

THE BRITISH INSTITUTE FOR LIBYAN  
AND NORTHERN AFRICAN STUDIES

# ANNUAL REVIEW

# 2025-26



**BILNAS**  
BRITISH INSTITUTE FOR LIBYAN  
& NORTHERN AFRICAN STUDIES

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## ABOUT THE BRITISH INSTITUTE FOR LIBYAN AND NORTHERN AFRICAN STUDIES

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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](mailto:gensec@bilnas.org)

## COUNCIL AND OFFICERS

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The Officers and Council on 31 March 2026 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 ANNA LEONE, BA, PhD
Honorary Treasurer:	OLIVER KIMBERLEY, MA, ACA
Assistant Director:	NICHOLE SHELDRIK, BA, MA, DPhil
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:	SALEM EL-MAIAR, MPhil, FRGS PROFESSOR HISHAM MATAR, FRSL BARBARA SPADARO, PhD ANITA RADINI, BA MA PhD JULIA NIKOLAUS, BA PhD NAJLAA EL-AGELI, AA Dep
General Secretary/Publications:	VICTORIA LEITCH, BA, MPhil, DPhil
Honorary Librarian:	DAWN WRIGHT, BA, DipLib

### Research Grants Committee

The Director
The Honorary Treasurer
The Assistant Director
The Head of Mission
PROFESSOR ALICE STEVENSON PhD, FSA (Committee Chair)
ISABELLA WELSBY-SJOSTROM, BA MLitt
GARETH SEARS, BA PhD
RACHEL IBRECK, BA PhD

### Publications Committee

The Director
The Honorary Treasurer
The Assistant Director
The General Secretary
Editor of Libyan Studies – Publications Manager
ISABELLA WELSBY-SJOSTROM, BA MLitt
GARETH SEARS, BA PhD
PROFESSOR SABINE PANZRAM, PhD

## PRESIDENT'S LETTER

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As I write this letter on a warm, early summer's day during a brief study trip to Morocco, I am delighted to reflect on the robust state of health of Northern African studies, invigorated by the input of UK-based scholars and by a new generation of North African scientists and researchers. Much of this is being facilitated by the addition of fresh infrastructural initiatives and government investment in equipment and people in the countries concerned but the vital role played by organisations such as BILNAS should not be underestimated in helping to train, develop and inspire students and researchers both inside and outside North Africa. This has been made possible through sustained funding of research, teaching and publishing initiatives, and of fruitful collaborative projects that have raised awareness in scholarship at an international level, giving increased momentum for positive change. A striking illustration of this burgeoning success is that of the recently re-opened INSAP (Institut Nationale des Sciences de l'Archéologie et du Patrimoine) building in Rabat. The €50 million refurbishment – including the installation of state-of-the-art analytical equipment and the creation of permanent research positions – is testimony to the long-term commitment by the government of Morocco to growing its heritage and tourism sectors. And, as is fulsomely acknowledged by these authorities, much of the impetus for this success is due to the collaboration of international scholars who contribute their expertise and support to joint projects, thanks to the existence of external funding.

Given our stated aims of encouraging scholarship and fostering relations in the region, we were very proud this year to announce the disbursement of grants by BILNAS to UK-based scholars amounting to a total of £40,000. The projects covered a diversity of subjects from the Roman to Colonial periods and in areas that stretch across Libya, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco. We hope very much to continue this funding in future and to encourage applications for projects including those from geographically adjacent areas in Northern Africa. But, to maintain this level of grant support and even to expand upon it, will inevitably require raising extra funds and we would like here to appeal to the membership for additional donations in the form of grant contributions and sponsorships to cover a wide gamut of subjects including history, archaeology, culture, languages, literature, art, institutions, customs and natural history of Northern Africa. Such funding support is vital in assisting scholars at different stages in their careers. This year, we are particularly grateful to ACE Travel and the Wyvern Research Institute for their generosity in supporting such collaborative funding schemes.

The Director in her letter has highlighted many of the splendid activities and achievements of BILNAS this year; none of these would have been possible without the hard work of our Council officers and – most of all – the participation of our members. To all, I say 'thank-you'.



## DIRECTOR'S LETTER

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This year, BILNAS has grown significantly, driven by new ideas, expanded activities, and the addition of many new international ordinary and Council members. We have hosted a range of high-profile seminars, both online and in person at the British Academy. Highlights include our summer event addressing the long-standing issue of the looting of Libyan antiquities, delivered by Morgan Belzic (The Louvre Museum), and the Annual Lecture by our former director, Corisande Fenwick, which focused on medieval Morocco.

Our grant scheme has been particularly successful, strengthened through new collaborations with ACE Cultural Tours and the Wyvern Research Institute, enabling us to broaden the scope of support available. Moreover, our grant portfolio has also expanded, supporting research across a wider spectrum of topics and disciplines. This year BILNAS sponsored research into: ancient Cyrenaican harbours; western stereotypes of Islam, violence and women; colonial deportations from Libya to Italy; Christological Epithets between Sinai and the Byzantine Empire; musical aesthetics in constructing senses of space in Tunisia; English captives in 17th-century North Africa; and decolonisation in Morocco.

In terms of publications, our series and journal have continued to grow, with high-profile monographs appearing later this year, in Open Access. We plan to increase our output and launch new publication initiatives to deepen engagement with both academic and public audiences: from a key reference title on Islamic and later pottery, to a pocket book on rock art and volumes connected to excavations in Tunisia and Libya.

Alongside this, we have made a concerted effort to rebuild and strengthen the BILNAS community, whose cohesion was affected during the Covid period. Increasing our visibility and engagement has been a key priority: we have expanded our presence on social media and launched the BILNAS Bulletin to communicate more directly with members, providing regular updates on our work, activities, and opportunities.

We have also actively engaged both our members and the wider public through events such as the screening of the documentary on Cyrenaica, featuring Dan Snow, alongside director and producer Bill Locke. These initiatives reflect our commitment to making Northern African heritage and research more accessible to broader audiences.

Looking ahead, we are planning a conference focused on ethical archives, alongside a new series of events dedicated to textiles, which will serve as our flagship theme for the next two years. Through this programme, we aim to explore textiles from multiple perspectives – historical, cultural, artistic, and methodological – bringing together scholars, practitioners, and the wider public. We hope to culminate this series with a major exhibition that will showcase the richness and diversity of textile traditions and research.

With your continued support and collaboration, we are confident that we can further strengthen and expand our work, raising greater awareness of the importance of North African heritage, art, languages, and history, and ensuring that these remain central to both academic and public conversations.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all our members for their continued support and commitment. I look forward to building even stronger connections in the years ahead.

## OBITUARY

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### Robert Morkot

Robert Morkot was the Director of BILNAS (at the time the Society for Libyan Studies) from 2013–16, having served on Council from 2006–2010. Born in October 1957, he passed away at his home in Devon, after a brave fight against cancer, on 21 October 2025. He was loved by everyone and the kindest of people, always with a witticism and a smile.

He got his first degree, in Ancient History, from University College London, with a specialisation in Egyptology. This was followed by a stint at the Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology, including working on the notebooks of Flinders Petrie. His doctoral thesis, also at UCL, examined the relationship between Kush and Egypt between 1500 and 700 BCE and the effects of Egyptian ‘colonial’ rule on the formation of the indigenous state. He was then a Fellow at the Oriental Institute at the University of Oxford, working on material from excavations in Sudan carried out in the 1920s and 30s. His final job was as senior lecturer in archaeology at the University of Exeter, focussing on ancient Egypt. In 2015 he became a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of London. He was also vice-president and then president of the Friends of Petrie Museum, based at UCL.

Amongst his publications was a contribution to the book *Centuries of Darkness* reassessing the chronology of the Old World. In Robert’s words: ‘For such a dull subject, it became something of a succès de scandale, even being lampooned in *The Times*. Despite the hostility of many Egyptologists, the solution suggested to the archaeological problems highlighted (revising the chronology of Egypt), has gradually moved in the authors’ favour: the debate continues.’ He was not afraid to speak his mind.

Robert was interested in the relationships between Egypt and its neighbours, hence the interest in Libya. Aside from his official involvement with BILNAS, he wrote a chapter in the BILNAS monograph *De Africa Romaque*, writing about ‘Before Greeks and Romans: Eastern Libya and the oases, a brief review of interconnections in the Eastern Sahara’. Other themes he explored included regime change, as well as artistic production in Libyan-Kushite-Saite Egypt.

For BILNAS, he navigated the Institute through a difficult period, when the funding from the British Academy was at risk, but with skill and good humour managed to keep things going, working to demonstrate the importance of not only the research but also the relationships that BILNAS had built with our North African colleagues.

He will be much missed.



## RESEARCH GRANTS

For the financial year 2025-26, BILNAS awarded two Postdoctoral Writing Fellowships, three Research Grants and two Celia Hensman grants for a total of £40,000 to UK-based scholars at different career stages for projects in Libya, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco. These projects demonstrated BILNAS' wide reach, across North Africa, covering the Roman to the Colonial periods. The reports and articles are an important part of BILNAS' dissemination and outreach programme, with journal articles, events and lectures linked to these projects.

### POSTDOCTORAL WRITING FELLOWSHIPS

**Flaminia Bartolini (University of Cambridge): £8000**

*The Imperial illusion: reading Italian colonialism through heritage (1914-1960)*

This publication analyses how the illusion of Italian colonial power in Northern Africa was fuelled in the Motherland through museum collections and archaeological findings. By examining the colonial heritage-making process of both the liberal and fascist periods, this book will show differences and similarities in the use of soft power to advance colonial ideological ends. By examining unpublished archival materials on colonial exhibitions that preceded the formation of the Colonial Museum in Rome, the museum itself, and what happened to its collections in the post-war period, this research has investigated the historical and political conditions under which the colonial project was 'sold' to the country. Thus this project also informs on how to deal with colonial legacies, their contemporary meanings, and how to use them in a reparatory effort.



*The Museo dell'Africa Italiana, opening of new rooms, August 1937 (© Archivio Storico Luce).*

**Catherine Phipps (University of Bristol): £8000**

*Sex, race and colonial power in North Africa: The French protectorate in Morocco, 1912-1956*

*Sex, Race and Power* re-evaluates the impact of French colonial power in Morocco through regulating the body, sexuality and emotions. It addresses the intimate experiences of individuals, both colonisers and colonised, as they navigated racialised and gendered colonial hierarchies. French colonial dominance in this period led to intense regulation of state-controlled prostitution that trapped unwilling Moroccan women inside the brothel system and illegally shipped them to military brothels in France, expelled from the country white women in relationships with Moroccan men and refused entry to couples in mixed marriages, banned films showing interracial romance, yet intentionally overlooked the exploitation of young Moroccan boys by European and North American men because of understandings of 'traditional' Moroccan sexuality. Through love letters, archival military records, medical journals and poetry, this project unravels the emotional complexities that underpinned imperialism and the exploitative treatment of Moroccan people at the hands of the French colonial state.



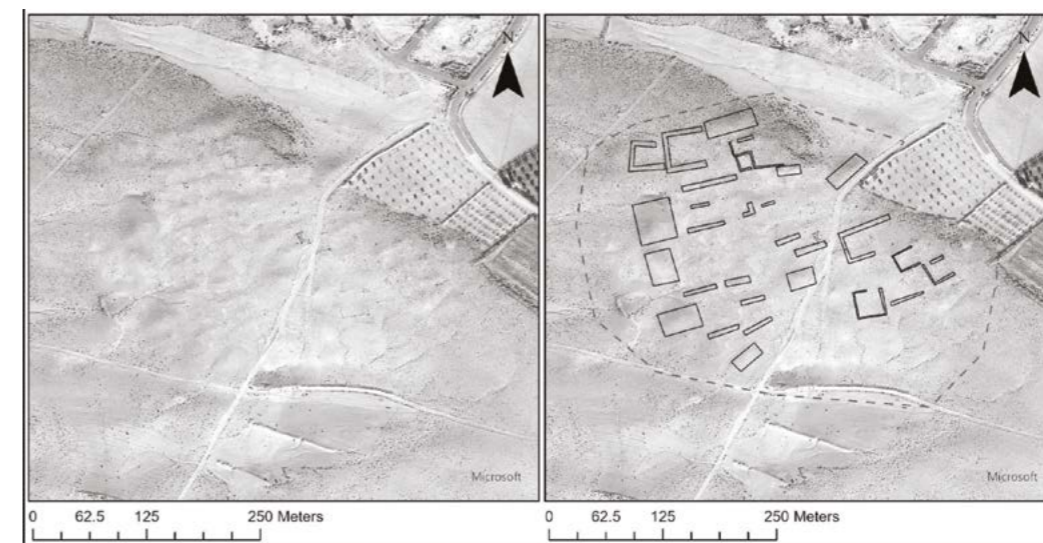
*Postcard from Casablanca.*

### SMALL AND LARGE RESEARCH GRANTS

**Nichole Sheldrick (University of Leicester): £7414**

*Agricultural Landscapes of the Nemencha, Algeria*

This interdisciplinary archaeological research project investigates the settlement, agricultural production, and environment of the Nemencha region of east, central Algeria (ancient southern Numidia) during the Roman period (1st-7th century CE). The introduction of large-scale olive cultivation for Mediterranean markets resulted



*Site AAA 51.43 as seen in satellite imagery (left) and with digitised plan of visible features (right).*

in a major socio-economic transformation of the region under the empire. Extensive investment into indigenous irrigation and cultivation technologies led to a substantial increase in settlement and population, organised around a series of imperial and private estates. This project will use advanced remote sensing methods to record, map, and analyse the ancient landscape in two pilot areas of the Nemencha region, which has not previously been subject to in-depth, modern archaeological investigation. Our intent is to reconstruct the political economy of the region and to gain new insights and depth of understanding into the scope and nature of the region's integration into Mediterranean economies.

**Julia Nikolaus (University of Ulster): £4869**  
*Al Haniyah Emergency Documentation*

The Greek and Roman harbour-town of Aptouchus, located near Al Haniyah, Libya, is at risk of destruction due to coastal erosion, urban expansion, and the construction of a military-funded holiday resort. Despite the site's extensive remains, archaeological fieldwork has been limited. The Cyrenaica Coastal Survey project assessed the site's condition in 2020, noting significant damage and the urgent need for action. This project digitally records the remaining settlement and harbour, in addition to targeted survey. The aims include comprehensive digital recording of terrestrial and submerged features, establishing site chronology and harbour layout. The project includes fieldwork, data evaluation, report writing, and publications.

*Example of a small part of the stratigraphy of the cliff face (left); Team members carrying out stratigraphic analysis of the cliff.*



**Coridande Fenwick (University College London): £9717**  
*Mobility, Identity and Community in Christian North Africa: the church and cemetery at Bulla Regia*

The BILNAS flagship project Mobility, Identity and Community in Christian North Africa is a collaborative Tunisian-British project which excavated a Late Antique church and cemetery at the site of Bulla Regia between 2016-2023. The project seeks to understand the history and development of a Christian cemetery and funerary basilica and its role within the urban landscape and to reconstruct the diet, health, lifestyle, origins and mobility of the late antique population. The grant will cover a robust radiocarbon dating programme and the completion of the ceramic analysis, which will test and refine the chronology of the church and cemetery established during the excavations. The results will be published in a monograph under contract with BILNAS which will transform our understanding of the development of Christianity at Bulla Regia, and how its inhabitants experienced the changes of late antiquity.

**CELIA HENSMAN AWARDS**

**Eliaou Balouka (Birkbeck, University of London): £1000**  
*Fieldwork: Djerba, Tunisia*

This PhD engages with Jewish-Muslim histories of minoritization in northern Africa and in the European urban diaspora outside and beyond the question of Israel-Palestine. It provides important scholarship by engaging with this long indigenous history and its rupture in modernity. It highlights the legacy of little-known histories of judeo-muslim symbiosis and minority diversity in North Africa. The project gives voice to populations whose histories have not been heard and analyses the traumatic processes of exile among traditionalist communities and its effects across multiple generations. The project will constitute a unique collection of oral archives spanning three generations, giving a voice to two minorities: the Jewish population and the Ibadite Muslims of Mzab, Algeria. In the primary site in Mzab, Ghardaia, there is no longer a Jewish community. This fieldwork offers the unique possibility to observe the coexistence between similar Jewish and Ibadite groups in Djerba, Tunisia, to observe the religious rites performed by both groups and analyse their proximate rituals in terms of theological co-influence. Djerba is also symbolically important in the narrative of the Ibadites and Jews of Mzab, so the interviews help to identify the use of the Djerba-Ghardaia 'origin story' within the two communities and how it sustained a bond/duality during their migration.



*Ghardaia Algeria, two young women from the Larbaa tribe.*

**Cori Ettiene (Durham University): £1000**  
*Fieldwork: Draa Valley, Morocco*

This project aims to determine the scope and establish a foundational framework for PhD research that investigates the role of domestic spaces and textile handicrafts in preserving Amazigh cultural identity in Morocco's Draa Valley. The project focuses on understanding how women sustain and adapt weaving traditions, identifying factors that influence their continuity or transformation amidst social, economic, and educational changes. The objectives include:  
 Building Relationships: Establish connections with artisans, community leaders, and cultural practitioners to gain insight into domestic weaving practices and their socio-cultural significance.  
 Assess Domestic Spaces as Sites of Production: Visit domestic spaces to understand their function in textile production and explore how settlement patterns and socio-economic shifts impact craft traditions.  
 Refine Research Methodology for 2026 Fieldwork: Use field insights to develop a community-informed research approach and establish partnerships with local scholars and organizations to support future research.



*Learning to weave in a women's cooperative in Tinghir.*

## BILNAS-AFFILIATED PROJECTS

### PARTNERSHIP FOR HERITAGE

The project, funded by the Cultural Protection Fund and carried out in collaboration with the Institut National du Patrimoine de Tunisie, the Department of Antiquities of Libya, Durham University, the University of the West of England, and the University of Dublin, ran from 2023 to 2025. It culminated in the opening of the newly established Tataouine Heritage Centre (Chenini, Tunisia), conceived as a cultural, historical, and economic hub for the region. The initiative included training 15 Libyan and Tunisian heritage professionals in documentation techniques (GPS, GIS, LiDAR, 3D modelling, condition assessment, conservation planning, and climate change impact evaluation), as well as 20 conservators, with a particular focus on the conservation of vernacular heritage. This included interventions on the traditional Qasr Zanata and the historic building now housing the Centre. The project also addressed intangible heritage, examining its relationship with traditional crafts and its role in sustaining local cultural practices and livelihoods. The aim of the project was to develop a sustainable and effective management system to safeguard the region's unique tangible and intangible heritage, while also promoting research and supporting local economic development in Tataouine.



Tataouine and documentation training.



### AT THE EDGE OF THE MOUNTAIN

Funded by ALIPH (2022-2026) and carried out in collaboration with Tarhuna University, the Department of Antiquities, Durham University, and the University of the West of England, the project aims to develop a sustainable management strategy for the heritage of the Nafusa region in Libya, while assessing the impacts of conflict and climate change. The project has included training in GPS, GIS, LiDAR, 3D modelling, condition assessment, conservation planning, and climate change impact evaluation. It also seeks to establish a comprehensive conservation strategy for the region,

including the documentation of buildings, the conservation of traditional architecture (the 9th century mosque) in Kabaw, and the creation of a new heritage centre to support research, community engagement, and local development.

### POST-DISASTER RECOVERY OF THE REMAINS OF THE ANCIENT EXTRAMURAL SANCTUARY OF DEMETER AND PERSEPHONE (funded by US Ambassador Funds for Cultural Heritage, 2026-2028)

The project, led by Prof Susan Kane, is a collaboration between the Department of Antiquities of Libya, Durham University, and Oberlin College. It aims to document and restore the extramural sanctuary at Cyrene, which was severely damaged following Storm Daniel.



Above: Part of the work on condition assessment to protect the heritage of the Nafusa region.

Left: The extramural sanctuary at Cyrene.

Below: The ribat at Iunca and archaeologists at work.

### RESEARCH IN THE RIBAT OF IUNCA (Tunisia – funded by Barakhat Trust and Leverhulme Trust)

Within the framework of the Leverhulme-funded project *Reassessing the Military Strategy in Byzantine North Africa*, carried out in collaboration between the Institut National du Patrimoine de Tunisie and Durham University, this project focuses on the investigation of the ribat at Iunca, located on the coast approximately 20 km south of Sfax. It aims to address key historical questions, including whether a Byzantine fort existed on the site prior to the construction of the ribat, and to determine the date of its foundation and its function over time. The project combines archaeological excavation with the conservation of the monument.





#### AL HANIYAH (APTOUCHUS), EASTERN LIBYA

In 2025, BILNAS-supported fieldwork was carried out at Al Haniyah by the Maritime Archaeology of the Middle East and North Africa (MarEA) project. Al Haniyah (ancient Aptouchus) is an ancient harbour settlement in eastern Libya occupied from at least the 6th century BCE through to Late Antiquity. The site faces serious threats from coastal erosion, sand mining, modern development, and agricultural expansion. The primary aim of the fieldwork was therefore to create a comprehensive record of the surviving archaeology before further loss occurs. On land, the team undertook detailed photography, drone survey, 3D modelling of standing structures and the eroding cliff face, and accurate DGPS mapping of walls and buildings across the site. Significant finds included a large multi-phase building within the modern resort development, evidence of quarrying and industrial installations, and architectural fragments including columns and mosaic flooring. A key focus was the exposed cliff face, where erosion has revealed stratified archaeological deposits containing seventy-six recorded walls along a 120-metre stretch, with pottery dating occupation from the 5th–6th centuries BCE to the 6th century CE. Underwater survey of the main harbour bay and neighbouring areas produced stone anchors, pottery, fishing equipment, and large worked-stone blocks, with evidence for mooring areas and a breakwater confirming the presence of formal harbour infrastructure. Together, these results have substantially advanced our understanding of Al Haniyah’s development as a harbour settlement and provide an essential baseline record to inform future research, conservation planning, and engagement with local communities and developers.

#### ENDANGERED ARCHAEOLOGY IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA (EAMENA) PROJECT

The EAMENA project is a multi-disciplinary project whose aim is to document heritage across the Middle East and North Africa. Established in 2015, the project is a collaboration between the Universities of Oxford, Leicester, and Durham and is generously funded by the philanthropic organisation Arcadia. The aims of the project are to create a baseline inventory and online database of archaeological sites and heritage across the region, to document their condition, and record any disturbances and threats that they face. The project uses a multi-disciplinary methodology including fieldwork, archival research, and digitisation, but a primary emphasis of the project is on the use, development, and promotion of open-access satellite imagery remote sensing methods and workflows for rapid documentation and assessment. Finally, a main emphasis of the EAMENA project is on the dissemination of knowledge and skills to partners and stakeholders in the region and beyond. This aspect of the project’s work has received support from the British Council’s Cultural Protection Fund which has funded over 30 training workshops across the region since 2017, the results of which have been published in several articles in *Libyan Studies*. EAMENA’s work in North Africa has often benefited from collaboration with and expertise from BILNAS and frequently uses material housed in the BILNAS Archive for research.



Members of  
the Centre for  
Endangered  
Archaeology and  
Heritage working  
in the BILNAS  
Archive (Photo:  
University of  
Leicester)

#### CENTRE FOR ENDANGERED ARCHAEOLOGY AND HERITAGE (UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER)

The Centre for Endangered Archaeology and Heritage (CEAH) is a research centre based at the University of Leicester whose aim is to support primary research on archaeology and heritage, and projects focussed on impact and capacity building. The Centre’s work addresses multiple threats to archaeology and heritage: conflict, looting, encroachment, development, lack of planning and lack of law enforcement, and climate change. All these have seen a dramatic increase in scale and severity of threats to heritage in recent decades across many countries. Building capacity and raising awareness on these issues through academic research and public events is an important aim of the Centre. Heritage is critical for creating and contributing to communities’ sense of place, belonging and identity, so enhancing protection is an important means of contributing to stable and more cohesive communities. Heritage is also an important economic driver, especially through global tourism, so heritage protection often has economic value to communities as well. The BILNAS Archive, which is also based at the University of Leicester, has a strong affiliation with CEAH and benefits from its support and networking events.

## BULLA REGIA

This Tunisian-British 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 bio-archaeological analyses. We have now completed the excavations of a newly discovered church and cemetery and are in the process of writing up the results into a monograph which will be published by BILNAS. In the past year, we have made considerable progress on the scientific analysis of the finds and human bone from the church and cemetery and were very happy to receive a grant from BILNAS for the 2025–2026 year to support a radiocarbon dating programme and completion of the ceramic work. Working with colleagues from the Deutsche Archäologisches Institut-Berlin, we have also been analysing materials (ceramics, glass and metal) from the neighbouring site of Chimtou (ancient Simitthus) in the Wolfson Archaeological Laboratories at UCL and published this year the first paper on medieval glazed ceramics in the Medjerda Valley as well as a major article on the neglected, but important, late antique African Painted Wares which will appear in the next volume of *Libyan Studies*.

## OASIS CIVILISATION PROJECT

Investigating the Saharan oases in the Wadi Draa, Morocco, the AHRC-funded Oasis Civilisation Project is now reaching its end. In 2024 the project completed excavation at a series of Iron Age and Medieval sites near the westward turn of the Draa towards the Atlantic (effectively at the limits of the oasis development). Work is progressing on analysis of excavated materials and on the final production of a series of volumes that will establish a new benchmark of knowledge for this part of the western Sahara.



## EVENTS

### *Nichole Sheldrick*

Over the past year, BILNAS has had a packed schedule of online and in-person events, including lectures, networking events, and film screenings, covering a rich variety of topics across the humanities and social sciences. Our online lectures featured topics ranging from new fossil discoveries in Morocco to street art in Tunisia. We co-hosted a networking event with the Libyan British Business Council (LBBC) and the screening of a new documentary on Libya's heritage. Our Annual Lecture was held in November 2025 at the British Academy, where we were delighted to have former BILNAS Director, Professor Corisande Fenwick, deliver a lecture on her work on Medieval Morocco. These BILNAS events, both in-person and online, offer important opportunities to engage with our members and provide occasions for people with an interest in Libya and Northern Africa to come together to learn and make new connections. They also enable us to showcase the latest, cutting-edge research supported that is being supported by BILNAS, as well as giving a platform to the work of other scholars working in Northern Africa.

15 April 2025 (Online)

### **Greeks and Libyans in Ancient Cyrenaica: Cooperation and Conflict**

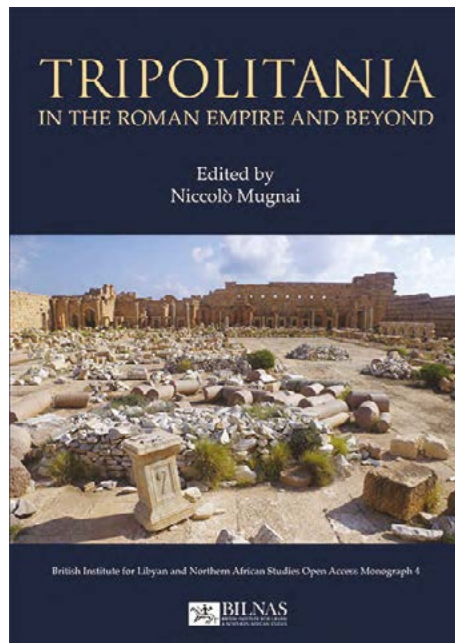
*Kristian Göransson (University of Gothenburg)*

[youtube.com/watch?v=pvLI84MYEko&feature=youtu.be](https://youtube.com/watch?v=pvLI84MYEko&feature=youtu.be)

This lecture presented the history of Greeks living in the colonies in Cyrenaica from the 7th century BC onwards who came into close contact with their Libyan neighbours. These interactions were sometimes but not always peaceful, and this lecture explored the relationship between the Greeks and the Libyans in the Archaic and Classical periods.



*A view of Cyrene  
(Photo: Kristian Göransson)*



Above: Cover of the book, Tripolitania in the Roman Empire and Beyond.

Right: Cyrenaican funerary sculpture (M. Belzic).



**12 June 2025 (British Academy, London)**  
**From Archaeology to Art Market, Transforming Provenance Research: Ten Years of Unveiling Cyrenaican Funerary Sculptures**  
**Morgan Belzic (Institut National d’Histoire de l’Art)**

In this lecture, Morgan Belzic presented his work with the French archaeological mission in Libya – a large study of Cyrenaican funerary sculptures, supported by the Libyan Department of Antiquities, the Italian archaeological missions, and BILNAS. Between 600 BC and AD 400, the inhabitants of Cyrenaica ordered marble and limestone sculptures to decorate their tombs and pray for their dead. Dr Belzic analysed the styles and practices of local sculptors, shedding light on Greco-Libyan culture, religion and society. He also focused on the recent development of looting and illicit trafficking of antiquities, and efforts to unveil criminal networks active in destroying cultural heritage. A lively discussion was followed by a drinks reception with delicious Libyan food provided by Eman Fazzani.

**13 May 2025 (Online)**  
**Tripolitania in the Roman Empire and Beyond: Current Work and New Directions**  
**Round Table Event to discuss the new BILNAS publication ‘Tripolitania in the Roman Empire and Beyond’, edited by Niccolò Mugnai**  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=10hM26kxjrQ>

To celebrate the recent publication of ‘Tripolitania in the Roman Empire and Beyond’ (published by BILNAS – available as paperback and Open Access eBook), this online roundtable brings together a group of scholars who discuss their contributions to this volume, including Niccolò Mugnai (University of Tübingen), Sergio Aiosa (University of Palermo), Florian Schimmer (Leibniz-Zentrum für Archäologie), and Isabella Welsby Sjöström (Independent). Particular attention is focused on new directions and potential future developments of research, highlighting the richness of Tripolitania’s archaeological and cultural heritage.

**25 September 2025 (Online)**  
**Street art and civil society in post-2011 Tunisia: aesthetics, civic engagement and organisational challenges**  
**Anwar Tlili (King’s College London)**  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BvYF8\\_Qxh-Y](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BvYF8_Qxh-Y)

This presentation explored post-2011 historical developments in the street art scene in Tunisia, from its phenomenal expansion in the wake of the 2011 uprising to its significant contraction under the Islamist government in the mid-2010s, and then its renewed momentum in the post-Covid era. Based on observations and accounts gathered from some key players in the street art scene in Tunisia made possible through a BILNAS Grant, Dr Tlili offered an overview and some reflections on the current street art scene in Tunisia, the place and role of street art in civil society and the public space, its modes of artistic practice, its core values and concerns, its organisational settings and governance, as well as the challenges facing it.



Street art scene, Tunisia.

**23 October 2025 (Online)**  
**Crumbling History – The Fading Material Culture of the Tataouine Region (Tunisia) and the Jebel Nafusa (Libya)**  
**Anna Leone (Durham University)**  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=umsnjWQQuis>

In this lecture, BILNAS Director Anna Leone presented an engaging and visually stunning resumé of her project in the Tataouine and Jebel Nafusa regions, a unified cultural region on the edge of the pre-desert plateau between southern Tunisia and Tripolitania (Libya). In the past fifth years, political and environmental upheavals have led to the depopulation of these regions, leaving the remarkable built heritage in a vulnerable state. The Partnership for Heritage project, funded by the British Council’s Cultural Protection Fund, brought together the expertise and resources of the Universities of Durham, Bristol, and Dublin, the Azzaytuna University in Tarhuna, and the Tunisian Institut National du Patrimoine. Together they have developed multi-scale documentation strategies for historic architecture, as well as essential, long-term, sustainable conservation interventions, alongside ethnographic research into traditional weaving techniques.



The stunning landscape of the pre-desert plateau

Florence Baker depicted on a camel in the mid-19th century CE



4 November 2025 (Online)

[Anne Marie Williamson \(BILNAS, University of Leicester\)](#)  
and [Andrew Goudie \(University of Oxford\)](#)

<https://www.ees.ac.uk/whats-on/events/women-explorers-in-north-africa.html>

BILNAS were excited to participate in the first joint lecture with the Egypt Exploration Society (EES). In this lecture, BILNAS Archivist Anne Marie Williamson and Andrew Goudie introduced the audience to nine remarkable women who refused to be confined by society's expectations, instead setting their sights on North Africa's vast deserts and hidden histories. These pioneers – archaeologists, anthropologists, and adventurers – not only braved remote lands but also laid the foundations for modern understanding of North Africa's ancient cultures, leaving behind records of enduring discovery and courage. This talk unveiled the extraordinary scope of their adventures and resilience, and also showcased how institutions like BILNAS are actively making critical historical resources like the BILNAS Archive relevant and accessible to both the academic community and the wider public.

27 November 2025 (British Academy, London)

[BILNAS Annual Lecture: The Making of Medieval Morocco: state-building and everyday life on the edge of empire](#)  
[Corisande Fenwick \(University College London\)](#)

Our 2025 Annual Lecture was delivered by former BILNAS Director, Corisande Fenwick, who presented her recent research on Medieval Morocco. The Muslim conquests in the 7th century transformed the everyday lives of communities in North Africa in profound ways. Some of these changes are well known, others less so: the appearance of mosques and palaces; the introduction of new crops, agricultural practices and technological innovations in ceramic, glass, metalwork; and the integration of North Africa into a complex trading network that connected the immense Caliphate with an even vaster region from China to the Atlantic. At the same time, though cultural change was slow and regionally varied, a distinctly 'Islamic cultural package' emerged. However, much of what we know about this transformative period

continues to reflect the experience of rulers and elites, rather than the bulk of the population. Recent archaeological discoveries in Morocco – the first region to break away from the caliphate – offer a new perspective on this transformative period. The lecture brought together a wealth of new archaeological and scientific evidence from cities and the countryside – from coins, pottery, glass to the movement of raw materials, and exotic goods – to explore how and why rival Islamic states emerged in this region, and how people lived, worked, and traded on the far western frontier of the Caliphate. A lively discussion was followed by drinks on the Wohl Gallery.



Below: Anna Leone presenting at the BILNAS-LBBC event.

1 December 2025 (British Academy, London)

[Libya-UK Reception: Celebrating Collaboration in Business, Culture & Heritage](#)

BILNAS were delighted to co-host this event with the Libyan British Business Council (LBBC) which brought together BILNAS representatives and Libyan business and community leaders. The aim of the event was to showcase Libyan heritage while strengthening bilateral cultural and economic ties. BILNAS Director Anna Leon presented the work of BILNAS, highlighting important research projects in Libya and Tunisia, and also stressing the need for more financial aid to help protect cultural heritage and enable research and outreach activities. LBBC's president, former UK Ambassador to Libya Peter Millett chaired a fascinating and entertaining chat with another previous Ambassador to Libya, Martin Longden, who reflected on his time in Libya, recounting stories of his travels, his favourite dishes, and his great fondness for the country and its people. The drinks reception provided an opportunity for people to network and share their own experiences of Libya and North Africa.



2–4 December 2025 (Tunis)  
**Pottery Production and Circulation in Northern Africa from Late Antiquity to the Post-Medieval Period**  
*Conference co-sponsored by BILNAS*

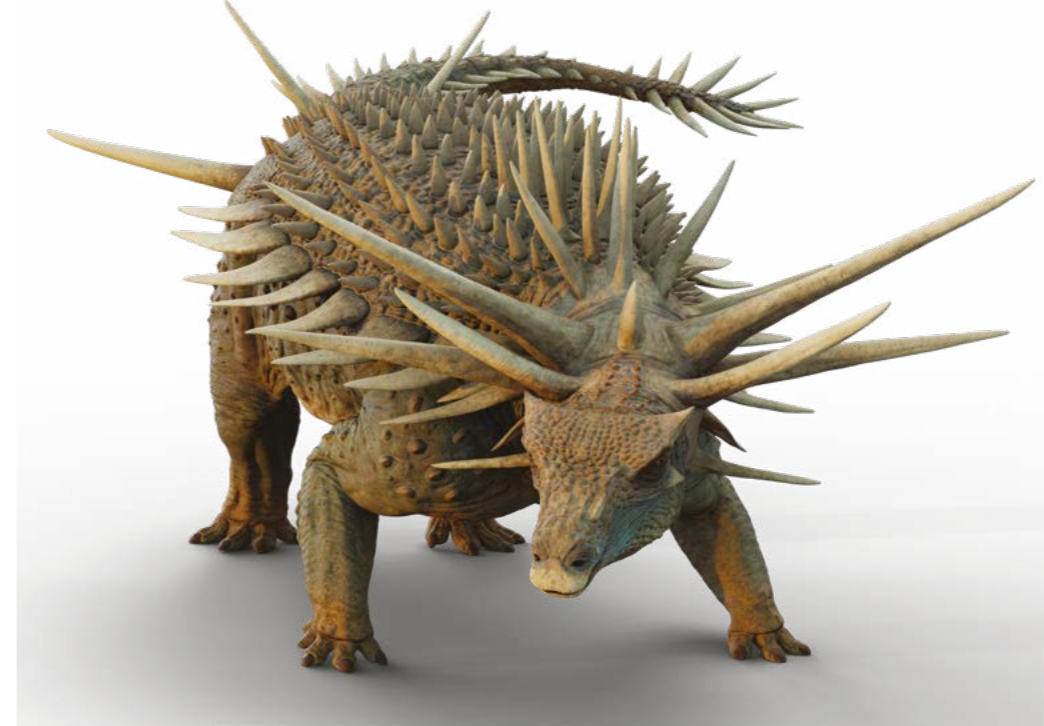
In December 2025, BILNAS co-sponsored this ground-breaking conference reassessing the role of North African ceramic production in the broader context of Mediterranean archaeology between the 6th and 18th centuries. Northern Africa – the southern Mediterranean coast from Morocco to Egypt – has long played a pivotal role in the cultural and economic dynamics of the Mediterranean. Pottery, as both a chronological indicator and historical sources, has been central to our understanding of these transformations, particularly during Late Antiquity, when central North Africa was a major hub for the production and export of ceramics, notably African Red Slip (ARS) ware and amphorae. This conference, organised by Viva Sacco (UCL), Chokri Touihri (INP, Tunisia), and Corisande Fenwick (UCL) brought together researchers to reassess and enrich our understanding of North African pottery production, which has been underrepresented in recent studies. The third thematic conference of the Association Internationale pour l'Étude des Céramiques Médiévales et Modernes en Méditerranée, participants aimed to identify gaps in current knowledge of this long and transformative period, foster collaboration, and define priorities for future research.

*The participants of the conference in Tunis.*



13 January 2026 (Online)  
**Bizarre dinosaurs from the Middle Jurassic of Morocco: implications for armoured dinosaur evolution**  
*Susannah Maidment (Natural History Museum)*  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YleuITbBlyg>

The Middle Jurassic is a critical time in the evolution of the dinosaurs because it witnessed the radiation of many groups, giving rise to a diversity of familiar forms such as the plated stegosaurs and the long-necked sauropods. However, this diversification is shrouded in mystery because the Middle Jurassic is poorly sampled, mainly due to a paucity of terrestrial Middle Jurassic rocks across North America and Europe. In 2017 and 2018 the Natural History Museum acquired a couple of enig-



*An artist's impression of the Spicomellus.*

matic specimens, purportedly from the Middle Jurassic of Morocco. Working with colleagues at the University in Fes, researchers traced the specimens to the El Mers III Formation, a suite of terrestrial rocks of Middle Jurassic age that were entirely unexplored by vertebrate palaeontologists. The Natural History Museum specimens were described as the first stegosaur from North Africa, and the world's oldest ankylosaur and first ever discovered in Africa.

Through the support of a BILNAS Flagship Grant, Maidment's subsequent work has revealed that the El Mers III Formation is incredibly fossiliferous and it may represent the best-preserved Middle Jurassic terrestrial ecosystem on Earth. In 2023, her team excavated a new partial skeleton of the ankylosaur, which demonstrates it had a morphology unlike any animal living or extinct, and challenging the prevailing understanding of the evolution of armour in these dinosaurs. Working in Morocco, however, is not without challenges. There are no natural history museums in which to reposit our finds, no prep labs, and no vertebrate palaeontologists working in the country, while a thriving commercial trade results in illegal excavations at our sites. Working with colleagues, they established a university collection, have trained students in fossil preparation, and are now working with them to establish protections for the fossils in the region.

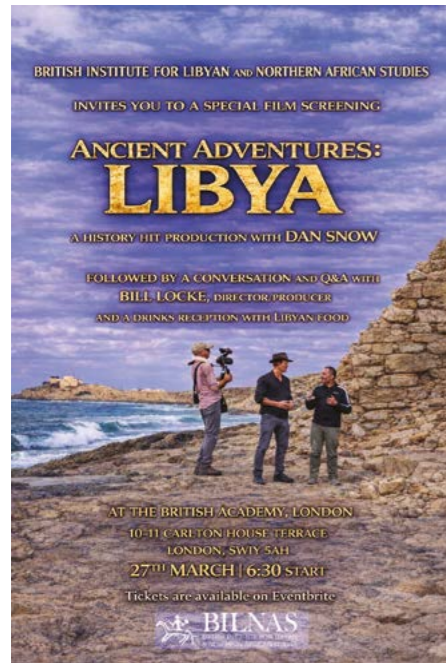
19 February 2026 (Online)  
**Troubling Memories and Forgotten Futures: A Jewish Childhood in the Muslim Mediterranean (2023)**  
*Rebekah Vince (Queen Mary University of London)*

In dialogue with Moroccan writer Abdelkebir Khatibi, Jacques Derrida speaks of himself as 'Franco-Maghrebian', as an Algeria-born, French-speaking Jew with precarious French citizenship, revealing a 'trouble d'identité'. In this lecture, supported by a BILNAS Flagship Grant, Rebekah Vince extends the notion of troubled identity to troubled memories as explored in *A Jewish Childhood in the Muslim Mediterranean* (2023),



*Front cover of A Jewish Childhood in the Muslim Mediterranean.*

a collection – or *recollection* – of Jewish memories stretching across North Africa and the Middle East. Edited by Franco-Algerian writer Leïla Sebbar, this anthology of autobiographical essays, originally published in French (2012), includes narrative accounts of pre-exilic Jewish memories spanning Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Lebanon, and Turkey. These micro-autobiographies trouble colonial ideologies, fixed identities, and competing nationalisms. Drawing from Jewish studies, postcolonial studies, and memory studies, the lecture examined the ways in which French-speaking Jews in Muslim-majority countries across the Mediterranean negotiated the ‘triple coexistence’ of Jewishness, Arabness, and Frenchness. It concluded on a tentative and fragile note of hope, gesturing towards a forgotten future of coexistence.



The poster for the event showing Dan Snow and producer Bill Locke interviewing Ahmad Emrage.

**27 March 2026 (British Academy, London)**  
**Film Screening: Bringing Libya's Past to the Screen – Ancient Adventures: Libya**  
*Bill Locke (History Hit)*

At the end of March, BILNAS welcomed film producer Bill Locke to speak about and screen the new History Hit documentary film ‘Ancient Adventures: Libya’, presented by Dan Snow. The film brings Cyrenaica’s rich and varied archaeological landscapes to the screen, from monumental Classical cities to fragile and threatened coastal settlements. The film was produced through a major international collaboration between History Hit, MarEA (Maritime Endangered Archaeology, Ulster University), the World Monuments Fund, the University of Benghazi, and the British Council’s Cultural Protection Fund.

Alongside the celebrated centres of Cyrene and Apollonia, the film also foregrounds lesser-known sites that are essential for understanding everyday life, long-term coastal occupation, and human engagement with dynamic maritime environments. The film highlights the site of Al Haniyah, a modest but archaeologically significant coastal settlement currently under severe threat from erosion and modern development. Research at the site is being undertaken by BILNAS Council Member Julia Nikolaus, and BILNAS funding directly supported the archaeological work at the site featured in the film. This screening reflected not only an engaging documentary project, but also BILNAS’s active role in supporting research, documentation, and the responsible public communication of Libya’s endangered heritage.



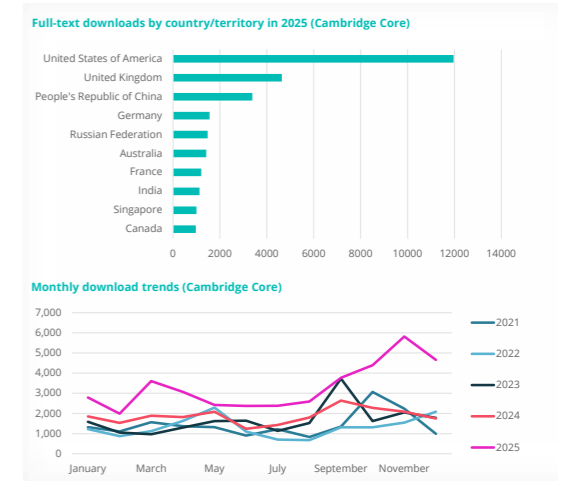
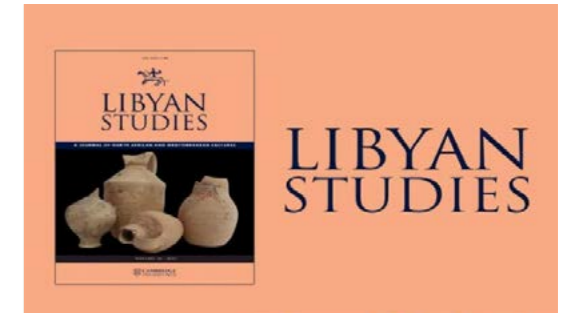
## PUBLICATIONS 2025–26

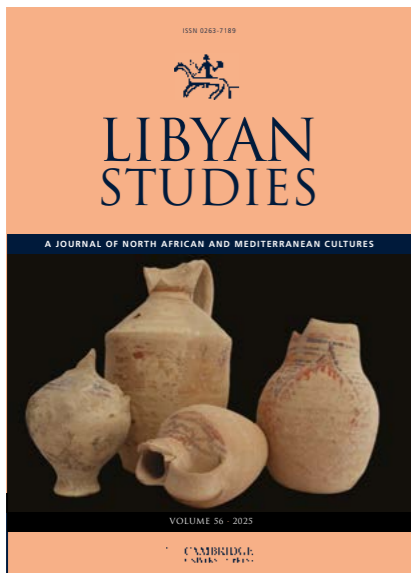
### LIBYAN STUDIES JOURNAL

The journal, produced in partnership with Cambridge University Press is edited by Dr Victoria Leitch. The 2025 issue was the first online only issue. There are cost and environmental advantages, and this follows CUP’s sustainability policy where they have reduced print journals by 70%. They continue also to focus on Open Access and the dissemination of high quality research. In addition to transformative agreements, their equitable initiatives allow authors from low and middle income countries to benefit from waivers or discounts on the article processing costs. This was our highest figure yet for Open Access, with 60% of the journal contributions. Our turnaround times also remain healthy, meaning that we can publish articles online on average 5–6 months after first submission, though we are looking at ways of improving this. This year we have also been developing new publicity and marketing strategies with CUP, such as the ‘collections’ initiative, grouping themed articles together to promote the core subject areas of the journal on social media to encourage new members to join and to widen our research network.

Our 56th issue contained a special section organised by Caroline Barron. The first five articles were on inscriptions of Libya: epigraphic culture in Greek, Roman and Punic Libya. François Chevrollier kicks off with an overview of Latin inscriptions of Cyrenaica, including the linguistic landscape; followed by Catherine Dobias-Lalou, who looks at personal names, also in ancient Cyrenaica, focusing on the evidence for Libyan and Jewish names; and Muna Abdelhamed uses epigraphic evidence to investigate the role of cereal cultivation and wheat supply in Hellenistic period, exported from Cyrene to the Greek cities. Moving to Sirt Caroline Barron re-interprets a late-antique catacombe; and the section finishes with Robert Kerr’s assessment of a Punic tribunate at the Bir ed-Dreder necropolis and the survival in the 4th century AD of the Punic language.

The main articles start with the story of a bronze hoard found off the coast of Tunisia, and reported on by Hakon Roland and Paolo Visona, with a descriptive catalogue. Pablo Rodriguez-Valdés takes us to the Cyrenaican sancturay of Martuba to discuss the focus of divine worship there and the mix of cultural traditions. Nicolas Lamare’s study reinterprets models of the Christian city in the late antique period, through the practices of the city inhabitants. In the same period, painted pottery production and distribution in North Africa is investigated by the team from UCL and the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut Berlin – as featured on the cover of the issue. Next, members of the Endangered Archaeology in the Middle East and North Africa project, working with the Department of Antiquities Libya, use remote sensing as a way of monitoring heritage and landscape change. This is followed up with a more detailed study, using Machine Learning Automated Change Detection methods in the Lefakat region of Libya to assess the sites. A new fieldwork project in Acholla, featured in the last bulletin,





reports the findings of its first season – watch out for more installments as the work continues! In a different but very important subject, Ammar Ammar investigates modern issues with water management.

The book reviews section encompasses many topics and regions, starting with Matthew McCarty’s reassessment of the role played by religion in shaping North Africa under the Roman Empire (review by David Mattingly). The recent archaeological studies by Nabil Kallala on Ruspina-Monastir (Tunisia) and by Stefano Camporeale, Rossella Pansini, Emanuele Papi and their colleagues on Sala-Chellah (Morocco) are thoroughly reviewed by Mohamed-Arbi Nsiri and Antonio Ibbá respectively. Reviews of publications on Cyrenaica feature prominently in this year’s issue. Luca Cherstich’s survey of the Southern Necropolis of Cyrene (review by Tim Penn); Michele Asolati’s second edition of the corpus of Greek and Roman Cyrenaican coinage (review by Antonino Crisà); Eleonora Gasparini’s analysis of domestic architecture at Cyrene and Ptolemais (review by Susan Walker); and Jane Chick’s examination of the sixth-century Large Mosaic Pavement at Qasr el-Lebia (review by Ine Jacobs). Hafed Abdouli’s study on the transition from Roman Tripolitania to Islamic Tripoli is the subject of the final review by Inas Bibtana.

### BOOKS

We have several books lined up for publication, at different stages but budget constraints are making it increasingly difficult to regularly publish books, as we are committed to making our monographs Open Access, which increased the costs. We are seeking outside funding to enable our publishing programme to continue. This is especially essential for large excavation volumes that require a lot of technical preparation on top of the book editing and production costs.

### OPEN ACCESS

BILNAS is working to a position where we can claim to be fully Open Access with our monograph publications. Funding Open Access books remains a challenge but we are committed to this goal and making our research publications accessible to all.

*Libyan Studies*, published with Cambridge University Press, has been a hybrid Open Access journal since 2016. This mix of subscribers only plus Open Access articles has been a successful model so far, and this year we published 60% of our articles Open Access.

### BILNAS BULLETIN

August 2025 saw the launch of our first Bulletin. This new magazine has been developed to bring our members news about past and future events, as well as informing them about fieldwork activities in progress. Members are encouraged to participate by sending in letters and stories.

*Don't forget that our Open Access books are available not only on the BILNAS website, but also on high-profile sites such as JSTOR, OAPEN, BiblioLabs, MUSEOpen, Unglue.it.*



## LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES

### THE BILNAS LIBRARY AT SOAS

*Dawn Wright (Honorary Librarian)*

The BILNAS Library is held within the Africa Collection at the Library of the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London.

As part of the move the BILNAS Library has also relocated stacks and can now be found at stack 69 on Level D. A total of twelve new titles have been added to the BILNAS library’s collection over the past year.

BILNAS members are entitled to a **Letter of Introduction** which enables them to consult the Institute’s holdings and to have full borrowing rights. Further details can be found at: <https://www.bilnas.org/resources/library/>

You can search the SOAS library catalogue (which also lists the holdings of the BILNAS Library) at: <https://soas.on.worldcat.org/discovery>

The BILNAS collection at SOAS is regularly used by researchers, such as Ahmet Tekin, a research fellow within the BA-funded joint BIRI project *Ottoman Mobilities and Interactions*.

### THE BILNAS ARCHIVE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER

*Valeria Vitale (Honorary Collections Officer), Anne-Marie Williamson (BILNAS archivist)*

The BILNAS Archive holds a unique and important collection of documents, photographs, maps, and plans created from the Second World War onwards. This exceptional collection features original work by some of the most influential British archaeologists of the 20th century, including Kathleen Kenyon, John Ward-Perkins, Olwen Brogan, David Smith, Graeme Barker, Barri Jones, Charles Daniels, John Lloyd, John Dore and David Mattingly and reflects a formative period in archaeological innovation. These documents, many still unpublished, record over 70 years of British-led and British-supported archaeological work across Libya and other parts of North Africa, with a wide remit from Prehistoric, Iron Age, Greek, Hellenistic, Roman and Medieval sites.

Today, access to many of these heritage sites is restricted due to political instability, and they are increasingly threatened by issues such as looting, urban development, and climate change. In some cases, these documents, photos, maps, and plans are the only remaining documentation of sites that are now at risk or already lost. The BILNAS Archive provides invaluable historical and ethnographic data, recording Libya’s history across the 20th and 21st centuries – not only through archaeological mission reports but also through the accounts, photographs, and documents of a wide variety of people, including geographers, botanists, journalists, and other travellers to the region.

The ongoing maintenance of our physical archive is essential for BILNAS to safeguard this remarkable resource, and to enable researchers, scholars, educators and Libyan communities to access and use it. Ensuring that our Archive remains accessible and in good condition, also enables and supports future initiatives including



*The BILNAS library stack at SOAS, London.*

research proposals, student projects, exhibitions, bringing Libyan and Northern African cultural heritage to wider local, regional and global audiences.

### UPDATES ON THE DIGITISATION OF BILNAS ARCHIVES – PROGRESS AND MILESTONES

BILNAS continues working on the digitisation of its archive. This effort has enhanced access to our resources, allowing more researchers to discover and utilise them. The digitisation process is carried out within an academic framework, accompanied by critical reflections on inclusion, access, contextualisation, and enrichment. We are delighted to report that the digitisation of the BILNAS collections is progressing according to our schedule, and that the number of our resources openly accessible on the Archaeology Data Service (ADS) platform keeps growing. This year we focused on the following collections:

#### Completed

**Digital Archive from Ghirza: A Libyan Settlement in the Roman Period, 1953–1984:** this collection contains correspondence, field notes, drawings, publication drafts, reports, maps, plans and photographic material relating to David J. Smith and Olwen Brogan’s work at the Romano-Libyan settlement of Ghirza, located 150 miles south-east of Tripoli, Libya, and approximately 80 miles inland from the Gulf of Sidra. The digitised documents can be now consulted online, on the ADS repository. <https://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archives/collections/view/1008028/metadata.cfm>

**Digital Archive from Ajdabiya and Sidi Khrebish, Benghazi, 1971–1975:** to David Whitehouse’s three seasons directing excavations at the early Islamic site of Ajdabiya and to Donald Bailey’s work on lamps at Sidi Khrebish. The digitisation process for this collection is complete, and it will soon be available on the ADS platform.

#### In progress

**Digital Archive from Farming the desert: the UNESCO Libyan Valleys Archaeological Survey:** this collection relates to the UNESCO Libyan Valleys Survey expedition, and the fieldwork conducted between 1979 and 1989 in Tripolitania to investigate the long-term relationships between settlement, land use and environment on the desert margins. The expedition was led by Barri Jones, Graeme Barker and David Gilbertson. The collection contains the field notes for the project, maps, plans, project reports, and documents relating to preparations for expeditions.

#### Planned

**Martyn and Audrey Webb Papers:** This small collection comprises photographs, maps, plans, notebooks relating to Martyn and Audrey Webb’s work in Cyrenaica, Libya between 1960–1963.

**Euesperides Excavation and G.R.H. Wright Maps, Plans, and Sections from Euesperides:** The digitisation of these two collections will directly support the first publication of BILNAS’ excavations at Euesperides.

**Olwen Brogan Papers:** Olwen Brogan was a pioneering female archaeologist working in Libya between the 1950s and 1980s. This is an extensive, valuable record of her work in the region.

### RESEARCH AND ENGAGEMENT THROUGH THE BILNAS ARCHIVE

#### Research Activities

To further promote knowledge exchange, Valeria Vitale, BILNAS Honorary Collections Officer, and Anne Marie Williamson organised and delivered the **Digital Engagement with Archives** workshop on 4 April 2025 at the Palestine Exploration Fund in London. The hybrid event hosted 37 participants, bringing together academic researchers and cultural heritage professionals to discuss the potential of simple and accessible digital technologies to enhance engagement with archival collections. Attendees specifically praised the practical case studies, which provided actionable insights into integrating digital tools with archaeological collections. The event was funded by the National Archives, and was included in a list of highlights on their [website](#).



*Participants at the Digital Engagement with archives workshop.*

While digitisation provides essential access and must be seen as an important part of our long-term strategy, the management of the physical archive remains a primary responsibility. Thanks to a ‘Archives Revealed’ Scoping Grant from the National Archives, we were able to hire a consultant to conduct and produce a scoping report to assess the physical condition, intellectual organisation and accessibility of BILNAS’ **Maps and Plans Collections**. This was urgently needed to evaluate the collection’s condition, review existing metadata, and outline realistic recommendations. The report has identified clear priorities for stabilisation and access, and will serve as a blueprint for future grant applications and partnerships.

The archive is a living and constantly growing resource, and frequently receives new deposits. In 2025, BILNAS acquired a critical set of primary documents written by and related to journalist Elizabeth Daukes who lived in Tripoli during the period of Libya’s transition to independence. We also received material from Kathleen Kenyon’s excavations at Sabratha, and the archives of David Mattingly’s extensive survey projects in Fazzan. We are also currently in conversation for the acquisition of significant archives related to excavations in Libya at Lepcis Magna and Benghazi (Euesperides), which have never been published. The acquisition and digitisation of this material, which is currently scattered across many different institutions and personal collections, will facilitate BILNAS’ plan to publish this material, forming significant research outputs.



'Mrs Brittan with beehives' (1910-1979), Olwen Brogan Papers.

### POSTGRADUATE PLACEMENT – SUMMER 2025

Xuejiao (Neva) Huang, a Leicester MA Student, has completed an 8-week placement in the BILNAS Archive (14 July to 6 September 2025) focused on creating a biographical dataset as part of the 'Connecting Archives, Connecting People' project. Neva talks about the fascinating story of Olive Brittan in the blog post, 'Olive Brittan - Beekeeper to the King of Libya' on Archive Stories, which she intends to expand into an article for *Libyan Studies*. <https://www.bilnas.org/olive-brittan-beekeeper-to-the-king-of-libya-by-xuejiao-huang/>

### INTERNATIONAL RESEARCHER VISITS

In June 2025, Dagmara Dąbrowska from the University of Warsaw (Poland) consulted the John Copland Thorn Collection, which documents Thorn's extensive research on the Necropolis of Cyrene.

In July 2025, [Alla Abdunabi](#), a visual artist specialising in sculpture and installation, explored the fine pottery samples from the 1971-1975 Sidi Khrebish excavation in Benghazi (ancient Berenice), Libya, part of the Philip Kenrick Papers.

In February 2026, [Dr Niccolò Mugnai](#), Assistant Professor at the University of Tübingen and our former Associate Director, delved deep into our photographic and documentary records, specifically focusing on materials related to Sabratha and Tripoli (ancient Oea).

### SHARING KNOWLEDGE AND ADVANCING PRACTICE

Our Archivist, Anne Marie, has been promoting BILNAS' collections and sharing her expertise at several academic events. She delivered the following papers:

'Unlocking the BILNAS Archive' at the Archives and Records Association Annual Conference (Bristol, 28-30 August),

'People-Centred Archiving at the BILNAS Archive' at the CIFA Archaeological Archives Group AGM and Conference (The Chester House Estate, 25 September)  
'Women Explorers in North Africa' (jointly with Andrew Goudie) at the Egypt Exploration Fund Spotlight Lecture (4 November)

'The Future is Archived: Unlocking New Knowledge in Archaeology through Digital Innovation' at Kom al-Ahmer—Kom Wasit in Context: Exploring the Dynamics of Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt (University of Leicester, 12-14 November).

### OUTREACH

This year we have started a weekly series of posts on our social media channels showcasing some of the most striking images and documents in the BILNAS archive. These posts have proven to be very popular. If you do not follow us already, you can find us at: [f https://www.facebook.com/LibyanNorthernAfricanStudies](https://www.facebook.com/LibyanNorthernAfricanStudies); [X https://x.com/LibyanStudies](https://x.com/LibyanStudies).

Anne Marie has also been active on the BILNAS blog, where she has written about the [Renaming of the University of Leicester's School of Archaeology in honour of Dame Kathleen Kenyon](#), and the [Launch of the Ghirza Digital Archive](#).

## 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.



## BILNAS ONLINE MEDIA REPORT

Over the past year, the BILNAS website at bilnas.org has seen exceptional growth in visitor numbers compared to the previous 12-month period: up 150% year-on-year from around 600 people per month to around 1500 people per month, on average.

Last year we decided to broaden BILNAS's social media presence by posting more material, on a more systematic basis, across a wider range of platforms.

As well as the usual *ad hoc* posts promoting regular BILNAS activities such as lectures and events, book launches and grant calls, we have been publishing weekly content derived from the BILNAS archive in Leicester, under the title 'Journey Through The BILNAS Archives.'

The aim has been to raise awareness of BILNAS among new and existing audiences by showcasing our extensive archival material which, to a large extent, defines BILNAS and the work we have been doing since the Institute launched in 1969.

While we previously focused on three main social networking applications - Facebook, YouTube and X (formerly Twitter) - we now also post content across Instagram, LinkedIn and Bluesky.

### CONCLUSION

The BILNAS website and its associated online media properties are all performing well given the relatively modest time and resources dedicated to the Institute's online activities. BILNAS needs additional funds in order to continue to function as it does. In the coming year we aim to develop and implement an online strategy for this purpose. Working in concert with our BIRI partners and the British Academy we are committed to increasing the BILNAS membership, our audience and online followers, as well as the range of activities we engage in and the subject matter we cover.

In the meantime we welcome input from members and supporters who may have ideas and experience about how best to achieve these aims.



## THE YEAR IN FIGURES

### MEMBERS FROM 13 COUNTRIES

Australia	Germany	Poland
Austria	Italy	Switzerland
Denmark	Japan	United Kingdom
Cyprus	Libya	USA
France	Malta	

### 322 OPEN ACCESS BOOK DOWNLOADS (263) FROM 47 COUNTRIES (32)

(new countries listed below in bold):

Afghanistan	France	Netherlands
Algeria	Germany	New Zealand
Armenia	Greece	<b>Niger</b>
<b>Aruba</b>	<b>Guadeloupe</b>	<b>Oman</b>
Australia	Hungary	Poland
Austria	<b>India</b>	Portugal
Brazil	Iraq	<b>Romania</b>
Bulgaria	<b>Ireland</b>	<b>Russia</b>
Canada	Israel	Slovenia
<b>Chile</b>	Italy	Spain
<b>China</b>	<b>Japan</b>	Saudi Arabia
Czech Republic	<b>Korea</b>	Tunisia
Denmark	<b>Lebanon</b>	Turkey
<b>Egypt</b>	Libya	United Kingdom
Estonia	<b>Malta</b>	USA
Finland	Morocco	

### SOCIAL MEDIA (last year's figures in brackets)

#### X (formerly TWITTER)

1,761 followers (1,753)

#### FACEBOOK

3605 followers (3,430)

#### YOUTUBE

414 subscribers (304)

23,500 views (from 54 videos)  
(19,385 views)

#### BLUESKY

86 followers (n/a)

#### INSTAGRAM

180 followers (n/a)

#### LINKEDIN

479 followers (n/a)

#### WEBSITE: BILNAS.org

18,000 unique visitors (7,200)  
= 150% increase year on year

38,000 page views (65,800)  
= 42% decrease year on year

Percentage of website views in each country (top six countries):

1. UK 22.83%
2. USA 22.5%
3. China 19.57%
4. Libya 4.85%
5. Italy 2.2%
6. Germany 1.73%

# FINANCIAL REPORT

## THE BRITISH INSTITUTE FOR LIBYAN AND NORTHERN AFRICAN STUDIES STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2026

	2025-26	2024-25
	£	£
<b>INCOME</b>		
British Academy Grant	146,003	162,893
Business Development Fund Grant	16,253	16,253
Subscriptions	4,216	4,780
Journal sales	6,049	1,107
Book sales and postage	2,208	1,448
Bank interest	893	655
Donations/gift aid	15,000	10,500
Miscellaneous	1,944	4,850
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>192,566</b>	<b>202,486</b>
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>		
Research grants	54,432	53,101
<b>Library/Research collections</b>	<b>68,786</b>	<b>95,030</b>
Archive: cataloguing, conservation, digitisation	68,786	95,030
<b>Communications and outreach</b>	<b>19,268</b>	<b>8,940</b>
Events	7,726	4,740
Publicity and outreach	832	1,125
Website maintenance/development	9,004	1,025
Lecture/meeting expenses	1,706	2,050
<b>Publications</b>	<b>26,901</b>	<b>23,990</b>
Storage/despatch of books	0	1,179
Print-on-demand costs	1,124	863
Publications Manager	21,184	17,633
Journal production	3,560	1,005
Production of monographs/Silphium books	0	1,500
Special projects	0	1,114
Other costs (Adobe, ISBN, small equipment)	1,033	696

Establishment	19,542	19,542
Bank charges	127	129
General Secretary's remuneration	12,500	12,300
Insurance	476	477
Office expenses	729	636
Accountancy	6,000	6,000
<b>Travel</b>	<b>1,121</b>	<b>219</b>
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>190,050</b>	<b>200,822</b>
<b>DEFICIT / SURPLUS FOR THE YEAR</b>	<b>2,516</b>	<b>1,664</b>

## THE BRITISH INSTITUTE FOR LIBYAN AND NORTHERN AFRICAN STUDIES BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31 MARCH 2026

	2026	2025
	£	£
<b>ASSETS</b>		
Virgin Money Account	0	71,465
NatWest Current Account	72,451	11,315
<b>Total Cash</b>	<b>72,451</b>	<b>82,780</b>
Debtors	11,054	1,000
Stock of publications, valued at cost	6,738	8,624
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>90,243</b>	<b>92,404</b>
<b>LIABILITIES</b>		
Creditors due within one year	1,557	5,020
Accrued income	1,468	796
<b>Total Current Liabilities</b>	<b>3,025</b>	<b>5,816</b>
<b>NET ASSETS</b>	<b>87,218</b>	<b>86,588</b>
<b>Represented by:</b>		
General Fund	38,164	35,648
Stock Fund	6,738	8,624
Publications Fund	42,316	42,316
<b>TOTAL FUNDS</b>	<b>87,218</b>	<b>86,588</b>

## NET MOVEMENT IN FUNDS YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2026

	2025-26	2024-25
	£	£
General Fund brought forward	35,648	33,984
Stock Fund brought forward	8,624	8,624
Publications Fund brought forward	42,316	42,316
<b>Total funds at start of year</b>	<b>86,588</b>	<b>84,924</b>
Deficit/surplus for the year	2,516	1,664
Movement in stock	-1,886	0
<b>TOTAL FUNDS</b>	<b>87,218</b>	<b>86,588</b>

### Grants paid

Included in the expenditure on research grants for the year ended 31 March 2026 is a payment of £7,200 which was made shortly before the year end. The grant was awarded by BILNAS in respect of the year ending 31 March 2027 financial year and, although initially paid from BILNAS's own reserves, will be funded by the grant awarded to BILNAS for research by the British Academy for the 2026-27 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 Society 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 Society 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 1203646 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 2025.

### 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 Society'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 Institute 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](mailto:gensec@bilnas.org)

Membership is open to all and runs from April to April. Key benefits of joining our community include:

- Online access to *Libyan Studies*, BILNAS's annual journal, current and past copies
- 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)

## CONTACT

General Secretary: Victoria Leitch  
BILNAS  
c/o British Academy  
10-11 Carlton House Terrace  
London SW1Y 5AH  
[gensec@bilnas.org](mailto:gensec@bilnas.org)

## Social Media

 <https://www.facebook.com/LibyanNorthernAfricanStudies>

 <https://x.com/LibyanStudies>

[www.bilnas.org](http://www.bilnas.org)

