginning the long and costly task of repairing damage to the cultural heritage. The same is of course equally true for the region of Derna in Libya, which is severely economically deprived. Also on a very sad note, we pay tribute in this Annual Review to Shirley Strong who for many years played an outstanding and invaluable role in the running of the Society for Libyan Studies.

Finally, I would like to thank you all for your continuing commitment to BILNAS. Your support remains vital to the long-term future of the Institute, making it the real community it is today. The active participation of members in our events and initiatives are what have allowed BILNAS to grow and evolve since 1969. The context in which we operate is changing rapidly, with social media, Open Access, and issues with archive and book space. Our policy has always been to adapt and modernise, but at the same time protecting our members. With this in mind, we have kept membership at the same price for over a decade to be as inclusive as possible. However, we function without knowing our budget from year to year, and exorbitant print prices have forced us to follow other journal publishers in going online only with our journal from 2025. We hope to have a print-on-demand option in the future, but Cambridge University Press are not currently offering this. For those of you who can easily afford the membership fee, we would also appreciate additional donations, as your support is more invaluable than ever to future-proof the Institute and its important research. We remain, as ever, open to the opinions and suggestions of our members, please do write to us. I do hope also that we will have a chance to meet at the Annual Lecture and at other in-person events next year.



DIRECTOR'S LETTER



It has been another very busy year for the Institute across all our areas of activity. Our research grants fund UK-based scholars to conduct research in the humanities and social sciences in the broader Northern African region. To commemorate the inaugural year of the now renamed Institute, we awarded two flagship grants of £20,000 for projects on palaeontology in Morocco, and Maghrebi Jewish literature in Tunisia and Libya. Our third postdoctoral writing fellow, Katharina Grüneisl, has spent her fellowship completing a monograph on the second-hand clothing industry in Tunisia. Our research grants have supported research on a wide range of topics across Northern Africa from the palaeoclimate of Middle Stone Age Morocco, Pleistocene tools in Libya and medieval churches in Sudan, to Tunisian street art.

Our publication and outreach strategy goes from strength to strength. As well as our annual journal *Libyan Studies*, we published a new and beautifully illustrated book by Dr Virginie Prevost titled *Résistance et dévotion: Anciens sanctuaires ibadites de Djerba* which is the first detailed study of the medieval and early modern mosques of the island of Jerba. Our online Zoom lectures continue to be very popular and attract large audiences from around the world, and I was delighted to see so many members at our Annual Meeting at the British Academy in November where we enjoyed a thought-provoking lecture on the deep prehistory of Morocco by our President, Professor Nick Barton. We hope to hold more in-person lectures in the coming year, as well as continuing with our online series, to showcase research from our grant-holders as well as scholars and writers working on Northern African topics. I am particularly delighted to announce to Members that our next Annual Lecture on 7 November will be delivered by Professor Hisham Matar (BILNAS Council Member) about his recently published novel *My Friends*, in which a Libyan exile takes a walk across London while recalling his past from the 1980s to the events of 2011.

I am also pleased to share with members the excellent progress we have made in our strategic priority of digitising the BILNAS Archive held at the University of Leicester under the capable leadership of Felicity Crowe, our Archivist. BILNAS has a long and distinguished history of archaeological research in Libya and holds a rich archive of photographs, plans, notes and other materials from its fieldwork projects. This year, the archive has been moved into its new home on the main Leicester campus where it is much more easily accessible for researchers and students. A detailed catalogue of the archive is nearly completed, and we have now fully commenced our digitisation programme. The first collection to be made available online will be the Sabratha archive featuring material from the 1948-1951 excavations of Kathleen Kenyon and John Ward-Perkins. These excavations were published by the Society for Libyan Studies as *Excavations at Sabratha, Volume II. The Finds. Part 1: The Amphorae, Coarse Pottery and Building Materials*, by J. Dore and N. Keay (1989); *Excavations at Sabratha, Volume II. The Finds. Part 2: The Finewares and Lamps*, by M.G. Fulford and R. Tomber (1994), now available for download from

our website as well as JSTOR and other open access repositories. Published by the Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies is the volume *Excavations at Sabratha 1948-1951*, by P. Kenrick (1986), which is also available for download. The Sabratha archive will be made available very soon on the Archaeological Data Service (ADS), the leading UK digital repository for archaeology and heritage.

Under Felicity's mentorship, five student interns from the University of Leicester have been working to identify archaeologists and workers in photographs from the archive. She has also run three highly successful events for the Libyan community with Dr Valeria Vitale (Honorary Collections Officer) and Reem Furjani, and has now received a grant from the National Archive to continue this important work in 2024.

We are extremely grateful to all our new and existing members for their continued support of the Institute and its activities in these challenging economic times, whether through renewing subscriptions, donations, bequests or helping to raise the international profile of the Institute. I am very much looking forward to seeing members at the Annual Lecture and other in-person events in London next year.



OBITUARY



Shirley with her husband Donald Strong and their first child Andrew.

Shirley Kate Strong MBE 17 May 1930 to 21 August 2023

Andrew Strong, Paul Bennett, Susan Walker

Shirley was the eldest child of Jack and Helen Twallin who lived in Bickley. After achieving her Higher Certificate, Shirley attended Queen's Secretarial College in London, following which she undertook a few secretarial roles before moving to Italy to stay with the Director of the British School at Rome, John Ward-Perkins and his family. It was there that she met a young Rome Scholar called Donald Strong. Charged with assisting him with his measuring and recording work of the artefacts in the region, she found herself at the end of a tape measure sizing up Roman marble sarcophagi. Their relationship blossomed, and they were wed in January 1954 and had three children, Andrew, Timothy and Mary, mainly living in Chislehurst. Donald, who was the Professor of the Archaeology of the Roman Provinces at the Institute of Archaeology in London had been suffering ill-health and his sudden death in Turkey in 1973 left Shirley a widow at 43. She took on secretarial roles at

University College London and later at the Egypt Exploration Society. Donald had been one of the co-founders of the Society for Libyan Studies and Shirley agreed to become their Honorary Secretary in 1974 (in succession to Olwen Brogan), until 1978. She then retired for a short moment and returned in 1984 as the General Secretary. She finally retired in 2013.

In the Queen's 2001 Birthday Honours List she was awarded an MBE for 'Services to the Community including The Girl Guide Association and the Society for Libyan Studies', which was presented to her by the then Prince Charles, at Buckingham Palace.

Shirley was charming, very good company with a wry sense of humour and a huge heart – and the most avid supporter of the Society and of Libya. Her death feels like the end of an era, the loss of an exceptionally able woman who was part of that nexus of British archaeologists who worked in post-war Libya to build a generation of expert Libyan archaeologists and warm relations with international scholars interested in the archaeology of that remarkable country.



RESEARCH GRANTS

For the financial year 2023–24, BILNAS awarded four Research Grants and a Postdoctoral Writing Fellowship for a total of £33,598 to UK-based scholars at different career stages for projects in Morocco, Tunisia, Libya, and Sudan. To mark the development from the former Society for Libyan Studies to the new British Institute for Libyan and Northern African Studies in 2022, BILNAS was able to award two Flagship Research Grants for a total of £39,580 to UK-based scholars in support of research in the fields of palaeontology and social sciences in Morocco, Libya and Tunisia.

FLAGSHIP RESEARCH GRANTS

Susannah Maidment (Natural History Museum, London) – £19,580

The paleo-heritage of a new globally important Middle Jurassic ecosystem in the Middle Atlas Mountains, Morocco

Export of scientifically significant fossils from Morocco is illegal, yet the international fossil trade in dinosaurs continues to thrive. Investigatory fieldwork in 2022–23 discovered dinosaur fossils in Middle Jurassic rocks in the Middle Atlas Mountains. These rocks are extremely rich in fossils and have the potential to be the world’s most important Middle Jurassic land ecosystem; however, commercial collectors are already collecting and selling fossils from the site. This project will excavate fossils and train Moroccan early career researchers in their study and conservation. These fossils, to be reposited in the Université Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah Museum, will offer a body of evidence that can be presented to government stakeholders to develop a protected status for the area.



Middle Atlas Mountains, Morocco: the team investigating a site where dinosaur bones are weathering out of the rocks (photo S. Maidment).



*Djerba, Tunisia:
El Ghriba
synagogue,
May 2022 (photo
R. Vince).*

Rebekah Vince (Queen Mary University of London)
– £20,000

*Memory as inheritance: transgenerational
Maghribi Jewish heritage across the Mediterranean
Francosphere*

In response to Ghaddafi’s call for Jewish return to Arab countries, Franco-Tunisian anticolonial writer Albert Memmi famously stated, ‘We would have liked to be Arab Jews’ (1974). This project explores troubled memories and forgotten futures, with an examination of the collection of autobiographical essays *A Jewish Childhood in the Muslim Mediterranean* (2023). Through an analysis of the ‘atopical’ Franco-Libyan Jewish writer Aldo Naouri and Franco-Tunisian Jewish historian Sophie Bessis as postcolonial pariah, it offers alternative perspectives on the Arab Jew, in relation to transgenerational Maghribi heritage. Two writing workshops will lead to publication of a volume of autobiographical texts by French Jewish women of Tunisian descent.

POSTDOCTORAL WRITING FELLOWSHIP

Katharina Grüneisl (University of Nottingham) – £8,000

*Urban economies of used fibre: making markets and transforming space in
post-independence Tunis*

This Writing Fellowship will be used to complete a monograph that provides the first ethnographic and historically situated account of the second-hand clothing economy in Tunisia’s capital city Tunis. Evolving imports of European and North American textile surplus materials and second-hand donations – which first arrived in Tunisia



*Second-hand sport
caps displayed
on a house wall
in central Tunis
(photo K. Grüneisl).*

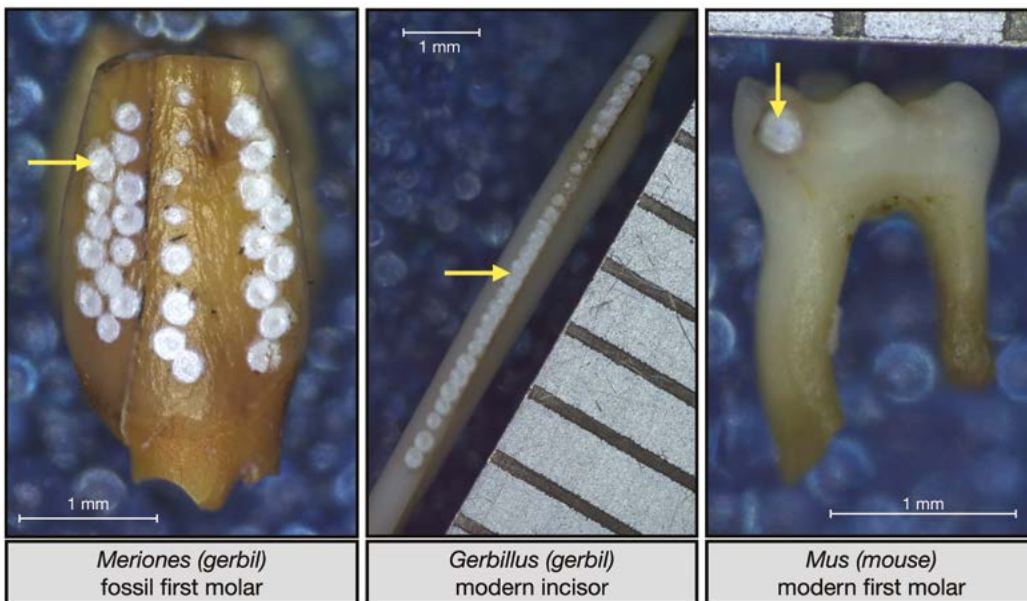
during the final years of the Second World War – constitute the entry point of this urban ethnography. Through close-up portraits of the diverse actors who participate in the contingent re-valuation of imported used garments at the urban micro-scale, the book demonstrates how seemingly marginal processes of market-making have been central to urban change and politics in post-independence Tunisia.

SMALL AND LARGE RESEARCH GRANTS

Stacy Carolin (University of Oxford) – £7,940

Resolving the impact of environmental change on Middle Stone Age humans in North Africa

The interplay between environmental change and key behavioural transitions in anatomically modern *Homo sapiens* is poorly resolved in North Africa. What effect did climate change have on the regional distribution of AMH and spread of cultural traditions? Were key behavioural developments triggered by increased climate variability? Such critical questions remain unanswered due in part to the lack of environmental records available beyond the Holocene in North Africa. Isotopic analysis of fossil rodent teeth, commonly collected alongside human artefacts, offers potential to identify paleo-humidity in dry areas. This project will develop and refine the non-destructive approach of laser ablation for museum-archived small rodent teeth isotopic analysis, and apply the teeth climate proxy to analyse the human-environment relationship at three sites in Northern Morocco during the Middle Stone Age.



Laser ablation shots on gerbil and mouse molars and incisors for minimally destructive isotope measurement (Stable Isotope Lab, University of Oregon).

Robert Foley (University of Cambridge) – £7,000

Pleistocene technology of the Libyan Fazzan

Between 2007 and 2011 the Desert Migrations Project surveyed and excavated Pleistocene localities in the Awbari sand seas and the Messak Settafet (Fazzan). These have a rich record of hominins shown by abundant stone tools. In addition to the Holocene material, the Project recovered large samples of Acheulean and Middle Stone Age lithics, as well as smaller ones of Oldowan and Mode 4 (blades). The samples

*Desert Migrations
Project: excavating
lithics on the
Messak, Libya
(photo R. Foley).*



were studied in the Jarma Museum, and preliminary quantitative and photographic data recorded. This project will digitise the paper records and use Pylithics software (an ML procedure for automatic data capture of lithics) to enhance the data from drawings and photographs, allowing a quantitative comparative analysis of assemblages across Africa. The objective is to contribute to the current debate about the role of the Saharan MSA in the emergence of modern humans.

Claudia Naeser (University College London) – £2,130

Piety, power and representation. A new type of church architecture in a fortification context in Medieval North Africa (renewal application)



*MOG089, room
with the wall
paintings (on the
right-hand wall):
in situ door
leaf with wood
that provided a
radiocarbon date of
AD 656-774 (photo
Mograt Island
Archaeological
Mission).*

Fieldwork has identified a hitherto unknown type of Medieval Nubian church architecture and its context in the fortress MOG089, which is located on the island of Kurta, off Mograta island, in present-day Sudan. Mograta, the largest island in the Nile, lies at the upstream end of the Great Nile Bend where long-distance trade routes from the north reach the river. Excavation of this church was supported by grants from BILNAS in 2022-23. The grant funds radiocarbon dating of five samples collected from within the church and the multi-roomed complex in the fortress. The results of the project promise to advance knowledge on Medieval Nubia's religious and military architecture, and to inform understanding of political representation at the intersection of religious life and military power in Medieval North Africa.

Anwar Tlili (King's College London) – £8,528

Mapping street art and civic engagement in the urban space in Tunisia: aesthetics, themes and agency in civil society

This study aims to map out and understand the current configuration of street art in Tunisia, its mode of operation, its themes and values, and its role as a civil society agent in facilitating and re-energising civic and democratic engagement. Based on fieldwork at eight case studies, the project examines the street art field in Tunisia in terms of its core representational contents and messages as well as core values, its aesthetic forms, and to what extent and how it is contributing to the creative production and renewal of the public space in its multiple dimensions – cultural, educational, social, and political – including with regard to developing creative ways of *enacting* and *doing* citizenship and democracy. The methodology consists of an ethnographic study of a sample of street art events and activities, representing both visual arts and performing arts, located both in Tunis and other urban centres.



Graffiti on a building in the Lafayette district in Tunis, reading 'from under the rubble we flourish' (photo G. Ben Mbarek / The National News).

BILNAS-AFFILIATED PROJECTS

BULLA REGIA

This flagship project sponsored by BILNAS and directed by Prof. Corisande Fenwick (UCL) and Dr Moheddine Chaouali (INP) aims to reconstruct the urban development of Bulla Regia from its Numidian origins to its abandonment in the Middle Ages and to understand the diet, nutrition, health, lifestyle, origins and mobility of its late antique inhabitants through excavations and bioarchaeological analyses. After many delays due to Covid-19, the final season of excavation at a late antique church and cemetery was completed in September 2023, together with the majority of the finds analysis. The project team are now working on the excavation monograph which will be published by BILNAS.

OASIS CIVILISATION PROJECT

The Oasis Civilisation project, a collaboration between INSAP, the University of Leicester and UCL is investigating one of the most significant and largest Saharan oases in the Wadi Draa, Morocco. The project is a continuation through excavations of the survey work carried out by the Middle Draa Project (2015-2018) and is directed by Profs. Youssef Bokbot (INSAP), Corisande Fenwick (UCL) and David Mattingly (Leicester). The results are transforming knowledge and understanding of the early stages of oasis formation and settlement in the Moroccan Sahara, from later Iron Age times, through the early centuries of Islamic rule, with a notable boom in activity in the Almoravid period (11th-12th centuries), to the Early Modern period where this region flourished under Saadian rule. In January-February 2024, the project excavated a series of Iron Age and Medieval settlements, including a hilltop Iron Age site (4th-8th century) and a medieval town with a walled citadel and outer suburbs (10th-12th century). BILNAS is supporting the publication programme for the project, which will take the form of a series of volumes. The first volumes will feature a complete site gazetteer for the Draa and an overview of its archaeology and will appear soon as a BILNAS publication. These set a new benchmark for understanding the Iron Age and Medieval period in Morocco and the Sahara, complementing BILNAS' prior work on the Garamantes of the Libyan Fazzan.

MAREA AND THE CYRENAICA COASTAL SURVEY

Maritime heritage sites in the Middle East and North Africa face many threats, particularly from conflict, rising sea-levels partly caused by climate change, and urban and industrial development. Because of this, the Maritime Endangered Archaeology (MarEA) project was established with the aim to rapidly and comprehensively document and assess threats to the maritime and coastal archaeology of the region (<https://marea.soton.ac.uk>). The collected data and the condition assessments for analysed sites are stored in the open access database platform of the Endangered Archaeology in the Middle East and North Africa (EAMENA, <https://database.eamena.org/>) project hosted by the University of Oxford. The MarEA project is based at the University of Southampton's Centre for Maritime Archaeology and at Ulster University's School of Geography and Environmental Sciences and is funded by Arcadia, a charitable fund of Lisbet Rausing and Peter Baldwin.

BILNAS has funded the Cyrenaica Coastal Survey (CCS) – a collaborative project between MarEA and the Department of Antiquities (DoA), supported by the Universities of Al Bayda and Benghazi in Libya. The aim was to record the current condition of maritime sites along the Cyrenaican coast between Tocra and Apollonia, with a particular focus on smaller, lesser known, coastal heritage sites. Recently the CCS team went back out into the field to assess the damage sustained by Storm Daniel to the previously surveyed sites. In 2023, Julia Nikolaus and Nick Ray from the MarEA team edited the special section on ‘Maritime Archaeology in North Africa: current research and future challenges and perspectives’ for *Libyan Studies* 54. We hope to continue our collaboration with BILNAS in 2024, in particular to enable us to return to sites that were deemed most endangered to record them in detail before they are destroyed over the next few years.



The Cyrenaica Coastal Survey team assessing damage after Storm Daniel and are recording new sites exposed by the storm.

MANAGING LIBYA'S CULTURAL HERITAGE

Over the last year, the Managing Libya's Cultural Heritage (MaLiCH) project, funded by the ALIPH Foundation, has continued to renovate an historic house in the Old Town of Ghadames. Working with the Ghadames City Protection and Development Authority (GCPDA), the team began by documenting the building's condition, produced detailed architectural and structural plans for the intervention, and surveyed traditional crafts across the region.

The site was prepared and the house's foundations consolidated. The external work on the building was completed by local contractors and local craftsmen have decorated the interiors with traditional Berber designs in a technique called Zanjafoor. The house is a community and cultural hub with exhibitions planned on contemporary local crafts and the history of the town. It will also be the location for new capacity building activities. The team are working with Hosh Alsaboun in Tripoli to deliver training, host travelling shows and strengthen heritage networks across the country.

The team have also been collaborating with the Department of Antiquities (DoA) on the challenges facing the World Heritage Sites of Lepcis Magna and Sabratha. Following discussions focused on management planning and responses to climate change, in particular the impact of coastal erosion and extreme weather events, they have organised the first phase of vegetation control at Lepcis Magna which was undertaken by the project under the leadership of Dr Hafed Walda and in close collaboration with the Site Controller and his team.

This was a cleaning operation intended to assess damage to the archaeological site and reduce the risk of fire over the summer while also facilitating good management practices including regular maintenance and better security. Nearly half of the core site (ca. 4.5 hectares) was included in this phase of work and the hope is to return in the coming months to start the next phase at Lepcis, involving further cleaning and assessment as well as targeted interventions, while also beginning a similar process with the DoA team at Sabratha.



EVENTS

From Dr Niccolò Mugnai, BILNAS Assistant Director

Our series of events in 2023–24 featured a mix of online and in-person lectures, talks, and other types of events, encompassing a range of subjects within the humanities and social sciences. Our Annual Lecture, delivered by Prof. Nick Barton in November 2023, looked at the impact of environmental changes in prehistoric times. A major focus of the year was to raise awareness of the BILNAS Archive housed at the University of Leicester; our Archivist Felicity Crowe delivered a talk to Members in October 2023, and organised events for communities in Libya and the Libyan diaspora in November 2023 and February 2024, which explored present-day understanding of Libyan clothing and perceptions of Libya’s built heritage by using archival materials. More archive-focused events are planned for next year, including sessions in Arabic to broaden our community network.

23 May 2023

Reem Furjani (Scene for Culture and Heritage)

Community uses of the Marcus Aurelius Arch in Tripoli before and after the Italian conservation

This online talk discussed the notion of authenticity in heritage meaning/making by showing how local communities identify and interpret value in cultural heritage. Focused on the Arch of Marcus Aurelius in the Old City of Tripoli (Libya), it looked at how the local community used the Arch before and after the Italian restoration in the early 20th century, which intended to ‘re-monumentalise’ the colonial symbol and orchestrate perceptions of it. This change was uncovered by taking two sections in the timeline of the Arch: the first from 13th–20th century ethnographic records, and the second based on post-2011 field observations, revealing a process of decay and re-creation of meaning attributed to the ruin and within which spatial transformation plays a central role, both as a manifestation of community interpretations and as a tool to condition them.



Tripoli, Arch of Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus, east side (photo N. Hogben, Manar al-Athar).



Sabratha, Dame Kathleen Kenyon with workers during the 1948–51 excavations (photo BILNAS Archive, Kathleen Kenyon and John Ward-Perkins papers, D5/12/7/8).

31 October 2023

Felicity Crowe (BILNAS Archivist – University of Leicester)
The BILNAS Archive: past, present, and future

Photograph of Sheik Kilani Baba at Ghirza, undated (photo BILNAS Archive, Olwen Brogan papers, D41/2/7).

The BILNAS Archive is a rich resource of material relating to Libyan and Northern African history, archaeology, and culture. It covers a great variety of material, from David Smith’s archaeological plans of the Byzantine fortress at Tocra to correspondence with King Idris’s beekeeper. Much of the archive is related to archaeological excavations, some of which are as yet unpublished. This online talk looked at the history of the archive, current work to catalogue the material and improve its accessibility, and future plans for the collection.



23 November 2023

Felicity Crowe (BILNAS Archivist – University of Leicester), Valeria Vitale (BILNAS Honorary Collections Officer – University of Sheffield), Reem Furjani (Scene for Culture and Heritage)
Libyan clothing in the BILNAS Archive

This online event, attended by people in Libya and the Libyan diaspora, used photographs from the BILNAS Archive to spark a discussion on clothing in Libya. We aimed to find out about the connotations of different styles and about personal memories and family traditions around clothing. What do clothes tell us about the social status, political outlook, age and regional affiliations of the wearers? What are the connotations of different ways of draping clothing, or of wearing traditional clothing, more ‘westernised’ clothing, or a combination of the two? Comments from attendees are being added to the archive catalogue so we can document modern Libyan culture better.

28 November 2023 (BILNAS Annual Lecture)

Prof. Nick Barton (BILNAS President – University of Oxford)

Agencies of behavioural change in early humans in North Africa

Wide-ranging behavioural and technological innovations characterise the Middle and Later Stone Ages in North Africa. Focusing on Morocco, this in-person Annual Lecture provided an overview of recent scientific developments and new archaeological discoveries and examined the impact of environmental change on early human populations. The region of Morocco is particularly interesting because it lies on the north-western margins of the Sahara, in an area known to have experienced vast fluctuations in past rainfall, temperature, and vegetation, and which periodically became part of a ‘Green Sahara’. Morocco also preserves caves with deep cultural and environmental sequences containing some of the oldest fossils of *Homo sapiens* in Africa. As such, it provides a perfect test bed for examining environmental affordances and human responses to changing climatic and environmental conditions over the last 150,000 years.



Interior of the ‘Grotte des Pigeons’, Taforalt looking towards the entrance (photo D. MacLean).

16 January 2024

Roberto Chiarvetto (Independent Researcher)

The Italian air/ground exploration south of the Tropic of Cancer (1932–1936)

This online talk illustrated the series of land and air reconnaissance expeditions that were undertaken after the Italian conquest of Libya in 1931, when an agreement on the borders of Libya with France and the United Kingdom became a necessity. Wadi Abd el-Malik, ‘Almásy’s Zerkura’ in the Gilf Kebir, was reached in November 1932, after two Italian biplanes had flown over Chad’s Ounianga lakes only a few weeks earlier. Libya’s borders with Egypt and the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan were agreed upon in 1934, but the 1935 Italo-French Agreements did not really put to rest the issues between these two nations in Africa. The recently appointed Governor of Libya, Italo Balbo, decided to explore the area in depth to question this agreement

and reach a new one with the French. A secret reconnaissance mission to the southernmost reaches of Libya was then very carefully planned and carried out in July 1936.

Central Sahara, solo air reconnaissance over the desert and Tibesti Mountains in 1936 (photo Archivio Centrale dello Stato - Ministero della Cultura, Rome).



15 February 2024

Felicity Crowe (BILNAS Archivist – University of Leicester), Valeria Vitale (BILNAS Honorary Collections Officer – University of Sheffield), Reem Furjani (Scene for Culture and Heritage)

Perceptions of built heritage in the BILNAS Archive



This online event was one of a series that uses digitized photographs to engage people in Libya and the Libyan diaspora in the BILNAS Archive. In this session, we used photographs from the archive to generate a discussion on Libyans' experience of built heritage and the meanings it holds for them. Did, for example, attendees go on school trips to archaeological sites, or hang out there as teenagers? Do they have a daily morning walk there or take their children there? Do they feel affection for the sites? How has the relationship with heritage changed through the generations in their family? Comments and stories from the discussion are being added to the archive catalogue.

The Greek Propylaea at Cyrene in 1968 (photo BILNAS Archive, Charles Daniels papers, D24/12/1/6).



Sala (Chellah, Morocco), 3D reconstruction of buildings in the Roman civic centre (image R. Pansini).

21 March 2024

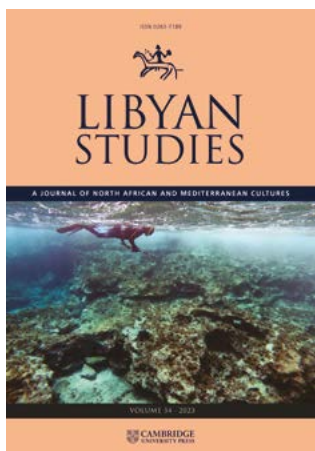
Dr Rossella Pansini (University of Siena)

The forum of Sala: architectural evolution of a North African town across the pre-Roman and Roman eras

This online lecture presented the main contents of the recently published book *‘Il Foro di Sala, 3. Edifici e ricostruzioni’* (Quasar, Rome 2023), which is dedicated to the architectural and urban analysis of the ancient town of Sala. This site, currently known as Chellah (Rabat, Morocco), shows traces of pre-Roman, Roman, and medieval-period occupation. The talk focused on the pre-Roman and Roman phases of the town, and on the study and 3D reconstruction work that was carried out on the buildings in the monumental district. The methodological process behind the work was described, looking in particular at the case study of the so-called ‘Temple A’, a pre-Roman sacred building that was reused, transformed, and enhanced in the Roman era.

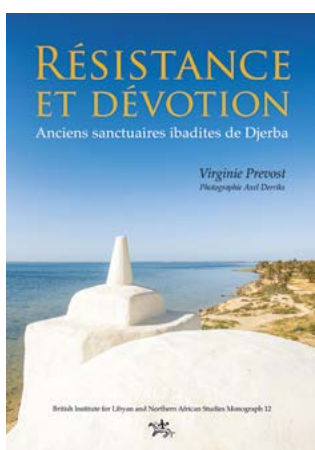


PUBLICATIONS 2023–24



LIBYAN STUDIES JOURNAL

Libyan Studies 54, edited by Dr Victoria Leitch was published in December 2023, in partnership with Cambridge University Press. Guest Editors, Dr Julia Nikolaus and Dr Nick Ray, organised a special section *Maritime Archaeology in North Africa* on current research, advances and challenges for the field of maritime archaeology in North Africa, including case studies from Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, and Sudan. The authors drew attention to the threats and damages to the wide range of coastal, near-shore, and underwater heritage, while also focusing on ways in which we can protect this heritage for future generations. Information about becoming a Guest Editor can be found on our website. This year we published seven Open Access articles, making the journal 50% Open Access.



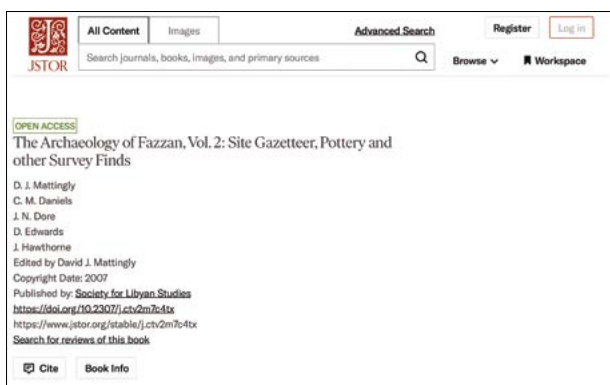
BOOKS

BILNAS continues to look at ways of streamlining our book publishing process, to reduce costs, increase accessibility and take environmental impacts into account. We are gradually selling off our old stock, with some books being converted to print-on-demand with zero stock. Some of our excess stock is in the process of being sent to Libya where it is hoped that it can be distributed to libraries and universities.

Autumn 2023 saw the publication of Virginie Prevost's *Les Mosquées Ibadites du Djebel Nafusa*. This volume is based on a corpus of 48 places of worship, some in excellent condition, others in ruins or completely rebuilt, which are mentioned in written Ibadite sources and in particular in the chronicle of al-Hilātī (d. 1099/1688–1689). Using numerous unpublished documents, the author reconstructs their history, and presents an in-depth study of the local memory of the island. Its publication was accompanied by an online video, in French, English and Arabic, which you can view on the BILNAS website (<https://www.bilnas.org/about-bilnas-publications/>). The author also presented the book in Jerba and will attend an event to promote the book at the Belgian embassy in Tunis.

OPEN ACCESS

BILNAS continues its commitment to producing Open Access across all our publications. The journal, *Libyan Studies*, published with Cambridge University Press,



remains, from 2016, a hybrid Open Access journal, meaning that it publishes some articles available only to subscribers, as well as Open Access articles which may be accessed online by anyone without charge. This year, even more BILNAS publications were made available as Open Access ebooks, with the help of a British Academy grant (Open Access platforms require processing fees). We currently have 22 books available Open Access on high-profile sites such as JSTOR, OAPEN, BiblioLabs, MUSEOpen, and Unglue.it.

LIBRARY

The BILNAS Library is held within the Africa Collection at the Library of the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London. It is currently located at stack 219 on Level D. There is a large-scale project taking place this year which aims to reorganise the library in order to create a better geographic layout and event space and to showcase the Africa Collection which is somewhat hidden behind the Law and Art collections on Level D. The new stack location for the BILNAS Library will be listed on the SOAS Library catalogue and the [Africa Subject guide](#) once the move has taken place.

In August 2023 the new Library Management System, [OCLC's WorldShare Management Services](#) (WMS), was implemented at SOAS Library - this runs the catalogue, acquisitions and circulation functions within the Library. You can search the library catalogue at: [Search SOAS University of London \(worldcat.org\)](#). In total 10 new titles have been added to the BILNAS library's collection this year.

In October, SOAS Library marked 50 years of the Philips Building (where the library is housed). There are several interesting articles about its history at: <https://www.soas.ac.uk/about/news/soas-library-50-years-old> and <https://www.soas.ac.uk/study/blog/complex-concrete-twists-and-turns-philips-building>



Philips Building, Library: book stacks being erected in 1972. (SOAS, University of London. All rights reserved).

THE BILNAS ARCHIVE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER

From Felicity Crowe, BILNAS Archivist

Felicity Crowe, the BILNAS Archivist, has been managing the Institute's first digitisation project, ingesting legacy catalogues into the catalogue, running an engagement project with Libyan partners, cataloguing new collections and supervising student interns. In May 2023 the BILNAS Archive moved to a new, more permanent location on the main campus of the University of Leicester, with easier access for students and visitors.

Key highlights include the digitisation of material relating to the 1948-51 excavations at Sabratha by Kathleen Kenyon and John Ward-Perkins. The finished scans and updated metadata have been deposited with the Archaeology Data Service and the Northern African Heritage Archives Network, who will both make them available online shortly. This is an important step in encouraging researchers to use the BILNAS Archive and will make the archive more accessible worldwide.

Right: *From the Olwen Brogan papers, one of her pictures from Ghirza.*



Below: *Khadijah Jahami with a telephone operator in Libya, from the Roland C. Shaw photographs.*



Significant progress has also been made on cataloguing collections in the archive, including the Fazzan Project, one of BILNAS's flagship projects from the 1980s-1990s. This includes excavation notebooks and diaries, theodolite surveys, drawings, photographs, correspondence and much more. Cataloguing of new deposits includes corporate papers, Christian Monuments of Cyrenaica, excavations at Euesperides, and maps and plans from various sites. We have recruited and trained five student interns to help in the archive, by identifying sites in photographs, checking for duplicate maps and looking for traces of Libyan excavation workers in the archives.

A series of BILNAS public engagement sessions have been used to gather information to more accurately describe Libyan culture in catalogue entries and to make the archive better known among Libyan researchers and the Libyan public more generally. We were delighted with the results of the first three sessions, and have been awarded a small grant from The National Archives to continue this work through 2024.

You can explore the BILNAS Archive online catalogue [here](#).



DONATIONS AND SPONSORSHIP

CORPORATE SPONSORSHIP

The British Institute for Libyan and Northern African Studies receives a grant in aid from the British Academy as well as subscription income from its members. However, to maintain a full research grant and publications programme, the Institute needs to supplement its income. We therefore welcome enquiries about opportunities to sponsor BILNAS and our official activities and events.

If you are a company or organisation with a presence in Libya or Northern Africa or interests in the heritage, culture and scholarship of the region, the Institute would be delighted to hear from you to discuss opportunities to support our lectures, seminars, book launches, and other special events or to support research in North Africa.

CORPORATE AND INDIVIDUAL DONATIONS

As a UK Registered Charity we welcome individual and corporate donations, bequests and legacies. If you wish to make a donation, please contact the General Secretary or check out the information on our website.

Thank you. We value your support.



THE YEAR IN FIGURES

MEMBERS 180, OF WHOM 42 ARE FROM OVERSEAS:

Australia	Israel	Sweden
Austria	Italy	Switzerland
Cyprus	Japan	Turkey
France	Libya	USA
Germany	Malta	

846 OPEN ACCESS BOOK DOWNLOADS FROM 32 COUNTRIES:

Algeria	Germany	Republic of Ireland
Australia	Greece	Romania
Austria	Hungary	Russia
Belgium	India	South Korea
Bosnia	Italy	Spain
Burkina Faso	Jordan	Sweden
Canada	Libya	Tunisia
China	Malta	Turkey
Denmark	Netherlands	United Kingdom
Egypt	Poland	USA
France	Portugal	

TWITTER

1779 followers

FACEBOOK

3100 followers

YOUTUBE

204 subscribers

8,800 views

WEBSITE

12,296 unique visitors (19% increase compared to 2022-23)

29,468 page views (9.5% increase compared to 2022-23)

Percentage of website views in each country:

UK: 30.5%

USA: 15.5%

China: 5.5%

Libya: 4.3%

France: 3.9%

Italy: 2.9%

FINANCIAL REPORT

BRITISH INSTITUTE FOR LIBYAN AND NORTHERN AFRICAN STUDIES STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

	2023-24	2022-23
	£	£
INCOME		
British Academy Grant	149,869	134,133
Business Development Fund Grant	16,253	15,479
Subscriptions	5,230	5,579
Journal sales	2,600	3,312
Book sales and postage	1,984	2,699
Bank interest	697	187
Donations/gift aid	18,000	21,341
Miscellaneous	1,419	4,714
TOTAL INCOME	<u>196,052</u>	<u>187,444</u>
EXPENDITURE		
Research grants	89,431	47,749
Library/Research collections	85,086	35,190
Archive: cataloguing and conservation	74,058	31,932
Archive digitisation	11,028	3,258
Communications and outreach	12,745	16,852
Events	5,086	3,467
Publicity and outreach	1,945	1,142
Website maintenance/development	5,214	11,743
Lecture/meeting expenses	500	500
Publications	22,758	28,387
Digitisation of old books	0	570
Storage/despatch of books	113	261
Print-on-demand costs	499	1,485
Royalties on book sales	0	200
Publications Manager	17,633	17,633
Journal production	2,760	2,745
Production of monographs/Silphium books	986	4,371
Other costs (Adobe, ISBN, small equipment)	767	1,122

Establishment	20,006	19,743
Bank charges	102	235
General Secretary's remuneration	12,275	11,928
Insurance	476	477
Office expenses	653	1,103
Accountancy	6,000	6,000
Donation	500	0
Travel	166	645
UK	166	645
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	<u>230,192</u>	<u>148,566</u>
DEFICIT / SURPLUS FOR THE YEAR	<u>-34,140</u>	<u>38,878</u>

**BRITISH INSTITUTE FOR LIBYAN AND NORTHERN AFRICAN STUDIES
BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31 MARCH 2024**

	2024	2023
	£	£
ASSETS		
Virgin Money Account	70,810	70,113
NatWest Current Account	2,424	41,808
PayPal Account	0	0
Total Cash	<u>73,234</u>	<u>111,921</u>
Debtors	11,302	0
Stock of publications, valued at cost	8,624	9,728
Total Assets	<u>93,160</u>	<u>121,649</u>
LIABILITIES		
Creditors due within one year	3,150	500
Accrued income	352	981
Grants allocated but not yet paid out	4,734	0
Total Liabilities	<u>8,236</u>	<u>1,481</u>
NET ASSETS	<u>84,924</u>	<u>120,168</u>
<i>Represented by:</i>		
General Fund	33,984	68,124
Stock Fund	8,624	9,728
Publications Fund	42,316	42,316
TOTAL FUNDS	<u>84,924</u>	<u>120,168</u>

NET MOVEMENT IN FUNDS

	2023-24	2022-23
	£	£
General Fund brought forward	68,124	29,246
Stock Fund brought forward	9,728	8,065
Publications Fund brought forward	42,316	42,316
Total funds at start of year	120,168	79,627
Deficit/surplus for the year	-34,140	38,878
Movement in stock	-1,104	1,663
TOTAL FUNDS	84,924	120,168

Grants allocated but not yet paid

Shortly before 31 March 2024 the Institute had committed to spend £4,734 of funding received from the British Academy but the receiving institution was unable to raise an invoice for this amount until shortly after 1 April 2024. In view of the proximity to the year end the amount has been included in the expenditure for the year and treated as a liability within the balance sheet.

Held over grants

At 31 March 2023 the Institute had received grant funding of £40,000 from the British Academy which had not been awarded. This sum was awarded and paid out during the 2023-24 year. Without this timing difference, with the receipt of funds in one year and distribution of them in the following year, the Institute would have shown a surplus for the year of £5,860 in the 2023-24 financial year and a deficit of £1,122 in the 2022-23 financial year.

Reserves policy

The Institute has few financial commitments which cannot be terminated at short notice, since it has no direct employees and does not own or rent premises; it has not therefore been considered necessary to retain a reserve for potential winding-up costs.

The Institute has historically set aside funds for publications arising (usually several years later) from fieldwork that it has supported. These are shown as a Publications Reserve, with the intention that they may be used to support (any) publication costs, but not new fieldwork.

Book collection

The Institute held 971 items in its books collection, which is housed in the library of the School of Oriental and African Studies ('SOAS') University of London.

The Institute did not have an active acquisition policy for its book collection during the year under review; it received volumes by gift and by exchange and works sent for review were generally also added to the collection.

Oliver Kimberley *Chartered Accountant, Honorary Treasurer*

**INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT
TO THE COUNCIL OF THE
BRITISH INSTITUTE FOR LIBYAN AND NORTHERN AFRICAN STUDIES**

Charity number 259262 registered in England & Wales

I report to the Council on my examination of the accounts of the British Institute for Libyan and Northern African Studies ('the Institute') for the year ended 31 March 2024.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the charity trustees of the Institute you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ('the Act').

I report in respect of my examination of the Charity's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145 (5) (b) of the Act.

Independent examiner's statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

1. accounting records were not kept in respect of the Charity as required by section 130 of the Act; or
2. the accounts do not accord with those records; or
3. the accounts do not comply with the applicable requirements concerning the form and content of accounts set out in the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 other than any requirement that the accounts give a 'true and fair view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination.

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Colm Walls *Chartered Management Accountant, Honorary Independent Examiner*
36 Lancet Lane, Maidstone, Kent ME15 9SA



MEMBERSHIP

To join BILNAS, sign up on the website <https://www.bilnas.org/membership/how-to-join/> or contact the General Secretary gensec@bilnas.org

Membership is open to all and runs from April to April. Key benefits include being part of a long-standing academic community, plus:

- Access to *Libyan Studies*, BILNAS's annual journal
- The opportunity to purchase BILNAS publications at significantly discounted prices
- Attendance at BILNAS events, meetings, lectures and the Annual General Meeting
- Access to the BILNAS Library through free annual membership of the SOAS Library
- Access to the BILNAS Archive (University of Leicester)

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gensec@bilnas.org

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www.bilnas.org

