BACKGROUND TO THE EXCAVATIONS AT PELLA

The ancient site of Pella in Jordan, locally known as Tabaqat Fahl, was visited by European travellers from the early 19th century. In 1958, limited excavations were conducted on the main mound (or tell) in the form of two small exploratory probes, whilst the Jordanian Department of Antiquities dug a number of important Bronze Age tombs in 1963/4. The first major archaeological excavations took place in 1967, led by R.H. Smith from the College of Wooster, Ohio. Work centred on a 6th century Byzantine church (Area I), and a Roman/Byzantine cemetery in Area II. After the Arab-Israeli wars of 1967 and 1973, work resumed at Pella in 1979 under the auspices of the Joint Sydney University/Wooster College Expedition, directed by J.B. Hennessy and R.H. Smith, in association with the Department of Antiquities of Jordan. In the twenty-eight seasons of excavations to date, detailed research into the main site of Pella and its hinterland has revealed much about the archaeological heritage of north Jordan. Initial work concentrated on the main tell, exposing a large area of the Byzantine/Umayyad city of the 6th-mid 8th centuries CE (Area IV), and cutting a trench at the south-east corner of the mound (Area III). Tombs were also investigated, including promising discoveries of the Middle Bronze/Late Bronze Age transition (16th century BCE) Over the years the Pella Expedition expanded considerably encompassing a diversity of research projects. Major advances were made in the early Stone Age (Palaeolithic) of the Jordan Valley by P.C. Edwards and P. Macumber, Bronze Age Pella (T.F. Potts and S.J. Bourke), Hellenistic and Early Roman settlement (J. Tidmarsh), the Byzantine period (P.M. Watson and K.A. da Costa), and early-mid Islamic society in north Jordan (A.G. Walmsley).

RECENT RESEARCH

Since the discovery of Natufian (12,500–12,000 years ago) settlement at Wadi Hammeh, three kilometres north of the main tell, a major sequence of Palaeolithic cultures has been identified in the area. This work radically altered our understanding of Palaeolithic society, the appearance of the first sedentary communities, along with the drastic social changes that resulted.

- Continuing excavation on the main tell in Area XXXII has established the sophisticated nature of urban life in the Early, Middle and Late Bronze Ages through to an evident decline in later Iron Age at Pella (3rd to 1st millennium BCE).
- Continuing excavation on the northeast summit of Tell Husn has revealed a long sequence of Early Bronze Age remains (4th Millennium BCE). These chart the origins of urban life, and have been producing stunning architectural complexes from its earliest phases.
- Investigation of the Hellenistic period, when the area was controlled by Alexander the Great and his successors (late 4th to end of the 1st century BCE) has provided a wealth of evidence for the second half of this period, along with tantalizing clues to the more historically obscure earlier years. New work on the ‘citadel’ hill of Tell Husn, expands our understanding of the Late Hellenistic and Early Roman periods.
- In the late Roman and Byzantine period, Pella attained its greatest level of urban concentration and largest geographical extent. Substantial domestic and public remains of the 4th to 7th century CE have been exposed on the main tell, adjacent slopes, and on the summit of Tell Husn.
- The Pella excavations have also revolutionized our understanding of social and economic conditions in Jordan after the Islamic Conquest.

Pella has proved to be a rich and complex site with an extraordinarily long near continuous history of occupation dating across the last 10,000 years.
**THE 2017 FIELD SEASON**

The 8 January-16 February 2017 season (our twenty-ninth at the site!) will concentrate on three main excavations areas. We will continue work within and to the west of the Bronze Age (ca. 1800-1500 BCE) temple on the south side of the main mound (Area XXXII). We shall expand previous work focused on the Late Hellenistic (Area XXIII) to explore more intensively the full occupational sequence from the Late Hellenistic through to the Late Medieval periods (ca. 80 BCE-1500 CE). On Husn we will expand work on the Early Bronze Age (ca. 3500-2800 BCE) structures on the east summit (Area XXXIV).
FIELD TRAINING

Beginning with the first season in 1979, Pella has always been a training dig for students from Australian universities, and the volunteers selected under this programme will be treated to the same training procedures. Over three weeks participants will acquire a thorough knowledge of how a dig runs through direct participation. This will entail experiencing a full range of field and house activities, backed up by briefings and mini-classes. 'Hands-on' experience is emphasized - you will become part of the team.

After arrival and settling in, participants in the volunteer programme will be taken on a familiarisation trek around Pella. Major features – archaeological, geological and environmental – will be pointed out as an introduction to the site and the work already completed.

Tasks will be allocated, divided into field and house work, and these will be rotated during your period of stay. Each participant will be working as an assistant to one of the professional core team members who will be responsible for the ongoing day-to-day training of volunteers.

Participants in the programme will experience a full range of archaeological field work: digging (the heavy work is done by hired labourers), in-field artefact recovery and labelling, pottery processing, non-ceramic artefact recording, drafting, and photography. Supervision is undertaken by the core team member in charge of the relevant area of work.

Major discoveries tend to be announced at periodic evening briefings. These sessions, while being informative, are informal, and will introduce volunteers to the process of archaeological reasoning and explanation based on field results.

FIELD CONDITIONS

Each week consists of five and a half working days, beginning with tea and biscuits at 6.00 AM and officially ends for the volunteers at 2.00 PM with lunch. The core staff will often work on to, and even after, dinner as required; volunteers are not expected to follow suit.

In the field, staff and volunteers will walk to their place of work to commence at 6.30 AM. During the 2017 season, the Area XXIII and XXXII excavation areas are a short walk from the house. Those in Area XXXIV are further afield, and will require around 20-30 minutes walking to reach the excavation area, but the views are worth the effort! At this hour of the morning, conditions will be cold and perhaps damp, so warm clothing and wet weather gear is essential. After breakfast at 9.00 AM, which is taken in the dighouse by both field and house staff (or on-site for those at Area XXXIV), it often becomes quite warm, and as the day heats up, you will find you need to remove layers of clothing.

As a trench assistant, volunteers will participate in the full range of field work: trowel work, collecting and labelling finds, recording the location and level of objects, and operating the soil sieves. A trench supervisor will provide tuition and oversee the activities of the volunteers. The work requires reasonable stamina and fitness, but is not exhausting as much of the removal of soil and heavy lifting is done by labourers from the local village.

In the dighouse, hours of work are the same as for the field staff. The various duties - washing, sorting, and cataloguing the finds - require concentration and attention to detail. Volunteers will work with core staff who are responsible for the instruction and supervision of their assistants.

PELLA AND OTHER SITES IN JORDAN

Pella is but one of a number of beautiful sites in Jordan - but few have such a spectacular geographical location. Perched at roughly 30m below sea level yet above the floor of the Jordan Valley, Pella lies at the beginning of the transitional zone between the Valley and the mountains of Jordan to the east (Biblical Gilead). Here throughout the ages, the ascent up the Jordan scarp began (or the descent from the mountains ended) after the flat valley floor of the Jordan and the gentle route through the Esdraelon/Jezreel Valley from the Mediterranean Sea. Because of its commanding position, Pella dominated the passage of goods and people over the millennia.

Internationally, Jordan is generally known because of two major sites, Petra and Jerash, both of which certainly deserve their fame. Many people have heard of the rock-cut city of Petra “half as old as time”, and quite a few people know of Jerash, a wonderfully preserved provincial Roman city with colonnaded streets and monumental temples still largely intact. Yet many other destinations in Jordan deserve equal attention, such as:

- the Byzantine Churches of Madaba and Mount Nebo, superbly decorated with brilliantly coloured mosaics;
- the ruins of Umm Qais (ancient Gadara) overlooking the Sea of Galilee;
- Wadi Rumm and Aqaba out of the pages of T.E. Lawrence’s Seven Pillars of Wisdom;
- the 12th century Arab Castles at Ajlun and Azraq;
- the Crusader castles at Kerak, Shobak, and Petra;
- the enigmatic Umayyad-period Desert Castles;
- the black-basalt desert town of Umm al-Jimal, today still standing as abandoned over a thousand years ago.
There are six co-directors responsible for the excavation and publication of different periods on the main site: Dr. Stephen Bourke, Dr. Kate da Costa, Dr. R.T. Sparks, Dr. John Tidmarsh, Dr. Alan Walmsley and Dr. Pam Watson.

The 2017 season will be directed by Dr. Stephen Bourke, and co-directed by Dr. John Tidmarsh (Hellenistic).

Stephen Bourke has worked most seasons at Pella since 1981 and became a co-Director in 1988. He gained a BA Honours degree in Archaeology at the University of Sydney in 1982, and a PhD from the London Institute of Archaeology in 1992. He specializes in the archaeology of the Bronze and Iron Ages. Stephen has directed thirteen seasons of excavations at Pella since 1994.

John Tidmarsh has worked at Pella for many seasons from 1979. While engaged in Medical Practice in Sydney, John gained his PhD on Hellenistic Jordan in 2000. He specializes in the archaeology of the Greco-Roman Levant. He has co-directed ten seasons of excavations at Pella since 1988.

The professional core of the team is largely made up of local experts, graduates, and senior students of archaeology or related subjects at the University of Sydney and other Australian and overseas institutions. They are selected because of their archaeological skills and their capacity to pass these on to others.

The volunteers are assessed and treated as other team members. Special professional skills, such as photography, technical drawing, architecture or surveying, can be useful and applicants should bring to our attention any special skills they may have.

The local domestic staff at Pella comprises a cook and two cook’s assistants, a foreman (in charge of the local labour force and local liaison work), and a washerwoman (who deals with all the laundry in traditional fashion - delicates are not a forte).

All participants, whether professional or volunteer, are working as part of a team. For the team to work effectively and happily, such qualities as flexibility, stoicism, and good humour never go astray.
THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

The village name of Fahl (stallion) preserves the ancient Semitic name of Phii(um), and the similarity to Pella, the name of Alexander the Great’s home town, cannot be accidental. Thus the local community are the inheritors of a name that is at least 4,000 years old.

The village today has about 500 inhabitants, and has grown rapidly in the last decade. It, like much of Jordan, has not been able to withstand the onslaught of Westernisation, although many villagers remain conservative in their outlook. After thirty years there is a well established spirit of co-operation with the village, and retaining the support of the local people must always be of prime concern to a foreign mission. There are few amenities in the village.

About three kilometres from the site is al-Masharia, located on the main north-south road that passes up the eastern side of the Jordan Valley. This is now a large and relatively recent town of around 20000. Masharia shopping is not very exciting, although the Friday clothes bazaar is a very colourful occasion.

All team members, both core and volunteer, are expected to remain sensitive to the culture and traditions of the local communities. As they have welcomed us into their midst our respect for their social mores and customs is the least we can do to show our gratitude.

COMMUNICATIONS

Either arrange international roaming on your Australian mobile phone (check rates with your provider) or purchase a Jordanian SIM card (with a Jordanian number) at Pella.

Sending post is quite efficient, especially for letters and postcards. Allow 10 days to two weeks for delivery. Do NOT send or receive parcels as these require a trip to Amman and the payment of hefty fees.

There are no fax or email facilities at Pella, although you can purchase a mobile data service via a USB dongle that now work reliably in the Jordan Valley. Communication via mobile texting is both cheap and reliable.

In emergencies only, the British Institute (CBRL) in Amman will receive messages from home, but further communication with Pella is via mobile phone in any case and we would recommend providing your family with your mobile contact details so they can contact you directly. The American Centre for Oriental Research (ACOR) is a favoured place for the team to stay when in Amman and we provide their details below.

Australian excavations at Pella
c/- CBRL, P.O. Box 519, al-Jubaiha, 11941, Amman, Jordan
CBRL phone number 962 - 6 - 5341317

ACOR
P.O. Box 2470 Amman 11181
ACOR phone number 962 6 5346117
This is a list of things to take which make life a little easier if you have them with you. It is better to bring these as it can be difficult, if not impossible, to buy them in Jordan.

CLOTHING

As we are guests in an Islamic country it is important to respect their codes of dress and this means that both men and women should dress modestly. No shorts, no tight fitting clothes, shirts to the elbow and no plunging necklines. Women can wear jeans etc., as long as they are loose. Life is much more pleasant if these rules are followed.

When the weather is warmer (mid February) it is advisable to bring some light-weight clothing which covers the body - no shorts (men or women).

WORK CLOTHES

Not all these are essential but they will make your time at Pella more comfortable.

- 2 pairs old jeans, boiler suits or similar
- Old shirts
- 2 old warm jumpers
- Work or hiking boots (it is not the time to break in new shoes)
- A light-weight, waterproof windjacket
- Warm socks
- Headscarf or beanie
- Knee pads
- Work gloves or rigger's gloves fit better than gardening gloves, and it is a good idea to wear cotton gloves inside to avoid chafing or blisters
- A pair of long washing-up gloves for when washing bones etc.

A hat is highly recommended.

The digging conditions may be wet and therefore clothes need to be left to dry sometimes for a day, therefore it is important to have at least one change of work clothes available. If they are old enough, they can be ditched to make room for those little purchases that one makes along the way.

CLOTHES FOR THE DIG HOUSE

- 2 changes of warm clothing to change into on returning from digging; these can be warm track suits or pants and jumpers.
- A towelling wrap (such as used in hotels). This is important to wear to and from the ablutions block as the shower rooms are fairly small and one's clothing is likely to get wet.
- A pair of thongs or such like are useful in the showers.
- Warm night wear, including bedsocks. This is important, particularly for the tent dwellers.
- Other underwear and socks as needed.
- A second pair of comfortable shoes to wear in the dig house when not working. Your dig shoes tend to get damp and muddy.

CLOTHES FOR TOURING AND GOING OUT.

- 1 pair of reasonable jeans or similar. Skirts of the women are fine as long as they are ankle length.
- Shirt.
- Warm jumper.
- Coat or jacket.
- Take one reasonably decent outfit as you may wish to have a meal out in Amman at one of the hotels or restaurants.

MONEY

You will need to change money in Amman before coming down to the valley. There are no facilities to change money near Pella. Your spending will be low and will involve what you consume at the bar and what you wish to spend on the Friday trips. A rough estimate would be to change the equivalent of $400-$500 for your time at Pella.
A SURVIVAL LIST FOR PELLA VOLUNTEERS

OTHER NEEDS

- Take all your basic toiletries and make up as it's a pain to try to find them in Jordan.
- Sunscreen. This should include a good lip salve, hand cream and facial moisturiser as digging can be very dehydrating.
- You may wish to take a hot water bottle, very comforting for cold aching feet.
- Tissues, sanitary pads-tampons.
- An MP3 player, iPod etc (not essential but can be a very soothing exclusion zone at the end of a hard day.)
- A towel, the supply is getting a little thin, so if you desire that soft fluffy feeling, bring your own. A small hand towel for use at the hand basins is recommended.
- A pillow if you are devoted to a particular type or have a bad neck. Beds and bedding are clean and serviceable but hardly luxurious.
- Bring all camera batteries and memory cards that you will require.
- A torch: both for use at night if you need to cross the compound and also while sightseeing to highlight those little nooks and crannies that are not well illuminated.
- A sewing kit.
- A water container of at least one litre volume for use during the day in the trenches.

MEDICAL KIT

BRING ALL YOUR USUAL PRESCRIPTION MEDICATION

Any required medicines should be stored in hand luggage when travelling and be in sufficient quantity for the full length of stay in Jordan (i.e. one month), as filling prescriptions exactly can be problematic around Pella.

As well as any usual prescription medication, it is advisable to bring:

- Your doctor's phone number.
- Stemetil/Lomotil/Vibramycin. These three for tummy upsets.
- Blackmores Peritone or similar for constipation, as the change in diet often has this effect.
- Any cough or cold medication, such as Throaties, Lemsips, Sudafed, Codral (or similar Day & Night medication) that you usually require for a cold (winter cgrounds that take hold in the dighouse have been our most prominent medical issue to date).
- Hand sanitizer will help keep the inevitable winter colds at bay.
- A broad spectrum antibiotic such as Bactrim or Amoxil.
- Aspirin or Paracetamol.
- Band-aids/Antiseptic lotion or cream, e.g. Tea Tree oil.
- Crepe Bandage.

ALCOHOL AND FOOD

Bring your own poison if you prefer something other than beer (the local brew is quite drinkable). Just watch the duty-free limit. A good variety of drinks can be purchased in Amman but not in the valley, so it’s best to bring it with you.

If you are a Vegemite freak or have any other eccentric passions in food bring them with you as it’s unlikely you will be able to buy them around Pella. If you smoke, bring your own as the local brands will send you even faster to your grave.

WHAT NOT TO BRING

DO NOT BRING ANY ILLEGAL SUBSTANCES, WEAPONS, BINOCULARS OR SENSITIVE READING MATERIAL. Sensitive material includes any publication that may be deemed offensive in Muslim countries.