

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR



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Picture editors of the tabloids always look forward to Ladies' Day at Ascot. They send photographers to the racecourse early in the day to capture the arrivals. By lunchtime, the desks of the newsroom are piled high with pictures of shoeless women and toppled cups of Pimm's. By four o'clock, Ladies' Day has acquired a new set of quotation marks and sharp captions: 'Not So Ladylike Now'.

Horse racing may not be the elite sport it once was but, as Emma Aston explains in this issue, it still takes 'kingly wealth' to pursue it as a career, with the horse alone likely to set you back £200,000. In antiquity, too, she reveals, horse racing was very expensive. Just look at the names and titles of the men Pindar honoured in his victory odes in the fifth century BC. But has it always cost a fortune to ride? Aston draws our attention on pages 6–9 to Thessaly, 'the "horsey" region par excellence in ancient Greece', where she discovers there were more than a few intriguing opportunities for riding enthusiasts.

Senior Curator Ian Jenkins has worked at the British Museum for 40 years, but might rather have become a stonemason, he tells Caroline Mackenzie on pages 27–32. Fortunately for us, a rolling stone and a copy of *The Telegraph* scuppered that plan and saw Jenkins installed in the museum's Department of Greece and Rome instead. Over the years, he has been involved in the display of the Parthenon marbles, the publication of a book that renders the sculptures readable by the blind and an imaginative reinvention of the museum's labels. In our revelatory

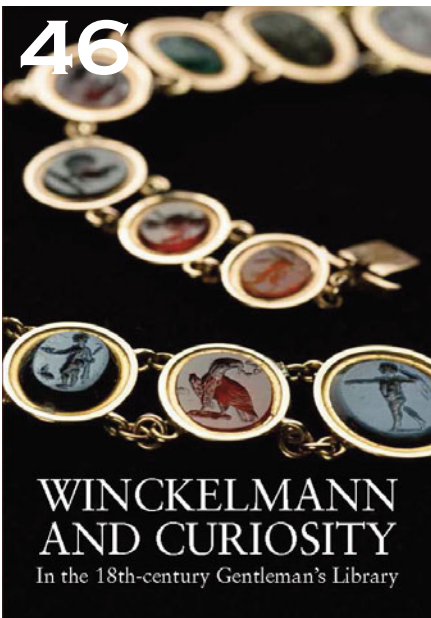
Q&A he explains why his favourite object in the entire museum is so beguiling, and why he will always have a soft spot for Socrates.

Also in this issue, award-winning poet A.E. Stallings describes how translating Hesiod gave her a new perspective on the problems Greece is facing today (pages 4–5); Paul Watkins (pages 33–36) documents the recovery of some of the extraordinary artworks looted from Cypriot museums and churches during the Turkish invasion of 1974; and Ian Ruffell attempts to construct some quirky ancient automata from textual descriptions (pages 17–20). Who knew that Greek robots were so elegant? Elsewhere, Rebecca Flemming explains what the Greeks really understood about reproduction, Giovanna di Martino uncovers a lost period in the transmission of Aeschylus' plays and Alice Dunn reflects on the difficulties encountered in the construction of Athens' new opera house.

Those booking holidays in Greece should look no further than Harry Mount's love letter to cruising in the Aegean and Diana Farr Louis' list of 11 places not to miss in Athens. Robert Tatam, meanwhile, enjoys a visit to Dodona, which is far easier to find today than it was in the 19th century. As holiday reading, Sofka Zinovieff recommends a love story set in Smyrna, and Paul Cartledge, Margaret Mountford and Michael Squire ponder some highly varied books on Greek culture.

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