

London Trip – Part #3

September 1, 2017 – September 4, 2017

Iconic London Telephone Booth – With the crown on top, the red phone booth is a cultural icon throughout the world and many still stand in London. Since the cell phones, they are now being re-purposed for many other uses including WIFI hotspots.



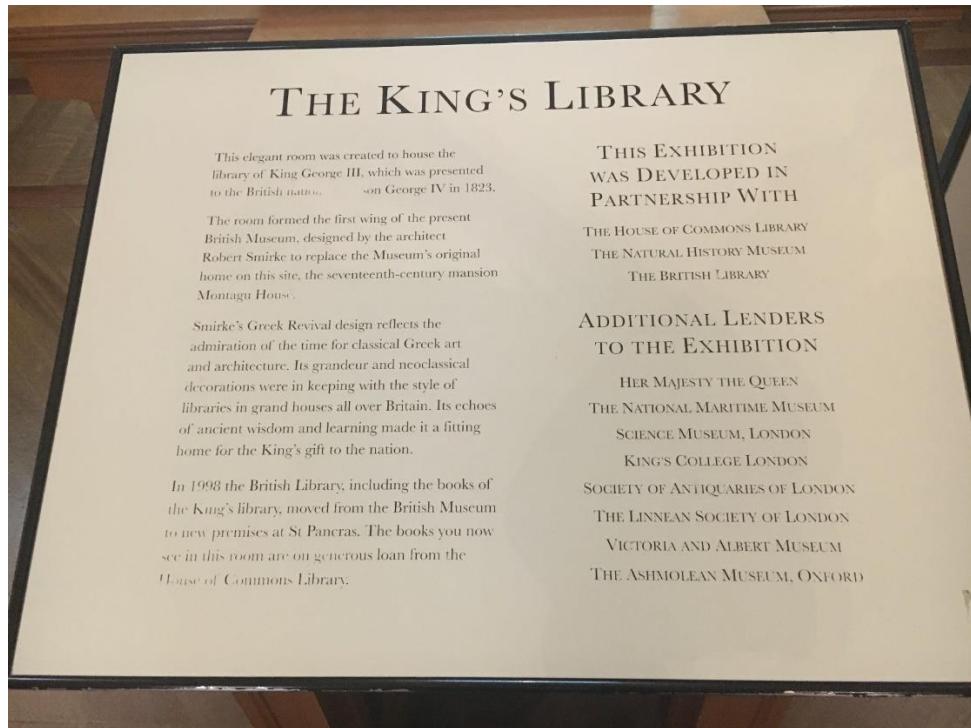
Outside of British Museum – Established in 1753 and houses a vast collection of over 13 million objects of art and artefacts dedicated to human history, art and culture and is FREE to all visitors. We spent our last full day getting lost in the two miles of exhibit space inside the British Museum. The Main Entrance has 44 Greek Revival columns and are 45 feet tall and closely based on the Temple of Athena. Outside the Museum is almost as spectacular as inside the Museum!

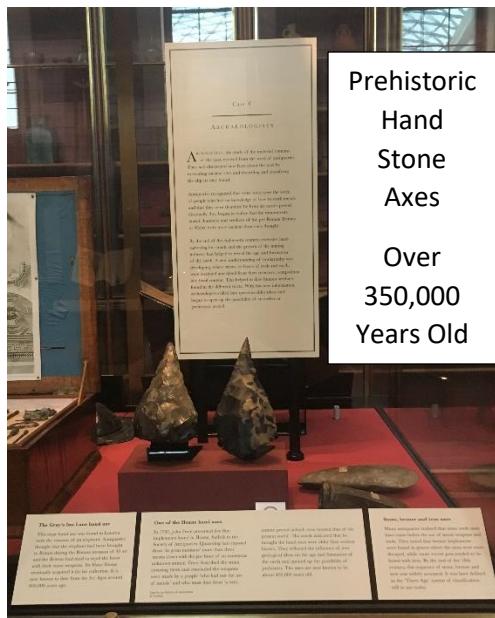


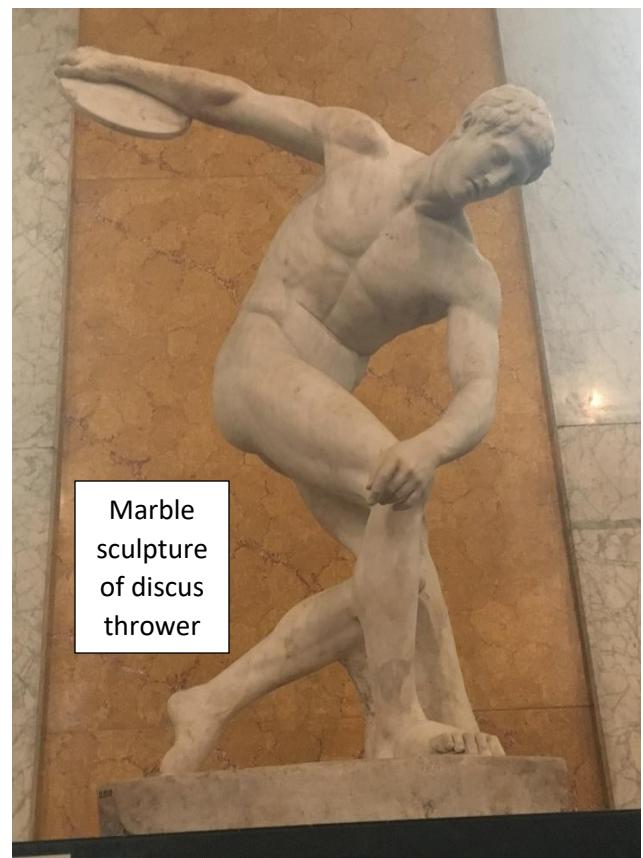
The Great Court inside the British Museum has a Glass Roof and is the largest covered square in Europe. The Great Court serves as a central linking point to the museum, somewhat like the Glass Pyramid at the Louvre in Paris.



The King's Library Gallery displays a wide range of objects relating to the Enlightenment Age.







As we turned a corner into another room, we came upon this surprising find -- a Holy Thorn Reliquary! It was created in 1390 in Paris for the Duke of Berry to house a relic from Jesus' Crown of Thorns. It is made of gold and lavishly decorated with jewels and pearls with 28 three-dimensional figures, mostly in white enamel. The front view depicts the Last Judgment with the Trinity and Saints above and Resurrection of the Dead below. The central front compartment contains the single long thorn believed to come from the Crown of Thorns worn by Jesus when he was crucified. There are two rather large sapphires, one at very top of reliquary representing heaven and one below Jesus where the thorn is mounted. The reliquary was featured in a BBC show "A History of the World in 100 Objects" and described as without question one of the supreme achievements of medieval European metalwork.



The Holy Thorn Reliquary

Enamelled gold, sapphires, rubies and pearls
Paris, about 1400

This reliquary was made to contain a thorn, supposedly from the Crown of Thorns that was placed on Christ's head before the Crucifixion. The armorial enamelled plaques in the base show that it was made for Jean, duc de Berry (1340-1416). The Crown of Thorns itself was a French royal relic, housed in its own chapel in Paris. Individual thorns were detached to make precious reliquary jewels.

WB.67

Rosetta Stone

The most visited object in the British Museum is the Rosetta Stone. It was found in 1799 in a town named Rosetta in the Nile Delta. It was the first Ancient Egyptian Bi-lingual Text to help decipher the Hieroglyphic scripts. The Stone has 3 inscriptions of the same decree written in different languages. The top and middle are written in Egyptian Hieroglyphics and Script and the bottom version is written in Greek. Once deciphered, the Rosetta Stone became the essential key to modern understanding of Ancient Egyptian civilizations. The text written on the stone is a decree designed to re-establish the rule of the Ptolemaic Kings in Egypt around 196 BC. The Rosetta Stone is a broken piece of a much larger stone. There are missing pieces of each version of the Decree.



What is the Rosetta Stone?

The Rosetta Stone carries an inscription in different languages which helped decipher the ancient Egyptian hieroglyphic script. It is the only surviving fragment of a larger stone slab (stela) recording a decree on 27 March, 196 BC.

At the top the decree was written in hieroglyphs, the traditional script of Egyptian monuments, then already 3000 years old. In the middle the same decree was written in Demotic, the everyday script of literate Egyptians, and at the bottom in Greek, the language used by the government.

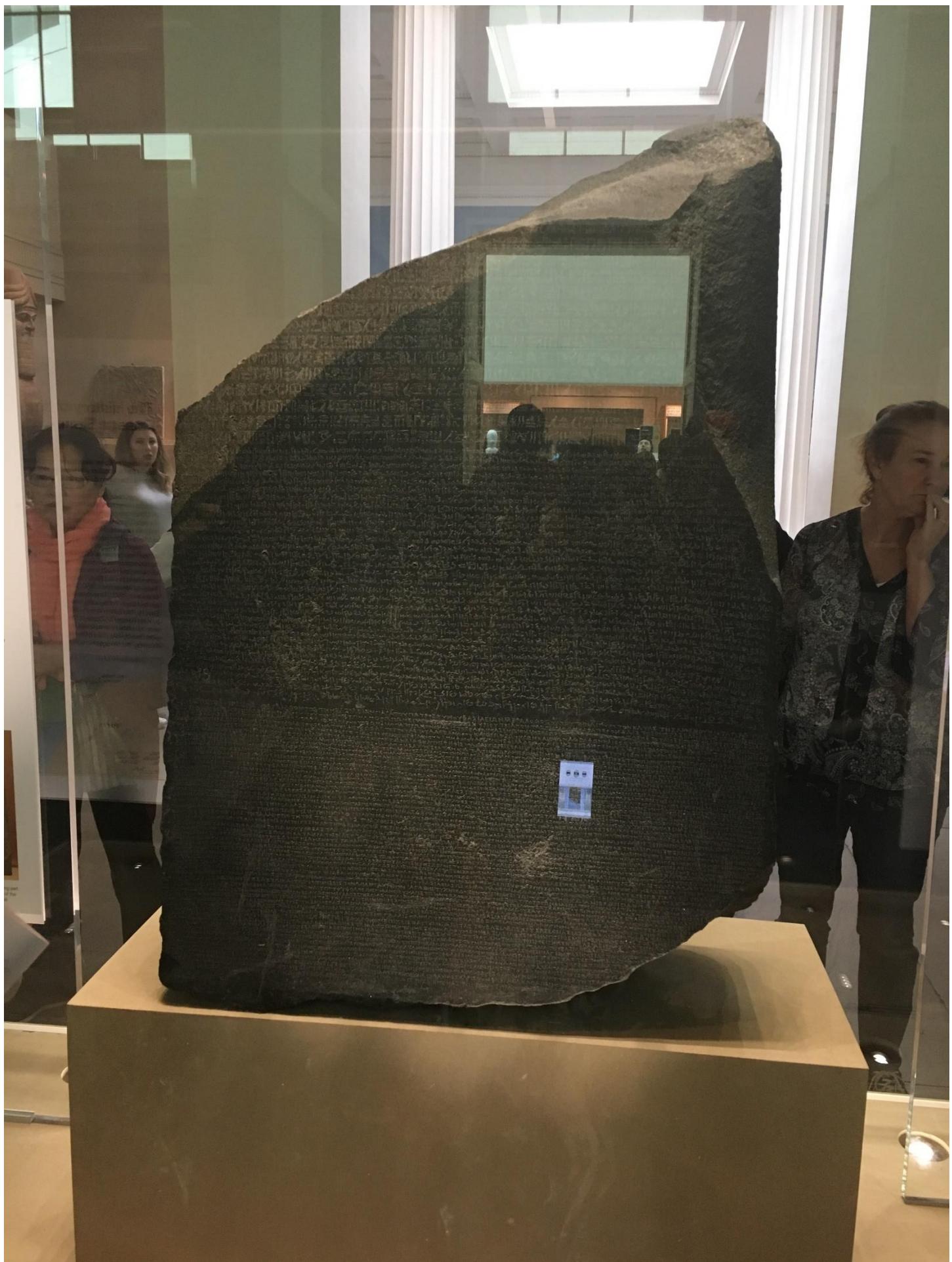
At this time Egypt was ruled by a Greek dynasty, and the decree was issued in honour of the boy-king Ptolemy V Epiphanes. It records the decision of the Egyptian priests to establish a royal cult in return for Ptolemy's concessions to the Egyptian temples. The granodiorite stela was placed in a temple, probably at the city of Sais near Rashid (Rosetta).



The Rosetta Stone would have been placed against a temple wall, like this round-topped stela in the temple of Iusa at Philae.



The Rosetta Stone is the only surviving part of a larger stela. This reconstruction of the stela shows how it might have looked.



The history of the Rosetta Stone

The Rosetta Stone was discovered in mid-July 1799 by soldiers in Napoleon's invading army at the town of Rashid (Rosetta).

After Egypt became Christian, the Egyptian temples were closed and many were demolished and their masonry reused. At some time, the Rosetta Stone was broken and moved from its original location to Rashid where it was built into a fortress by the ruler of Egypt, Sultan Qaitbay, in the fifteenth century. In 1799 it was rediscovered as the French were building new defences. Its importance was immediately recognised, but when the French were defeated, it was surrendered to the British forces as part of the Treaty of Alexandria in 1801. It entered the British Museum in 1802. These events were recorded in painted labels on the sides, reading 'Captured in Egypt by the British Army in 1801' and 'Presented by King George III'. Copies of the Rosetta Stone were circulated internationally to scholars, and within twenty-five years of the Rosetta Stone's discovery, the hieroglyphic script was deciphered.



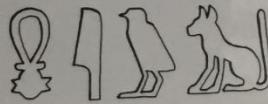
Backside of Rosetta Stone



The writing of ancient Egypt

Egyptian hieroglyphs were first used around 3500 BC and fell out of use at the end of the fourth century AD. After this time, all knowledge of how to read them was lost.

Many European scholars tried to decipher the mysterious script, but because hieroglyphic signs look like pictures, they assumed that all hieroglyphs were images recording ideas without language. In fact hieroglyphs recorded the ancient Egyptian language with a mixture of sound and picture signs. For example, the ancient Egyptian word for cat is written:



mi + i + w + picture sign

The first three signs record the sounds miw (the word is derived from the cat's 'miaow'), followed by a picture showing the animal.

This is what Champollion realised in 1822, working from the Rosetta Stone and other inscriptions. His decipherment unlocked 4000 years of an ancient written culture and the Rosetta Stone has become an icon of all our attempts to understand the past in its own words.

Hieroglyphs

Demotic

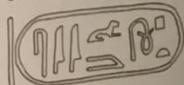
Greek

The key to Egyptian hieroglyphs

As soon as the Rosetta Stone was discovered, scholars realised that it might help decipher the mysterious Egyptian hieroglyphs, since the Greek inscription, which could be read, stated that each script on the Stone recorded the same decree.

In England and France two exceptional men were working on hieroglyphs: Thomas Young (1773–1829) and Jean-François Champollion (1790–1832). Earlier scholars had already guessed that rings, or cartouches, in hieroglyphic inscriptions probably enclosed royal names. Young used the cartouches on the Rosetta Stone to work out that some hieroglyphs wrote the sounds of the Greek royal name Ptolemy, but he thought most hieroglyphs were symbolic images.

Cartouche (written from right to left)



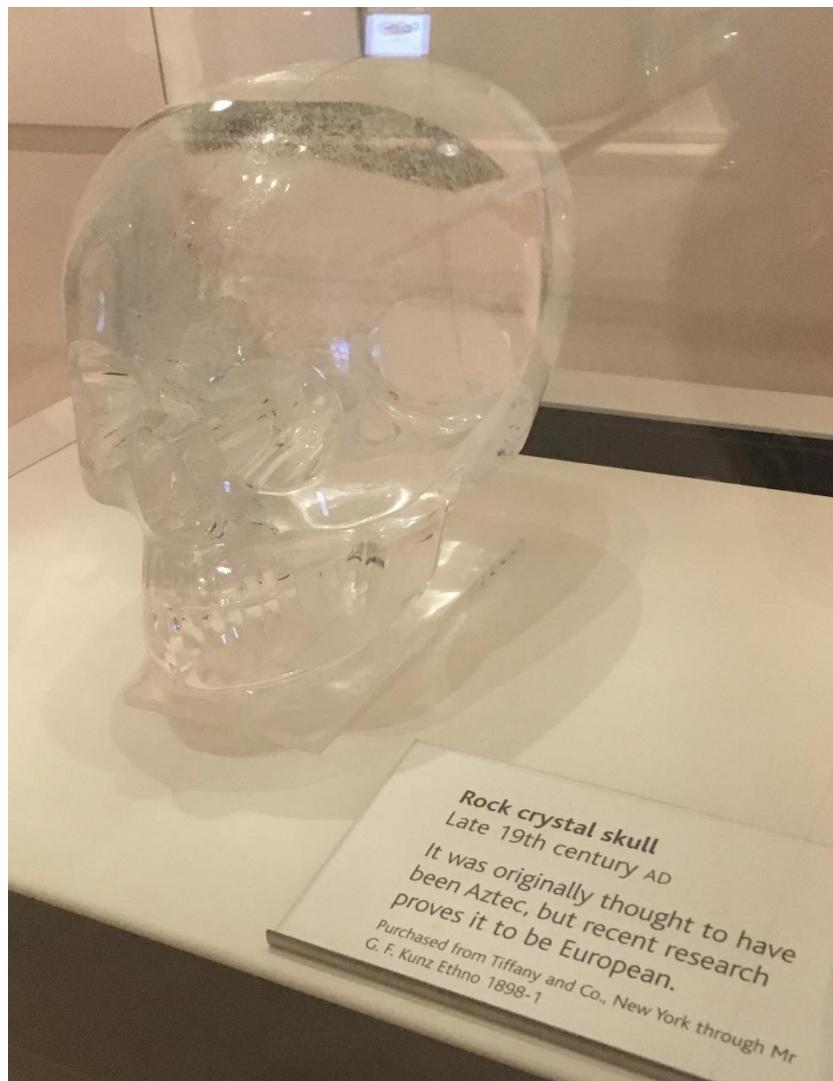
= PTOL(E)M(A)IS
or Ptolemy

Cartouche decoded

□ = P ⌂ = O ⌂ = L
□ = T ⌂ = M ⌂ = I ⌂ = S

On 14 September 1822, Champollion went much further. He realised that he could also read the names of earlier, native Egyptian pharaohs, and that hieroglyphs must be signs that also write the ancient Egyptian language. With his knowledge of the Coptic language, the descendant of ancient Egyptian, he could start to read hieroglyphic texts.

Rock Crystal Skull – “Ancient” Life-sized sculpture made from a single block of crystal - FAKE



Crystal skull

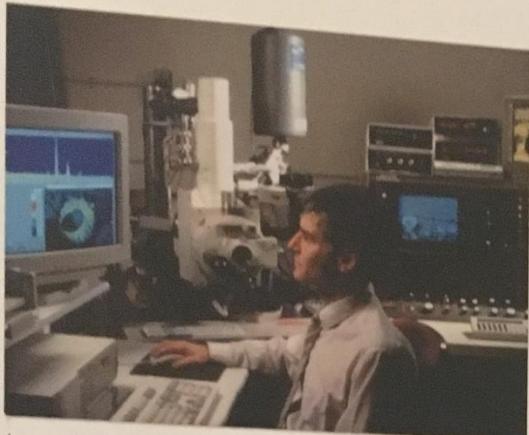
Of ancient origin – or a fake?

The British Museum purchased this quartz crystal skull from Tiffany and Co. of New York in 1897. It was originally owned by Eugène Boban, a collector who is known to have dealt in both genuine and fake Mexican antiquities. At that time it was thought that it might be an exceptional example of Aztec (14th –16th century AD) workmanship, and was originally displayed alongside other ancient materials from Mexico.



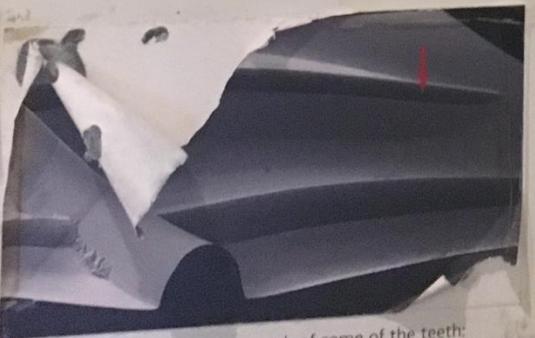
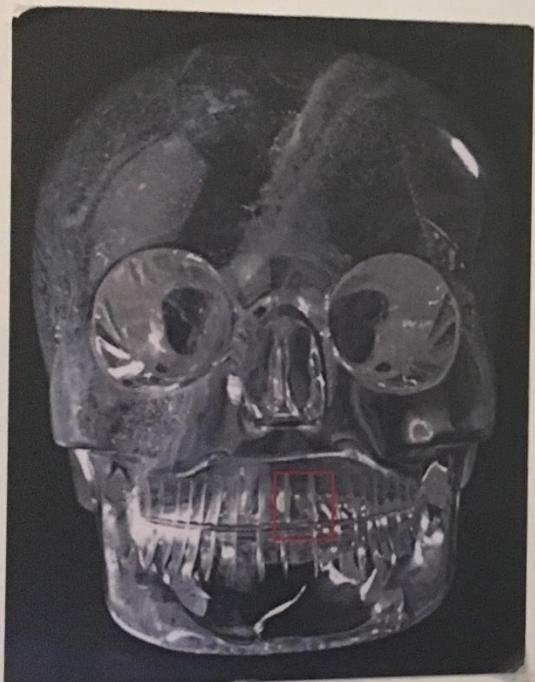
The skull has attracted worldwide attention from those who credit it with special powers and believe it to be a source of ancient knowledge with the ability to heal. While it has always been the subject of interest and curiosity, scientists have long doubted its authenticity. Research by the Smithsonian Institution in Washington and by scientists at the British Museum now shows that it was probably made in the late nineteenth century, from Brazilian quartz.

What makes the skull a fake?



A scanning electron microscope (SEM)

Although the crystal skull is highly polished, traces of tool marks remain from its carving. Moulds have been made of these indentations using special silicon dental 'wax' and these have been examined at high magnification in a scanning electron microscope. The detailed investigation revealed clear evidence that some features were carved using rotary cutting wheels. This kind of equipment was not available until after the Spanish conquest of Mexico in 1521, so the skull cannot be of Aztec manufacture. Instead, it seems likely that it was in fact made by Europeans working in Germany or Brazil during the late nineteenth century.



High magnification SEM photograph of some of the teeth: the curvature of these and other carved features on the skull show they were cut with a wheel. (Photograph rotated through 90°)

Diverse Cultural Life of Africa

Cast Brass Plaques





Head of a
Queen
Mother



Tree of Life – Sculpture built from the surrender of 600,000 weapons



Colossal (20 ft tall) 1,400-year-old Marble Statue of a Standing Buddha



Michaelangelo's Epifania Cartoon of Holy Family



Michelangelo (1475–1564)

The Epifania cartoon, around 1550–5
Black chalk

A cartoon is a final preparatory drawing on the same scale as the finished painting or other work of art. The word comes from the Italian for a large piece of paper: *cartone*.

This is one of only two surviving cartoons by Michelangelo. It is a design for a painting not by Michelangelo himself but by his biographer, Ascanio Condivi, now in the Casa Buonarroti, Florence. The aged Michelangelo, then in his mid-seventies, made numerous changes to the figures, such as in the position of the Christ Child's head.

The cartoon is recorded in Michelangelo's studio after his death in 1564. It was wrongly described then as an *Epifania* (the adoration of the newborn Christ by the three kings). The subject remains mysterious, but the position of Christ between his mother's legs (observed on the right by the Infant Baptist) suggests that one of its themes was his miraculous incarnation.

Due to the cartoon's scale and importance it always hangs here, alongside changing displays of treasures from the Museum's collection of prints and drawings.



Photograph: Ascanio Condivi,
The Holy Family and other figures
after Michelangelo, Casa Buonarroti, 1550s
British Museum 1820, 11, 1, 1

Ancient Egypt Collection -- With over 100,000 items, it is world's largest collection of Ancient Egyptian Artifacts outside of Cairo.









Gebelein man

Middle Predynastic
3500 BC

This man died more than 5500 years ago. He was buried at Gebelein in Upper Egypt, where he was found in a shallow grave covered with stone slabs, as partly reconstructed here. His body was naturally mummified by rapidly drying in the hot desert sand. This also preserved his hair, but its colour has probably faded with time.

Around him are objects typical of the Middle Predynastic period, about 3500 BC, the time we think he lived. All are from Gebelein, and some may have come from his grave.

From CT scans we know he was a strong young man. He died from a stab wound in his left shoulder, rare evidence of violence at this time. Visit the virtual autopsy table to learn more about this remarkably well preserved Predynastic person.

Gebelein, Middle Predynastic (Naqada I), EA 32751
Gebelein, Middle Predynastic (Naqada IIc), EA 16936, 22173,
22446, 30750, 30831, 35326, 35331, 35344, 67711



Bishop Timotheos, consecrated in 1372 in Cairo, during the declining years of Christianity in Lower Nubia. On his remains was found a long iron staff topped with a Benedictine Cross suspended around his neck.

The burial of Bishop Timotheos

During excavations at the cathedral of Qasr Ibrim in 1964, the well-preserved body of a Nubian bishop was discovered under the entrance to the north crypt. The body was dressed in a complete set of garments, including a tunic and trousers of cotton and linen, a blue turban and a hooded cloak decorated with a panel of silk tapestry. The bishop's iron benedictional cross was found suspended around his neck. The garments are of relatively simple design and may have been Timotheos' travelling apparel.

With the body were found two long paper scrolls, now in Cairo, comprising the letters of appointment of Bishop Timotheos, issued by the Coptic patriarch in Egypt. Written in Coptic and Arabic, the documents reveal that the bishop was consecrated in Old Cairo in 1371 and enthroned the following year at Naqada in Upper Egypt (an irregular procedure, perhaps resulting from troubled conditions in Nubia).

Timotheos may have died shortly after his arrival in Nubia; the nature of his burial suggests the need for haste and secrecy.



The body of Bishop Timotheos revealed by the 1964 excavation at Qasr Ibrim.



Iron benedictional cross of Bishop Timotheos
The blue cord from which the cross was suspended is displayed below.

EA 71955

Jewelry from Ancient Egypt



Cyrus Cylinder – Written by a Babylonian Scribe in Cuneiform Script in 6th BC called first declaration of human rights.



The Cyrus Cylinder

This dates from the reign of Cyrus the Great who ruled Iran between 550 and 530 BC. It describes this king's peaceful capture of Babylon in the year 539 BC and how he rebuilt the main temple there. The text, written in a script called cuneiform, claims that Cyrus restored temples in neighbouring cities and returned deported people to their homes. With reference to his just peaceful rule, this object has been referred to as an early 'charter of human rights'.

century BC, Babylon, Iraq

17.1941

What does the Cyrus Cylinder say?

'I am Cyrus, king of the world, great king, legitimate king, king of Babylon, king of Sumer and Akkad, king of the four rims (of the earth), son of Cambyses, great king, king of Anshan, descendant of Teispes, great king, king of Anshan, of a family (which) always (exercised) kingship'. (Extract from the Cyrus Cylinder)

The Cyrus Cylinder is one of the most famous historical documents of the Achaemenid Empire. It was written by a Babylonian scribe in cuneiform script, in the 6th century BC. The cylinder records Cyrus' peaceful capture of Babylon in 539 BC

and how he rebuilt the main temple of the city god Marduk. Cyrus claimed he had restored temples and cults in neighbouring cities and returned their deported people and gods. He strengthened Babylon's fortifications by completing the city moat and installing doors of cedar clad with bronze at the city gates. The cylinder was placed in the foundations of Babylon's city wall.

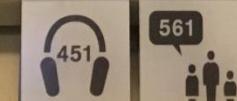
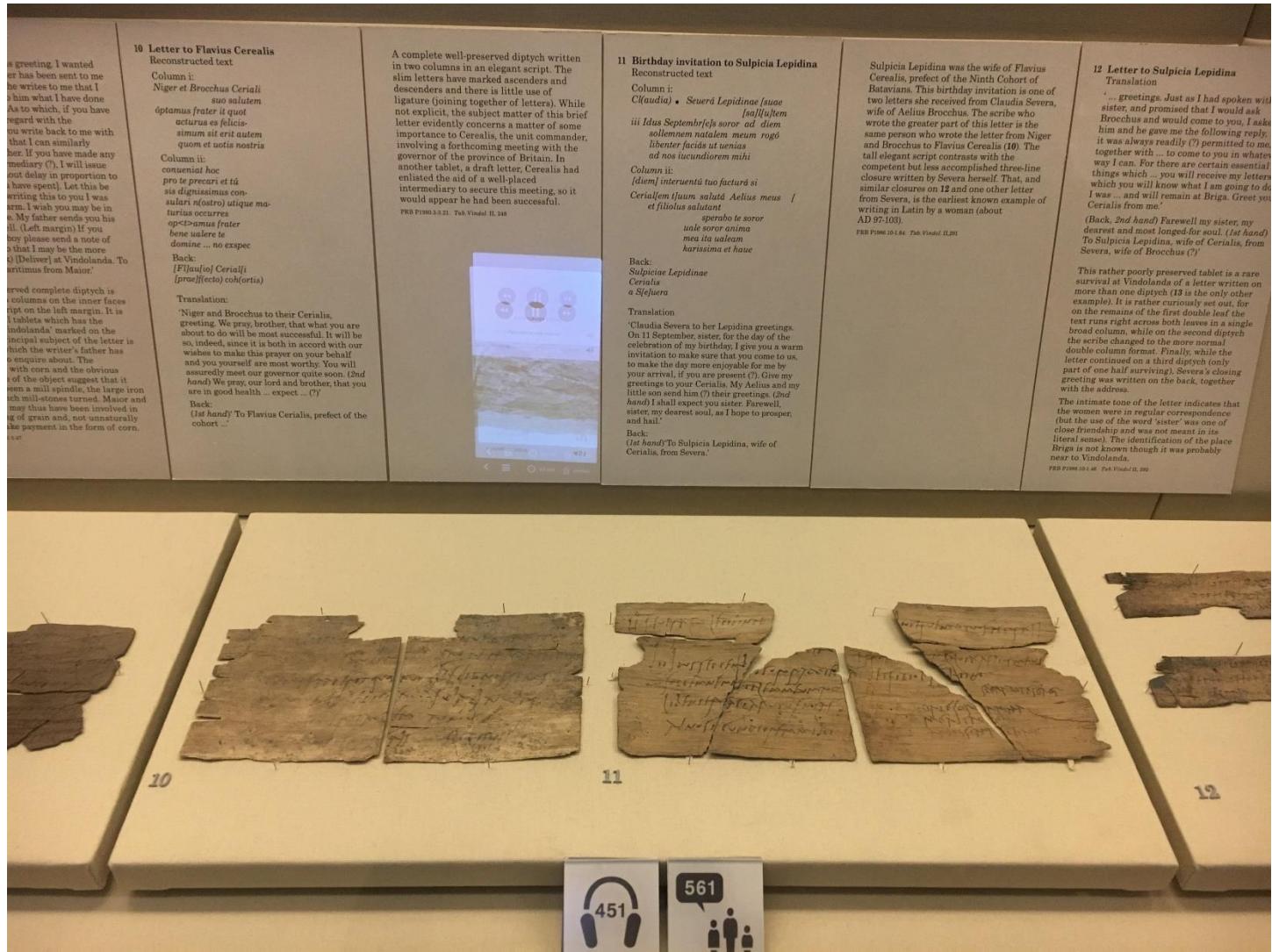
For a full translation of the text, visit www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk



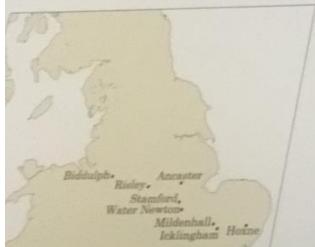
Priceless Bronze Age Gold Cape – One of the finest pieces of Bronze Age Craftsmanship in the World and made from 23-carat gold.



Vindolanda Tablets -- Oldest surviving handwritten documents from Britain written in Latin in Roman cursive script, written around 100 AD.



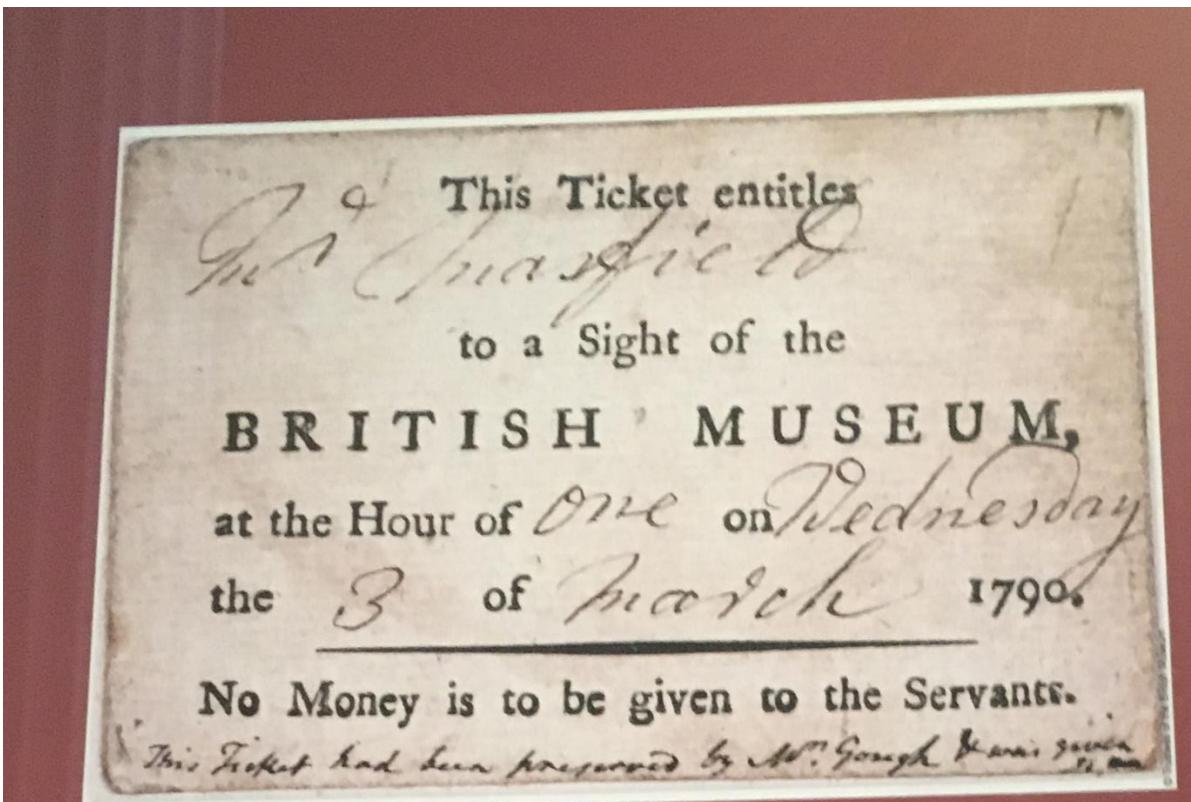
Floor Mosaic -- Earliest Known Mosaic Picture of Christ



This is the central roundel of a 4th-century AD mosaic floor from a villa at Hinton St Mary, Dorset. It is one of the most important early Christian remains from the Roman Empire.

The roundel is probably the earliest known mosaic picture of Christ. It is the focal point of the main floor in the position usually occupied by a figure of a pagan god or goddess. However, the Greek letters X and P (chi and rho) behind the head indicate that the person is probably

In the corners of the main mosaic are four heads. This position, often given to personifications of the four seasons or winds, is occupied here by what are possibly Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, the four Gospel writers. The mosaic formed the floor of two interlinked rooms of the villa. In the smaller room, the mosaic's central scene is of the pagan hero Beliuphon overpowering the triple-headed Chimaera – perhaps a Christian symbol of Good overcame Evil.



Entrance ticket to the British Museum, 1790

On 15 January 1759, The British Museum opened its doors to 'studious and curious persons'. A limited number of tickets were issued each day to avoid overcrowding. Entry was free, but visitors had to apply in person to the Porter, return another day to collect their ticket, and then come back at the appointed time for the visit itself. Under-Librarians took groups of five around the Museum, with tours conducted at a rapid pace to make way for the next party.

Found my Trip Souvenir! An African Cross in Gift Shop of British Museum – Axum Cross from Ethiopia

The Queen of Sheba was born in Axum but travelled to Israel to meet King Solomon. They had a son named Menelik, who later became the first emperor of Ethiopia. Menelik brought the original Ark of the Covenant back to Ethiopia from Israel. Today, the Ark, which once housed the Ten Commandments, supposedly remains well hidden in Axum.

