



**Conflict and Cultural Heritage Conference:
Saturday 31 October 2015
in the Auditorium, St John's College, Oxford**

Outline Programme

All welcome. No pre-registration needed. Arrival 09.15 for 09.30:

09.30 **Theme 1: What is happening?** The significance of sites at risk, and the current situation

09.30 Welcome and introduction - Chair: Dr Liz Carmichael (OxPeace)

09.35: Dr Robert Bewley (EAMENA): *Overview of Endangered Archaeology in the Middle East and North Africa*

09.45: Dr Ross Burns (author 'The Monuments of Syria' and 'History of Damascus'): *Monuments at War—the Syrian Conflict and the Changing Pattern of Destruction as Reflected in Aleppo and Palmyra*

10.15: Dr Lamia al-Gailani (UCL / SOAS): *When words fail. Iraq's lost heritage, and efforts to save it*

10.40: Dr Sebastian Brock and Sebastien de Courtois (Oriental Institute, Oxford University, and l'École Pratique des Hautes Études): *Syriac Christian communities: people, monuments and manuscripts in Syria, Turkey, and Iraq*

11.10 **Coffee** in Reception Room

11.30 **Theme 2: Why is this happening?** Understanding ISIL and other Islamist extremism: Chair: Dr John Chesworth (Centre for Muslim-Christian Studies, Oxford)

11.30: Dr Alia Brahimy (CCW; Contest Global): *Cultural Heritage in the Islamic State's Worldview*

12.00: Dr Noel Brehony (Chair of CBRL): *Politics, with a focus on Yemen*

13.00 **Lunch** (1 hour): sandwiches, juices provided in Reception Room

14.00 **Theme 3: What is being done or should be done?** Exploring archaeological and military heritage protection initiatives. Chair: Dr Paul Collins (Ashmolean)

14.00: Prof. Graham Philip (Durham Univ.) *The Sites and Monuments Record for Syria, and the Shirin Project.*

14.20: Lt Col Tim Purbrick (British Army): *Delivering a Military Cultural Property Protection Capability*

14.40: Vernon Rapley (V&A Museum) *Law Enforcement of Cultural Heritage Crime*

15.10: Dr Emma Cunliffe (EAMENA) *"Heritage for Peace": an NGO protecting Syrian Cultural Heritage during the Conflict*

15.30 **Panel: Where do we go from here?** The impact of the present situation on the fields represented by today's speakers, and on the media. A discussion panel of the speakers, with audience Q&A, introduced and chaired by Sebastian Usher (BBC Middle East Editor).

16.30 **Closure** (chair: Dr Liz Carmichael) and **tea in Reception Room.**

Podcasts will be available here: <http://podcasts.ox.ac.uk/> or Google the Conference title.

Video will also be available here: <http://www.vam.ac.uk/page/c/culture-in-crisis>

**The organising committee,
OxPeace, EAMENA, The Changing Character of War Programme, Victoria &
Albert Museum, and the Ashmolean Museum,**
welcomes you here today.

Full programme

- 09.30 **Theme 1: What is happening?** The significance of sites at risk, and the current situation
- 09.30 **Welcome and introduction** - Chair: Dr Liz Carmichael (OxPeace)
- 09.35 **Dr Robert Bewley:** *Endangered Archaeology in the Middle East and North Africa*
The Endangered Archaeology project is assessing threats to archaeological sites using satellite imagery and aerial photographs. This paper will present an overview of the approach, initial results and future strategies for the project. An open-access, web-based, database will provide information on all the sites discovered and recorded for potential users. The EAMENA project is funded by the Arcadia Fund (www.arcadiafund.org.uk) based at Oxford University in collaboration with Leicester University, UK.
- 09.45 **Dr Ross Burns:** *Monuments at War—the Syrian Conflict and the Changing Pattern of Destruction as Reflected in Aleppo and Palmyra*
Why have monuments that have survived millennia of conflict, earthquakes and the pressures of changing patterns of settlement, suddenly become not just incidental targets but pawns in a new type of conflict? The dimensions of the problem are looked at from the perspective of two centres with some overall conclusions on what has been lost in Syria as a whole. While the risks can only be resolved by an overall settlement of the conflict, what can those outside who care about the country and its past do in the meantime?
- 10.15 **Dr Lamia al-Gailani:** *When words fail. Iraq's lost heritage, and efforts to save it*
Iraq has lost to war, violence, development, and neglect many of its most valuable monuments, ancient and modern. What are the urgent measures – immediate or long term – to preserve and document what is left?
- 10.40 **Dr Sebastian Brock:** *Syriac Christian communities: people, monuments and manuscripts in Syria, Turkey and Iraq today*
Dr Brock will speak about some of the living Syriac Communities of the Middle East, introducing who they are, and their manuscripts.
- 10.40 **Mr Sébastien de Courtois:** *Syriac Christian communities: people, monuments and manuscripts in Syria, Turkey and Iraq today*
My presentation will be based on my own experience as a journalist who was present in Northern Iraq in the summer 2014. I will mention the destruction of the Yezidis sanctuaries in Sindjar; the destruction of churches and Syriac monasteries in the plain of Niniveh; but also the heroic action of Father Najeeb who saved thousands of old manuscripts from Mosul and the city of Qaraqosh. Then I will show pictures of the very old Synagogue of Alqosh, in the Kurdistan area.
- 11.10 **Coffee** in Reception Room

- 11.30 **Theme 2: Why is this happening?** Understanding ISIL and other Islamist extremism:
Chair: Dr John Chesworth (Centre for Muslim-Christian Studies, Oxford)

We give apologies on behalf of Dr Rizwaan Sabir, who was to have spoken in this session on: *ISIS: In the Name of Power, Politics, and Propaganda*. With regret, Dr Sabir explains: "I have been invited to the US Congress to deliver a recommendation paper on the "countering violent extremism" (CVE) policy which is going through Congress as we speak, and I believe it is vital for a critical perspective be offered to ensure the policy is as effective and nuanced as can be."

An introduction to the doctrines and motivation of ISIS/ISIL will be covered by Dr Brahim.

- 11.30 **Dr Alia Brahim:** *Cultural Heritage in the Islamic State's Worldview*

This presentation will explore the beliefs that underlie the Islamic State's practices, as well as the political strategies behind the deliberate destruction of cultural heritage.

- 12.00 **Dr Noel Brehony:** *Politics with a focus on Yemen*

The turmoil and war in Yemen are leading to the destruction of cultural heritage and providing new opportunities for Al-Qa'ida and ISIS as they seek to expand their presence to areas outside Syria and Iraq and compete with each other for support. Using Yemen as an example, the lecture will examine how they draw on their experience in the Levant to seek to build political entities and use the threat to cultural heritage for political purposes. Can the successes of some Arab regimes in dealing with Al-Qa'ida now be adapted to counter the much greater threat posed by ISIS?

- 13.00 **Lunch** (1 hour): sandwiches, juices provided in Reception Room

- 14.00 **Theme 3: What is being done or should be done?** Exploring archaeological and military heritage protection initiatives. Chair: Dr Paul Collins (Ashmolean)

- 14.00 **Professor Graham Philip:** *The Sites and Monuments Record for Syria, and the Shirin Project*

This presentation will focus upon three main issues.

1. To explain why there is a need for a comprehensive and accurate inventory of archaeological / heritage sites in Syria, and what is currently being done to support the creation of such a resource.
2. To introduce the international organization Shirin to the audience, by explaining what it is, who its members are, and what is its intended function?
3. To explain the nature of the contribution that Shirin is seeking to make to the protection of cultural heritage in Syria during and after the current crisis.

- 14.20 **Lt Col Tim Purbrick:** *Delivering a Military Cultural Property Protection Capability*

The presentation will cover the definition of cultural property, a short background to conflict and the destruction of cultural property, responses to cultural property destruction by international agencies/politicians/international armed forces, international law relating to armed forces and cultural property protection, reasons why the British Army is currently considering instituting a military cultural property protection capability and the elements required to deliver a military cultural property protection capability.

14.40 **Vernon Rapley:** *Law Enforcement of Cultural Heritage Crime*

Vernon will describe the difficulties encountered by law enforcement when trying to target the illicit trade of cultural heritage. He will explore the reasons why police departments can sometimes appear to be reluctant to engage fully in this area of criminality. Vernon will also draw upon his experience investigating cultural property criminals to provide and insight into their methodology and the potential scale and impact of their acts.

15.10 **Dr Emma Cunliffe:** *Heritage for Peace”: an NGO protecting Syrian Cultural Heritage during the Conflict*

Heritage for Peace is an international NGO entirely founded and run by volunteers, who work to protect heritage during conflict and assist their colleagues in Syria. This presentation will showcase their ideas and principles, some of their work, and some of the difficulties faced in working during a conflict. The second half will present a particular project - a regular report of international actions undertaken by the international community, demonstrating how the wider community has reacted, and how the approach of a small NGO can be successful.

15.30 **Panel: Where do we go from here?** The impact of the present situation on the fields represented by today’s speakers, and on the media. A discussion panel of the speakers, with audience Q&A, introduced and chaired by **Sebastian Usher** (BBC Middle East Editor).

16.30 **Closure** (chair: Dr Liz Carmichael) and **tea in Reception Room.**

The Conference gratefully acknowledges the support of:

The Victoria and Albert Museum

The Golden Bottle Trust

St John’s College Research Centre

Council for British Research in the Levant (CBRL)

British Institute for the Study of Iraq (BISI)

Maison Française D’Oxford

Changing Character of War Programme

Oxford Peace Research Trust

Speaker Biographies

Dr Robert Bewley

Dr Robert Bewley is the Director of the Endangered Archaeology in the Middle East and North Africa (EAMENA) project at Oxford University. He was the Director of Operations Heritage Lottery Fund from May 2007 to December 2014. Prior to this he was Regional Director for English Heritage in the South West (2004-2007), Head of Aerial Survey, and Head of Survey for English Heritage (1995-2004). He started his professional career as an Inspector of Ancient Monuments for English Heritage in 1984, having graduated from Manchester University (1978) and completed post-graduate degrees at Cambridge University (1979-1984).

Dr Ross Burns

Ross Burns, after studying history and archaeology at Sydney University, was an Australian diplomat for many years. His first Ambassadorial assignment was in Damascus in the mid-eighties. After retirement in 2003 he has furthered his interests in writing on the archaeology of Syria with 'Monuments of Syria (I B Tauris, London 1992, 1999, 2009) and 'Damascus, A History' (Routledge 2005). He is currently completing a history of Aleppo for Routledge and maintains a website to keep alive the memory of Syria's extraordinarily rich past - www.monumentsofsyria.com. Ross is a collaborator with Oxford's Manar al-Athar www.manar-al-athar.ox.ac.uk open-access photo-archive of buildings and art in Syro-Palestine and North Africa. He is also currently preparing for publication his PhD thesis on the colonnaded axes of the cities of the eastern provinces under Rome.

Dr Lamia al-Gailani

Dr Lamia al-Gailani is an Iraqi archaeologist living in London, and an honorary senior research associate at the Institute of archaeology, UCL.

Dr Sebastian Brock

Sebastian Brock is an Emeritus Reader in Syriac Studies at Oxford University, and an Emeritus Fellow of Wolfson College.

Sébastien de Courtois

Based in Istanbul, Sébastien de Courtois is currently researching his PhD with the "Groupe, Sociétés, Religions, Laïcités" (<http://www.gsrl.cnrs.fr/>) at l'École Pratique des Hautes Études in Paris. He studies the Tur Abdin, the land of Syriac orthodox communities in Eastern Turkey, focusing on the education system within the monasteries and the surrounding villages. He is the author of "*The Forgotten Genocide, Eastern Christians, The Last Arameans*", Gorgias Press (2007). <http://www.gorgiaspress.com/bookshop/p-260-the-forgotten-genocide-eastern-christians-the-last-aramiansbrby-sebastien-de-courtois.aspx>. He also has a background in practicing law, and also writes as a journalist covering issues relating to the minorities in the Middle East, and as a travel writer.

Dr Alia Brahim

Dr Alia Brahim has been a Visiting Research Fellow at the Changing Character of War Programme since 2013, and is currently Director at the strategic intelligence consultancy, Contest Global. She was previously a Research Fellow at the London School of Economics and Political Science (2009-2013) and a Research Associate in International Relations at the University of Oxford (2007-2009). She also read for her MPhil and DPhil in International Relations at Oxford. Alia is the author of *Jihad and Just War in the War on Terror* (Oxford University Press, 2010), as well as a number of academic and press articles on al-Qaeda's evolving ideology and strategy, the western and Islamic just war traditions,

political Islam, and political trends in the Middle East and North Africa. Alia regularly authors opinions columns and appears in the international broadcast media.

Dr Noel Brehony

After a PhD on Libya and post-doctoral research on the West Bank, Noel Brehony was in the FCO with postings to Kuwait, Yemen, Jordan and Cairo and then Director of Middle East Affairs for Rolls-Royce plc. He is chair of the Council for British Research in the Levant and Menas Associates, past President of the British Society for Middle East Studies and former chair of the Anglo-Jordanian Society and the British Yemeni Society. Author of *Yemen Divided* (IB Tauris 2011) and co-editor of *Rebuilding Yemen* (Gerlach 2015).

Professor Graham Philip

Professor Philip has been working in Syria since the early 1980s and pioneered the use of satellite imagery for site prospection through his fieldwork project *Settlement and Landscape Development in the Homs Region, Syria* (1998-2010). Co-leading the AHRC-funded *Fragile Crescent Project* (2008-13), he was involved in the collation and analysis of survey data from across the Fertile Crescent. The resulting settlement database now forms a major component of the Shirin SMR. After completing his PhD, Prof Philip worked in Baghdad for the British Archaeological Expedition to Iraq, served as Assistant Director of the British Institute for at Amman for Archaeology and History (1989-92), and held a British Academy Postdoctoral Fellowship at the Institute of Archaeology, University College, London. He has worked at the Department of Archaeology, Durham University since 1994.

Lt Col Tim Purbrick

Lt Col Tim Purbrick is a staff officer at Army HQ. He served for 10 years in the Regular Army in West Germany and Northern Ireland. He was a tank commander in the 1991 Gulf War following which he completed tours as the Army's Spokesman in the Ministry of Defence and as a Combat Camera Team Commander in which he served primarily in Bosnia-Herzegovina as well as in many other countries covering training and operations. On leaving the Army in 1998 he joined the Army Reserves and has been called up to serve in the UK to support operations in Iraq in 2003 as well as deploying to Iraq in 2007 and Afghanistan in 2011 in media operations roles. His current post is in the Concepts Branch of Army HQ – the Army's Strategic Foresight unit – where he is responsible for developing analytical concepts for Media, Information Warfare and Cyber Warfare.

Vernon Rapley

Vernon Rapley is the Security Director at the Victoria & Albert Museum, the 'World's leading museum of art and design'. He is also the founder and chairman of the National Museum Security Group, the UK lead for Tourism on the Cross-sector Security and Safety Communications Group and a member of the NPCC (National Police Chiefs' Council) Heritage and Cultural Property Crime Working Group. Before joining the V&A in 2010, Vernon served as a police officer for 24 years, the last 10 years as the head of the Art & Antiques Unit at New Scotland Yard. During that time he overtly and covertly investigated all manner of art and cultural property crime. He was a member of The Interpol Tracking Task Force (Iraq), as well as representing UK Law Enforcement on International initiatives to combat the illicit trade of cultural goods from: Afghanistan, South America, Eastern Europe and South East Asia and others. He formed a number of long lasting community partnerships, including the creation of ArtBEAT, a unique use of expert volunteers drawn from the cultural sector to assist the police. Towards the end of his police career he organized two exhibitions of Fakes & Forgeries, the last one attracting 30,000 visitors in just 3 weeks.

Dr Emma Cunliffe

Emma is a Research Associate working on the Endangered Archaeology in the Middle East and North Africa (EAMENA) Project, working to protect heritage in the Middle East. After completing her PhD on site damage in Syria in 2013, she worked as consultant for several months, before starting with EAMENA in early 2015. She specialises in satellite imagery analysis of site damage and heritage protection during peace and conflict, focussing on Syria. She is a committee member of UK Blue Shield (www.ukblueshield.org.uk), and a long-term consultant for the NGO Heritage for Peace (www.heritageforpeace.org).

Sebastian Usher

Sebastian Usher has been fascinated by the Middle East ever since childhood holidays spent with his grandparents in Lebanon. He has reported from most of the Arab world in the past twenty-five years. He's written about culture, politics, conflict and religion in the region for a variety of newspapers and magazines, both English and Arabic. For the past fifteen years, he's been with the BBC – as North Africa correspondent, media reporter, Middle East reporter and analyst. He's currently Middle East editor for the BBC World Service, broadcasting for radio and TV – as well as writing for BBC online. With his Lebanese wife, he also runs a Middle Eastern food and events company.