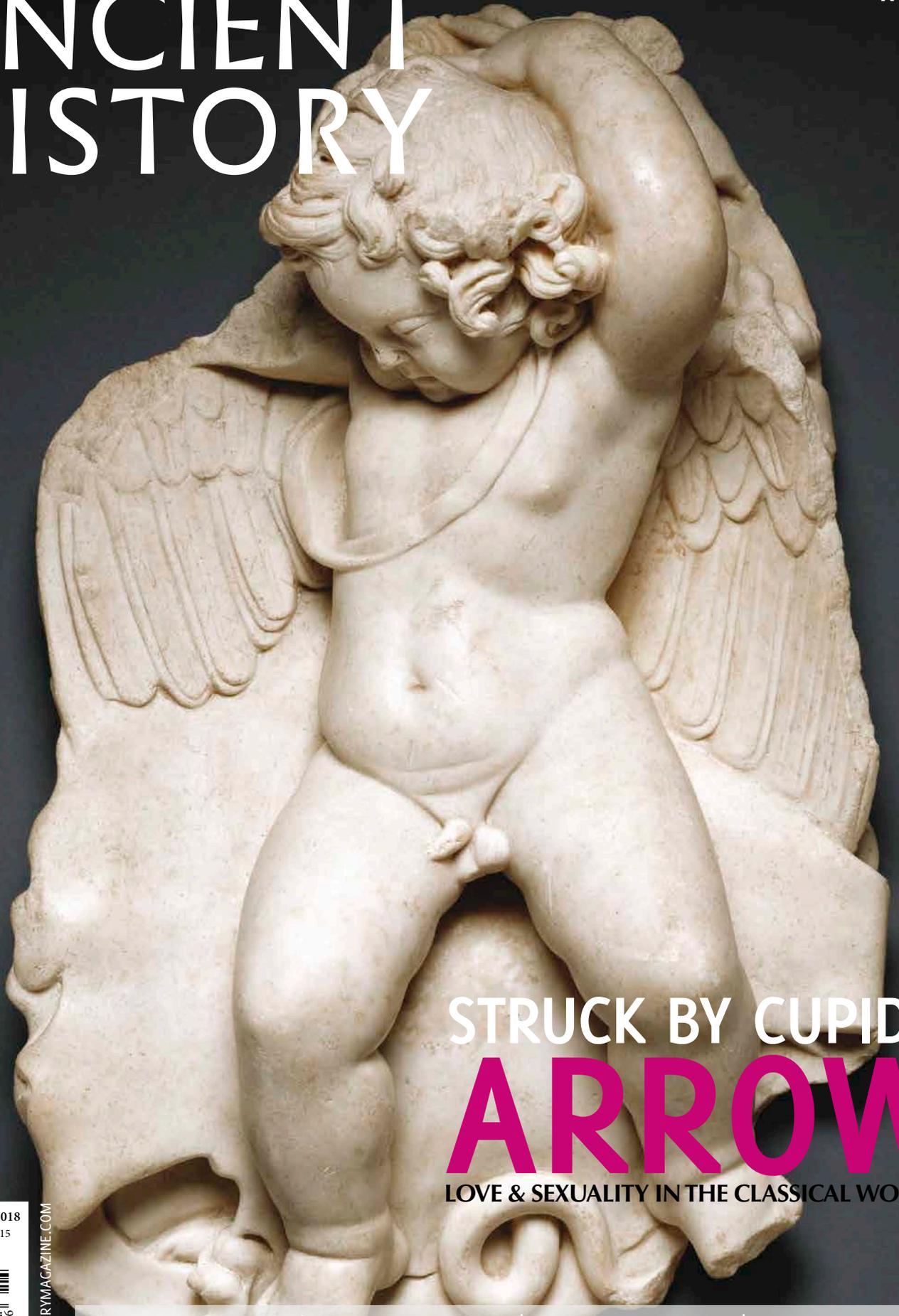


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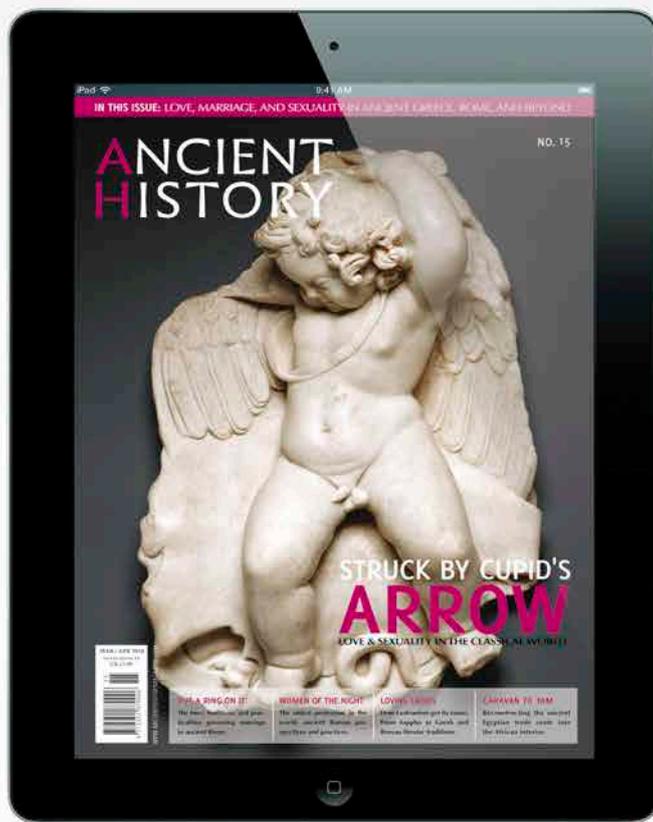
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ON THE COVER

Given that this issue's theme focuses on love and sexuality in the ancient world, we could hardly think of a more appropriate cover model than Cupid himself (or Eros as he was known to the Greeks). Sleeping Cupids were a popular motif in classical art. They were often used on funerary monuments, where death was equated with peaceful sleep. This Roman example dates from between AD 50 – 100 and now resides in the J. Paul Getty Museum in California.



ANCIENT LOVE & SEXUALITY

Ancient attitudes to love, sex, and marriage were in some ways extremely practical and permissive. Still, for many people living in the classical world, there was little freedom when it came to matters of the heart.

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Editorial

Sexuality is one of the most natural aspects of our humanity; it is how we continue to ensure our existence. Yet for centuries, it has also been one of the most controlled and censured parts of our lives. Even now, when we perceive ourselves to be living in a 'modern age', we still try to control how other people express their sexuality, and who holds the power in relationships. This was no different in the ancient world. So are we really that 'progressive'?

Writers have lamented over love and sex since people were able to pick up utensils and etch

in stone. They were (and still are) the topic of endless comedies, tragedies, odes, and songs. Love and sex are also central to much of what we call our societal 'norms', i.e. many of our conventions and expected behaviours, from how societies view the role of women, to marriage customs, family law, and sexual orientation.

But what did love and sex really look like in the ancient world? How similar were ancient ideals to our modern ones? What were their expectations in love, sex, and marriage? In what ways were the ancients more

progressive? In this issue, we tackle sex in ancient Greece and Rome, Roman prostitution, ancient attitudes to polygamy, Roman marriage, and how lesbians became associated with the island of Lesbos. We examine the inherent complexities of love, sex, gender, sexual orientation, and the law across the ancient world and hope you enjoy making the journey with us.

Sandra Alvarez
Editor, *Ancient History*

Rings tell the story of life in Britain during the twilight of the Roman Empire



Discovered in the English county of Norfolk, this Brancaster-type ring dates to the late fourth or early fifth century AD.
© Portable Antiquities Scheme

Researchers from Newcastle and Oxford Universities have catalogued, for the first time in detail, each of the 54 Brancaster-type rings known to exist in the UK today. They claim that they can be dated with confidence due to their design, and the material they're made from.

Named after the Roman Fort and Norfolk village where the first example was discovered in the mid-19th century, a Brancaster ring is a type of signet ring with a characteristic square or rectangular bezel, inscribed with characters or text.

Most of the 54 rings are made from silver, and a small number from gold. This contrasts

with the early Roman period when the majority of rings tended to be made from bronze.

As well as being worn as an item of jewellery, they were commonly used with wax to seal letters and other important documents.

Writing in the German journal *Bonner Jahrbücher*, the research team say that the fact the rings are made from precious metals and were used with important documents and goods, point to them being owned by wealthy, educated individuals.

The rings were discovered over several years at sites predominantly in the south and east of Britain. Some rings were found during archaeological excavations at known villa locations but many were found as part of buried hoards alongside other artefacts such as coins and jewellery. A large number of rings were also discovered by metal-detector users and re-

ported to the Portable Antiquities Scheme.

Many of the hoards that include these rings also contain large numbers of late Roman silver coins. In many cases these coins have been clipped around the edges. Tampering with coins was illegal during the Roman period and it is believed that this clipping dates to the fifth century. This is further evidence for the fifth-century date of the rings.

The rings are engraved with a wide variety of designs. Some have what appear to be portraits of the emperor, soldiers or lovers while others feature several dolphins and mythical sea creatures such as sea griffins, which are frequently depicted in late Roman art. Many of the rings also bear references to Christianity, either in the inscription or the images depicted on the bezel, such as doves or peacocks.



Ancient Roman boxing gloves uncovered at Vindolanda

During the summer of 2017, Vindolanda archaeologists enjoyed one of their most successful annual research excavation seasons to date with one remarkable discovery after another coming to light. These include two very unusual and distinctive pieces of leather. Now identified as boxing gloves, the two leather objects have very similar attributes in terms of style and function, although they are not a matching pair.

Unlike the modern boxing glove, these ancient examples have the appearance of a protective guard, designed to fit snugly over the knuckles protecting them from impact. The larger of the two gloves is cut from a single piece of leather and was folded into a pouch configuration, the extending leather strips at each side slotting into one another to form a complete oval shape. This created an inner hole into which a hand could still easily be insert-



ed. The glove was packed with natural material, which acted as a shock absorber.

The two gloves can still fit comfortably on a modern hand. They have been skilfully made, with the smaller glove retaining the impression of the wearer's knuckles. It is likely that the gloves were used for sparring practice, as those used for 'professional' bouts seem to have contained metal inserts to make them more dangerous.

Boxing was a well-documented ancient sport that pre-

ceded the Roman era. In the context of the Roman army it was a recorded pursuit, a martial activity designed to increase the skills and fitness of the boxers. Boxing competitions also took place with crowds and supporters: it was also the sort of activity that the Roman garrisons would have gambled on.

The boxing gloves will be on display in the museum at Vindolanda from February 20th, 2018 along with other finds from the cavalry barracks excavations.

Boxing was an extremely popular sport with the ancient Romans. These two gloves are not a matching pair, but can still historians and archaeologists clues as to what the ancient Romans used for sparring practice and fights.
© Vindolanda Charitable Trust.

Ancient DNA results end 4,000-year-old Egyptian mummy mystery

The Two Brothers are the Manchester Museum's oldest mummies and amongst the best-known human remains in its Egyptology collection. They are the mummies of two elite men – Khnum-nakht and Nakht-ankh – dating to around 1800 BC.

However, ever since their discovery in 1907 there has been some debate amongst Egyptologists as to whether the two were actually related at all. Hieroglyphic inscriptions on the coffins indicated that both men were the sons of an unnamed local

governor and had mothers with the same name, Khnum-aa.

When the complete contents of the tomb was shipped to Manchester in 1908 and the mummies of both men were unwrapped, it was concluded that their skeletal morphologies were quite different, suggesting an absence of family relationship. Based on contemporary inscriptional evidence, it was proposed that one of the brothers was adopted.

In 2015 this was put to the test when DNA was extracted from the mummies' teeth. Analysis showed

that both Nakht-Ankh and Khnum-Nakht belonged to mitochondrial haplotype M1a1, suggesting a maternal relationship. The Y chromosome sequences were less complete but showed variations between the two mummies, indicating that Nakht-Ankh and Khnum-Nakht had different fathers, and were thus very likely to have been half-brothers.

The study, which is being published in the *Journal of Archaeological Science*, is the first to successfully use the typing of both mitochondrial and Y chromosomal DNA in Egyptian mummies.