

ISSUE number 2.

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LYRE OF UR NEWS

February 20th 2005



BULLS HEAD at the British Museum

LATEST NEWS FOR ALL OUR SUPPORTERS AROUND THE WORLD:

Another fine donation..... from the UAE !

Mr **Brian Wilkie** back in 2003 listened intently to the idea of recreating an authentic version of a well-loved Iraqi artefact and immediately pledged to support the project.

"It is a great idea and I'm sure it will be worthwhile," he said back then.

We look forward to bringing the Gold Lyre of Ur to you, one day, in the United Arab Emirates, Brian.



THE GOLD LYRE OF UR (above)

"Where is it now?"

Everyone asks the question!

Well, here is the Lyre in Baghdad museum, as it is today. In bits. As it was found, after the famous recent looting, in the car park! Thieves had

taken the strips of gold covering on the arms.

The Gold Bulls Head was found in the Iraqi Bank where it had been stored ready for selling-on, perhaps by Mr Hussain himself.

Could this famous original artefact be restored for Baghdad Museum by some generous donation? Why not?

[Picture: Thanks to Dr Lamia Al Guilani of Baghdad Museum who gave us much help from Iraq]

Thanks to family ***Pierre Saad*** of ***Strasbourg*** who looked after ***Andy Lowings***, and donated more Cedar of Lebanon wood. Pierre comes from the mountains of Lebanon and is one of the famous Marronite communities who live high in the mountains there.

“His family made me welcome for three days and it was a joy to become part of their happy and close family life.”

Language was not a problem there in family Saad: Polish, French, English Russian and Aramaic tongues bounce across the table at mealtimes!



PURE SILVER COVERED TUNING LEVER

Precious red Sumerian Stone has come from Iraq thanks to Mary Schmidt in Izahoe, North Germany.

She asked local Middle Eastern businessmen to help us with obtaining “Pink Iraqi Limestone” and this has now come direct from Mosel. A taxi driver was sent out into the mountains there by Mr Tata to retrieve a “PINK ROCK” !!! He subsequently returned for another rock!

He must think we are mad here in the UK!

It IS really reddish and will fit well into the colour scheme. Straight from the red desert of Iraq it looks fantastic. Perfect!

On Wednesday February 16th 2005 Andy Lowings spoke to the “Peterborough Medical Society” here in Cambridgeshire UK.

He introduced to them what our non-political and non-aligned team is doing. Their own organisation is full of interesting experts in their own fields and the questions came thick and fast over an hour long.

Thanks to the Medics for their interest!

MOCK UP of THE LYRE OF UR

We made a basic model of the full scale Lyre of Ur with from 8 to 11 strings.



Tara Jaff playing our prototype

This simple instrument has can now be used to practise on by our players. We have a CD of our first commission composed and played by Classical harpist Eleanor Turner, cellist Rowena Calbert and Iraqi player, [shown here] Tara Jaff.

COMPOSITIONS!

Ayub Ogada has started composing a new piece for the Lyre. Ayub comes from Kenya and his people (part of the Dinkka people) play the Lyre to this day. Ayub lives near Slough in London and has toured with Peter Gabriel and has released several CDs of his music.

We are proud to have Ayub with us on our project team. His lilting voice will move you to tears...

[Contact us for his CD list]

Michael Mauldin of New Mexico USA has been asked in principle to commission a new work for Ur Harp. He composed the `Birds in Winter Prelude 4` (on our `**Stamford Harp Festival Live`** CD) and is very much an inspiration of the Lyre Project because of his other music.

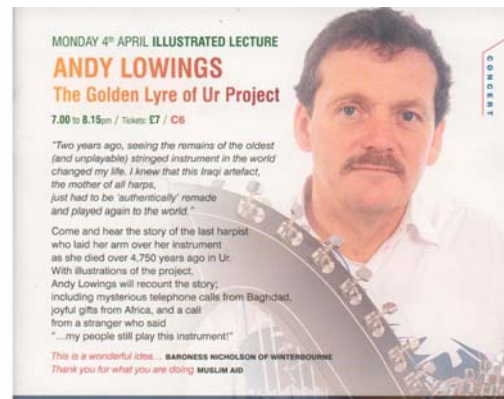


STAMFORD HARP FESTIVAL
Kike Pederson from Paraguay

THANKS (again): to **Simon Vilette** who got in contact with us. He donated a small stone-saw, with ALL the diamond discs needed, to enable us to cut the Lapis Lazuli and the red limestone for the decoration.

Venues:-

We are giving a one-hour talk to the **Edinburgh Harp Festival** in April. It is the first time that we as a group will meet up and talk to the world of harpists and makers about our project. We are thrilled to be there in front of the Festival. It is a privilege to be invited. Come along! April 4th 2004 Murchison School Edinburgh.



We have applied for a **Performing Rights Society Grant** for New Music for the Lyre of Ur Project.

“Journey of strings”.

It is based upon a collaboration of seven international artists weaving itself around the story of the Lyre and its journey through the world, and its metamorphosis into other stringed instruments.

This hugely ambitious, optimistic idea of a performance has been commissioned by the Stamford Harp Festival 2006 and could result in a new multi media performance incorporating harps, lyres, dance, drama and song.

Wish us luck with the PRS!

GOOD Media NEWS!

BBC Radio Lincoln interviewed us last year **LIVE!** The conversation was so fast. On radio you have to be quick with an answer. They asked for an update at any time we care to go in !

We were also contacted by **Irish National Radio of Dublin.**

Their `serious` music programme on Thursday night was interested in the Lyre of Ur and its ideas and wanted to know the full story.

We gave an interview for ten minutes about the project, for Ireland, a country crazy about harps, of course!

This has resulted in our now being invited to give a lecture to **the WORLD HARP CONGRESS in Dublin** in July. **A great, great honour.**

We continue to be followed by **World Satellite TV** that shows UK based arts and culture. It is syndicated around the world.

LATEST NEWS!!!!!!!!!!!!

BBC Radio Four, Ancient Music Programme has just asked us for an interview.

We are in partnership with **BOW BRAND STRINGS of Kings Lynn UK.** They make fine gut strings in the old way.

They have now helped us to string the **Lyre of Ur** using gut strings. We have a selection of different sizes to use and so can play around with new ideas thanks to their kind donation.

For the technophiles:
*We are using unvarnished cow gut, *cut in 5 foot lengths,
*It is oiled
*Low tension on the thick ones;
high tension on the thinner ones.

Shell Plaques for the Lyre's front Have been re-created by Loughborough University, using a laser-milling machine at Liverpool University Lairside Laser Engineering.



Under the guidance of two tutors Carmel and Mark, the preliminary trials looked good on two sample shells, and they then went on and were successful in making a fine set.



Shell Panel set in Bitumen, Shell and Lapis Lazuli 269x77mm [thanks to ACS Market Deeping Photography]

Loughborough University

tutor Jo Pond, visited the British Museum to see the original versions of the 75 mm x 75mm reliefs, showing mythical scenes that will amaze everyone who sees them !



Not only did Loughborough succeed but the kind and generous people of **Torre del Greco in Italy** helped us create a second set donated over the summer.

Works of art copied from 5,000 years ago.

WEBSITE

www.lyre-of-ur.com

EVERYONE who e-mails us says how well made the site is !

Thanks to Mr Keith Jobling

for his fantastic support. Keith is Chairman of MUSIC:LINK in Lincolnshire and he has an amazing database of everything that is happening in the East Midlands in the music and arts worlds.

Web site: www.music-link.org

E-mail: musiclink@lincoln.tc



Paraguayan Dancer at the Stamford harp Festival Lincolnshire 2003

Keith has recently changed the colour of the website to a desert beige and has created a photo archive and is full of ideas.

EACH person on our supporters list on the site has provided some aspect toward the Lyre's creation.

Have we missed you out?

Please tell us immediately.

VENUES IN THE WORLD

Would you like to hear what we have produced?

If only an outline invitation it will help us raise money, as funders need to know venue invitations before committing themselves to assist a tour.

A world famous orchestra approached us, to see if we would "consider playing alongside them in London".
Stay posted !

Our first proper venue as announced here in **Lyre of Ur News**, as August 29th 2004 didn't happen with the finished Lyre due to circumstances beyond our control. But the concert went ahead anyway. with our international collaboration of musicians using a more basic, simple model Lyre.

So our new proposed date for presentation of the finished Lyre is this spring instead.

We have players keen to play it, in three continents. It can be played by anyone, tuned in any way (Classical western tuning, Greek modal tuning, modern Arabic tuning, ancient Sumerian modalities) and it is a fixed point of our project that *it should be available to ALL communities to hear, and listen its story.*

Would YOU like to hear it played near you ?

Contact us
Tel UK (0)1733 253068



Lyre of Ur tee shirts.

(Donated, and available from Ian Urch of "Hands on Harps" Coventry UK)
E-mail: printing@joatservices.co.uk

FUND RAISING

It may seem that all this response means that we are also inundated with offers of money !

Nothing could be further from the truth and we have actually minimal amounts of money.

We need money for every aspect of the project; from helping arrange to make the Lyre of Ur, arranging the transport of materials; for making promotional letters. Also: to assist visits to generate support; to help to pay telephone bills, postage bills; for the instrument boxes and the flights and the gold sheet and importantly to insure the Lyre against theft.

This is here a real, international team making a well-loved and famous instrument that pre-dates our world divisions.

It can have a huge impact for good in every community.

THE NATURE OF PERFECTION

When we started to rebuild a playable version of the Baghdad Gold Lyre of Ur it was not immediately apparent what might be the problems ahead.

One of the more surprising problems was "how authentic must we be in recreating such an instrument? " Having set in our constitution the words `authentic reconstruction` it then began to be clear that however hard one tries, one has to, in the end, compromise.

Should we use copper saws pulled by slave boys to cut wood, or just use a modern band saw? If we use a planing machine then the end result will be very near `perfect`. But justified?



Perhaps this use will make quite a different end result and it will no longer even look `authentic`. Should we `cheat` in order to `look` correct? Should we use modern glues to stick together the parts of the lyre?

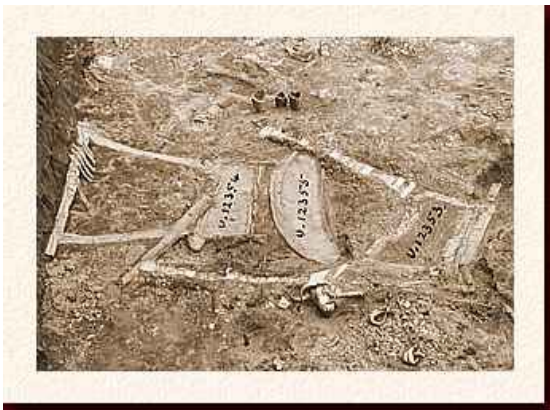
Stones can be cut accurately and easily by using a modern diamond saw. Hand cutting might be easy in days of endless labour but will be impossible today.

So we took the decision, from the start that true authenticity is impossible even with endless time and funds.

But we said we *should* use what materials they used back then. For good or bad!

And in fact this has not been as bad as one might expect. Using bitumen as a glue for precious stones is not at all difficult and the result is fine...and authentic

But one cannot avoid the appearance of `perfection` by cutting wood using modern machines and that is a severe disadvantage, as the result is rather `repro`. In addition, even the shape and size of the Lyre of Ur is highly speculative.



Found after almost 5,000 years under 60 ft. of soil, the timber had all but gone and much of the rest was badly decayed in the earth!

String remains were only possible to be seen by way of specialist photography! And the shape itself was in great doubt.... give or take perhaps 5% in any direction!

Thanks to the British Museum's advice we were also warned against taking their own (or anyone else's) restored lyre as `gospel truth`.

"Beware or making just a `perfect` copy, of our own copy" they wisely told us.

In fact, the American Lyre in Pennsylvania Museum was incorrectly restored for over 30 years. Arms were initially made round rather than square and tuning pegs were `inserted` into the top of the yoke. Quite wrong.

Perhaps just wishful thinking on the part of the curators.

(It was only after Sir Leonard Woolley visited, that he remarked that it wasn't how he remembered it in the earth.)

But he did have his own ideas on the `perfection` of this artefact.

"Some of the pieces of cut shell really don't fit into where they were used" he said, ***"Curved pieces were used when straight pieces should have been used. It is as if the workmen `made do` hoping that no one would notice"***.

Perhaps, too, it just was not important either to the Sumerians to be `perfect`. Perhaps the whole concept of perfection may have arisen only after the advent of machines, that allowed us to manufacture endless perfect components.

We will never know. We can only use what was discovered, and thanks to the very well documented notes on the dig we do know a great deal.

At the end of the day we try our best.

We approach a problem, and take a view, and move on. We might not satisfy everyone of course but we have investigated, decided and learnt much by the process.

But, finally, although `authenticity` IS important it is not the SOLE object in this Project.

We aim to try to involve as many international craftsmen and musicians as possible (to show, gently, too, that perhaps they can cooperate where politicians might not).

We have been criticised (not too harshly) by experts but we hold one thing very dear: If the last player who laid her hands over the Lyre, as she died 4,750 years ago, were here today we would like to think she would say

“Yes that’s my very own lyre.”

And perhaps she will be here, after a long journey.

Who knows?

Andy Lowings February 2005