

Return Visit to the British Museum – February 5, 2018 – London, England

By Tom Allin

Knowing we wouldn't see everything we hadn't already seen we immediately headed to the staircase and the second floor. No time to waste when this may be the last day we have to roam the British Museum.

Damn, the staircase walls are covered by beautiful mosaics. Some of them are made to look like rugs and they look so real you want to reach out touch them. OK, we have climbed a lot of stairs in the last 20 months but none as slow as these and if we weren't in a hurry we would have climbed even slower.

As we cut through several galleries to get to the Oxus treasures (modern day Iraq) every once in a while something would catch one or both of our attention.



The Queen of the Night caught both of our attentions. She represents an ancient Mesopotamian goddess. The plaque is made of baked straw-tempered clay and was made in Babylonia (southern Iraq) between 1792 and 1750 BC. I think it was seeing a female nude figure that made us take a look but then you realize she has wings, her feet are talons just like the owls on each side of her and she is standing on two lions. She is beautiful.

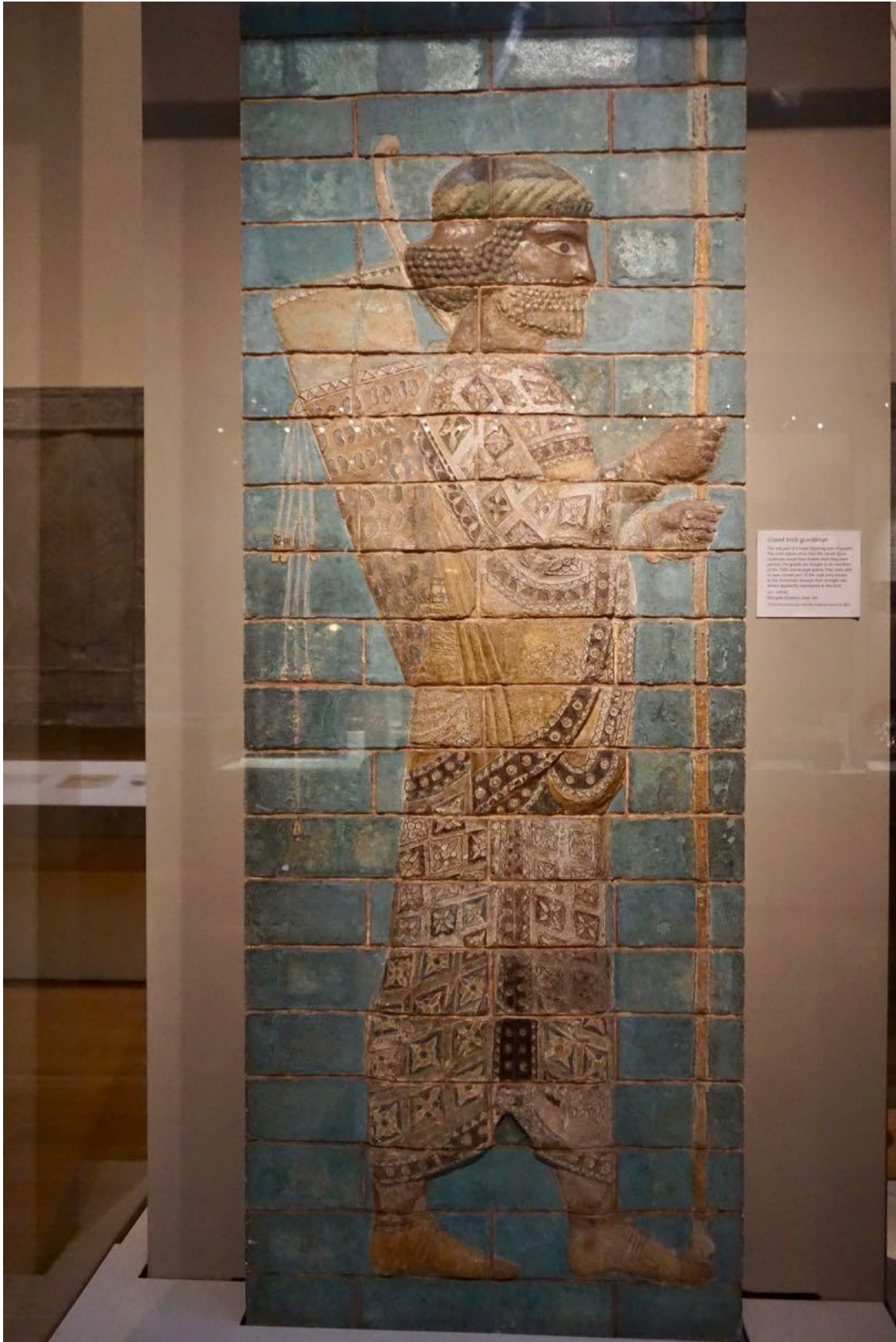
The next item that brought me to a stop were these two figures.



These figures were from Iran. “The first cities of Iran were founded about 3000 BC. Most likely these craft figures were used for long distance trade.” The elongated faces and simple bench like bodies are not beautiful or realistic but fascinating to me nevertheless.

I vaguely remember reading about people like Alexander the Great but I always wondered just how real was this person. What I am trying to say is at 15 I don't know if I truly believed there was an Alexander the Great or was he maybe a fable or story without basis.

Then you see something real he may have seen. These glazed bricks are from one of three Persian palaces that were destroyed by Alexander the Great in 323 BC. The glazed bricks were made between 550 – 330 BC.



Glazed brick guardian
This is one of the many figures from the Ishtar Gate, the main entrance to the city of Babylon. The figures were made of terracotta and were glazed in various colors. The figure is shown in profile, facing right, and is wearing a turban and a long, patterned robe. He is holding a bow in his right hand and an arrow in his left. The figure is set against a background of blue-green tiles.

Finally we reach the Oxus treasures. The four horse drawn chariot would be considered exquisite workmanship if it were done today but how do you describe the workmanship that was done in the 5th – 4th century BC?



The next photograph may not be much to look at but its translation to English makes our President appear humble:

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



This was written in cuneiform script in the 6th century BC. The cylinder records Cyrus' peaceful capture of Babylon in 539 BC.

Warning! Must be 18 years older to view this next photograph.

“Lovers – this is the oldest known sculpture of a couple making love. The lovers are face to face. One person has their arms around the shoulders of the other whose legs are drawn up around the waist of the first. The tender sexual embrace is made more explicit because the sculpture is ingeniously phallic whichever way you look at it.”



A bronze statuette of Mars. The British Museum believes Mars was holding a spear and shield. Me, I think he was toasting with a beer mug.



And we all know “it ain’t over until the fat lady sings”.



“This is actually a Horned helmet found in the River Thames at Waterloo Bridge, London dates to 150 – 50 BC. Originally this helmet would have been a gleaming golden color and decorated with red glass studs.”

The legs were tired and the stomachs growling so we left the museum for lunch. However, before lunch we stopped to look at an interactive map of London. In the bottom center of the map is Turnham-Green Park and Rick and Lee live several blocks to the left of the park. The large park at top center is Hyde Park.



For lunch it was a nearby Pub and that national dish: fish and chips.



Following lunch we joined a walking tour of the British Museum. We entered the Museum from the rear entrance and walked by these lions.



Our guide was interesting and hit various highlights (but not all because the tour was only two hours in length).

We spent no more than ten minutes in the gallery containing the Parthenon Marbles or Sculptures. The story of how the marbles got from Greece to England is almost as interesting as the marbles themselves. The Greeks want them back noting they came from Greece, the government of Turkey wants them because they controlled Greece at the time the marbles were removed from Greece and believe therefore they were stolen from Turkey (pretty weak case I think) and the British say, "he who has them, owns them!"



The next photograph came from the Mausoleum at Halikarnassos – one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. These places actually existed and I am standing in a room of various items that make up the tomb! How cool is that.



The last item of the tour is one that would have been so easy to walk past but is something I will remember as long as my memory stays with me. It is the Sutton Hoo helmet. "This is one of just four complete helmets to survive from Anglo-Saxon England. The helmet consists of an iron cap with a crest, neck-guard, cheek-pieces and face-mask. It was originally covered with tinned copper alloy panels, decorated with animal and warrior motifs. Viewed together, the helmet's mouth, nose and eyebrows form the image of a flying beast." Late 500 AD to early 800 AD

This helmet was made roughly 100 to 400 years before the first English King was declared, Alfred the Great, King of Wessex.



The next photograph is a model of what the Sutton Hoo Helmet most likely looked like at the time of its making.



Egyptian tombs, palaces and castles, gold, Roman gods, kings and queens, lion hunts, 7 Wonders of the World, and warrior helmets and weapons these are things of boy's dreams or at least my dreams.