

Review of Professor Peter Edwards' 'Greek Temples of Sicily' 22nd April 2021

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We welcomed back Professor Peter Edwards who had delivered a fascinating presentation on 'The Death of Venice' earlier this year so we were looking forward to another presentation of his. Until retirement Peter had been a Professor of Engineering Maths Education at Bournemouth University and an Associate Lecturer and External Examiner for the Open University. He holds separate degrees in Maths, Aeronautics and Robotics.

In true 'lecturer' mode Peter set out his objectives at the start, showed us very clear diagrams building up the information as he went along. Peter ensured that there was progression with sufficient and well-chosen photos and carefully chosen words so that by the end we had certainly been entertained and much better informed.

Peter's mathematical and engineering background helped us to view the architecture of the temples, so that we thought about the symmetry and how they were constructed. We learnt that Greek temples nearly all faced east. Some of us learnt new words such as 'amphiprostyle'. So for the meaning of this word we discovered that we could look at ancient classical temples and better understand the layout being able to note the porticos at the front and the rear but not the sides. 'Pseudoperipteral' too seemed an interesting word describing the style of freestanding colonnades at each end with engaged columns at the side. However, Sicily's early Greek temples almost exclusively used the 'peripteral hexastyle' arrangement – just a fancy way of stating that the temple had a single row of columns all around the perimeter (i.e. peripteral), providing a portico on all sides, with six columns at the front and at the rear (i.e. hexastyle).

A map of the different regions of Sicily showed us where we might view the various temples and find out more about Sicily's rich classical background. In the west the magnificent 'Greek' temple at Segesta looked well worth a visit. At Selinunte the most westerly of the Greek colonies in Sicily Peter's earlier diagrams helped us visualise what the temple of around 550 BC must have looked like in all its glory. We could clearly see that the Temple of Concordia was the star of the temples at Agrigento; the largest and best preserved Doric¹ temple in Sicily.



In these uncertain times and not knowing when we might be able to travel further afield it was reassuring to know that there are plenty of examples of the Greek style here in the UK. The British Museum is one such example with its portico as the entrance to the museum just as it would have been the entrance to a Greek temple. The

Ashmolean too in Oxford, the oldest public museum in Britain built in the Greek revival style in the 17th century.

One of our members summed up Peter's session so well: "Thank you time flew by as this was so absorbing. Learnt a great deal – will go round the UK with my eyes open."

Thank you Peter!

Photo: 'The Temple of Concordia' Copyright – Professor Peter Edwards

Review by Christine Chittock, Chairperson and Speakers' Coordinator.

¹ Doric: The oldest and simplest of the three main orders of classical Greek architecture, characterized by heavy fluted columns with plain, saucer-shaped capitals and no base.