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Great North Museum:
Hancock

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PREFACE

The Great North Museum: Hancock, a public museum of natural history and ancient civilisations in the city of Newcastle upon Tyne, houses an impressive collection of antiquities including inscriptions, ceramics, bronzes, stone and terracotta sculpture, gems and arms and armour. The collection contains Roman, Near Eastern, Egyptian and British Prehistoric objects, and it has particular strength in Greek and Etruscan artefacts. The collection possesses a single Attic inscription on stone, which is published here for the first time.

As we explain in more detail in our Introduction, the provenance of this inscription is very uncertain, and we have been unable to trace the history of its ownership before 1980 (when it was acquired by Newcastle). We are mindful of the issues associated with publishing antiquities whose pre-1970 provenance cannot be documented, but (having regard to, for example, the AIA's code of ethics) the benefits of publication would seem in this case to outweigh any reservations one might have on that score, especially as the inscription is now held in a public collection. Indeed, we are hopeful that our publication might provoke further study of the stone and its provenance.

We are grateful to Sally Waite of Newcastle University, Andrew Parkin (Keeper of Archaeology for the Great North Museum), Ellen Watts and Daisy-Alys Vaughan (the subject of whose doctoral study is the Shefton Collection). As usual, we offer our thanks to Stephen Lambert, Irene Vagionakis, to the anonymous reviewers of the paper and to the AIO Advisory Board.

ABBREVIATIONS

In addition to the abbreviations listed at <https://www.atticinscriptions.com/browse/bysource/> the following abbreviations are used in this volume:

Agora XXXV: J. B. Grossman, *The Athenian Agora. Results of Excavations Conducted by the American School of Classical Studies at Athens. Volume XXXV. Funerary Sculpture* (2013)

Boardman and Parkin: J. Boardman and A. Parkin, “Brian Benjamin Shefton, 11 August 1919–25 January 2012”, *Biographical Memoirs of Fellows of the British Academy* 17, 2018, 51–56

Boardman, Parkin and Waite: J. Boardman, A. Parkin, S. Waite eds., *On the Fascination of Objects: Greek and Etruscan Art in the Shefton Collection* (2015)

Collignon: M. Collignon, *Les Statues Funéraires dans l'Art Grec* (1911)

Cook: B. F. Cook, “An Attic Grave Stele in New York”, *Antike Plastik* 9, 1969, 65-72

Garland: R. Garland, “A First Catalogue of Attic *Peribolos* Tombs”, *ABSA* 77, 1982, 125-76

Harrison: J. Harrison, *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion*. With Introduction by R. Ackerman (1991)

Hofstetter: E. Hofstetter, “Seirenes”, *LIMC* VIII 1 Suppl., 1997, 1093-1104

Kokula: G. Kokula, *Marmorlutrophoren* (1984)

Kroll: J. H. Kroll, *Athenian Bronze Allotment Plates* (1972)

Kroll 2015: J. H. Kroll, “An Allotment Plate from Central Greece”, in A. P. Matthaiou and N. Papazarkadas eds., *AΞΩΝ – Studies in Honor of Ronald S. Stroud*. Volume 2, 595-98

Loy and Mullen: M. Loy and A. Mullen, “A Greek Inscription with Rider Iconography from South Shields, Britain”, *ZPE* 209, 2019, 140-44

Peyer and Johnston: R. M. de Peyer and A. Johnston, “Greek Antiquities from the Wellcome Collection: A Distribution List”, *JHS* 106, 1986, 286-94

Roisman and Worthington: J. Roisman and I. Worthington, *Lives of the Attic Orators: Texts from Pseudo-Plutarch, Photius, and the Suda* (1995)

Shefton: B. B. Shefton “The Greek Museum, University of Newcastle upon Tyne”, *Archaeological Reports* 16, 1969-1970, 52-62

Spawforth and Parkin: A. Spawforth and A. Parkin, “Introduction”, in J. Boardman, A. Parkin and S. Waite eds., *On the Fascination of Objects: Greek and Etruscan Art in the Shefton Collection* (2015)

Vedder: U. Vedder, *Untersuchungen zur plastischen Ausstattung attischer Grabanlagen des 4. Jhs. v. Chr.* (1985)

Weicker: G. Weicker, *Der Seelenvogel in der alten Litteratur und Kunst* (1902)

Woysch-Méautis: D. Woysch-Méautis, *La représentation des animaux et des êtres fabuleux sur les monuments funéraires grecs: de l'époque archaïque à la fin du IVe siècle av. J.-C.* (1982)

AN ATTIC INSCRIPTION AT THE GREAT NORTH MUSEUM: HANCOCK, NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE

Many of the objects in the collection of antiquities at the Great North Museum: Hancock derive from the “Greek Museum” of the University of Newcastle, developed and sustained by the classical archaeologist Brian Shefton (1919-2012) from the time of his appointment to a lectureship in archaeology and ancient history at Newcastle in 1955.¹ Shefton was supported and encouraged initially by Charles Bosanquet, Rector and later Vice Chancellor of that University until his retirement in 1968.² Shefton was originally allocated a grant of £25 with which he purchased three Greek pots.³ He was the curator of the collection until his retirement in 1984, when he was succeeded by Antony Spawforth. At that point, the collection consisted of over 800 objects acquired by purchase (often through auction houses) on the basis of University sponsorship, grants (for example from the National Art Collection Fund, the Hellenic Society and local businesses and enterprises), bequests from benefactors and loans from the Wellcome Collection.⁴

Between 1956 and 2009 the collection was housed in a number of different University buildings. It is a fitting tribute to Shefton’s efforts that the “Greek Museum” was renamed “Shefton Museum of Greek Art and Archaeology” in 1994. In 2009 it became part of the Great North Museum when the University moved its archaeology collections (including also the “Museum of Antiquities”, founded in 1960) into the refurbished Hancock Museum (originally the home of a natural history collection). Shortly after, to celebrate Shefton’s 90th birthday, the Greek Gallery was renamed the “Shefton Gallery of Greek and Etruscan Archaeology”, as it is known today. The collection is managed by Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums on behalf of Newcastle University.

As we have shown in other *AIUK* papers, the majority of collections of antiquities in the UK have their roots in the eighteenth or nineteenth centuries. The collection at Newcastle is therefore very unusual (perhaps even unique among public collections) in having been developed over the course of the second half of the twentieth century. Shefton conceived of the “Greek Museum” as the basis for both research and teaching but also in terms of what would today be described as “outreach”: in a letter to the Managing Director of Tyne Tees Television Limited (dated 3rd April 1981, now held in the archive of the Shefton collection) Shefton thanked him and his Arts and Sciences Sub-Committee of Tyne Tees TV for their “generous contribution of £500 towards the acquisition” of the stele (1); he praised their support “not only to an important activity of the University on behalf of the cultural amenities of the region but for scholarship and research on a much wider level”; and he also acknowledged the company’s help in acquiring an ancient bronze helmet (published as Shefton, pp. 54-55, no. 3). The collection, therefore, is very much a reflection of Shefton’s foresight and skill in persuading benefactors to support it.

¹ See Spawforth and Parkin; Boardman and Parkin.

² Shefton, 52.

³ Boardman and Parkin, 55.

⁴ Spawforth and Parkin, 4; Boardman and Parkin, 55-56. For an overview of the Shefton collection, see Boardman, Parkin and Waite.

The collection contains one stone which is likely to be of Attic, perhaps Athenian, provenance (1). We publish its *editio princeps* here. The inscription was purchased (with the assistance of a grant of 50% from the Victoria and Albert Museum and a contribution from Tyne Tees TV)⁵ at the Sotheby's Sale on 13th May 1980. In the sales catalogue it was described as "A Roman marble fragment from a grave Stele, with pointed top, decorated with a column in relief and surmounted by a winged figure, 20 ½ in. (52.1 cm)".⁶ The catalogue offers no information about its previous owners or the circumstances of its discovery.⁷ When we came across the stele on display in the Shefton Gallery it was labelled as "Attic"; the identification was made probably by Shefton himself.⁸ Nothing certain, therefore, is known of its provenance. There are other Greek inscriptions on stone in the Great North Museum: these include a second-century AD funerary monument possibly deriving from Thrace (Inv. no. NEWMA: 1904.1), the discovery of which (in a stonemason's yard in South Shields) was announced by Robert Blair, Secretary of the Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle-upon-Tyne in around 1894. It was donated to the Society's Museum in 1904 (see Loy and Mullen). On display in the Great North Museum, next to 1, is an unpublished funerary stele for Kallimachos son of Gorgias of unknown provenance (possibly second century AD; NEWGM: 827, on permanent loan from the Wellcome Institute).⁹

The collection at the Great North Museum holds another inscription of likely Athenian provenance in the shape of a fourth-century bronze *pinakion* (probably non-dikastic; used for the allotment of magistrates) inscribed with the name Δίπολις Κροπίδης (Inv. no. Shefton 141).¹⁰ It was purchased on behalf of what was then the city's Greek Museum at the Sotheby's Sale on December 11th 1967, with help from a grant from the Victoria and Albert Museum. There is another, unpublished, bronze plaque in the collection (Inv. no. Shefton 884); its provenance is unclear.¹¹

⁵ Shefton, letter to the Managing Director of Tyne Tees Television Limited, 3rd April 1981.

⁶ Sotheby's Sale catalogue for 13th May 1980 Lot 219, p. 40, under the heading of "Various Properties". The sale was not listed in Clairmont's list of Sotheby's sales (perhaps because of the object's incorrect designation in the sales catalogue as Roman): see *CAT VI* p. 298.

⁷ Sotheby's have informed us (by email, 25th February 2020) that the vendor of the item in 1980 was UK-based, but that they are unable to supply any further information; they have no information on the pre-1970 provenance of the stele.

⁸ Shefton described the object as an "Attic marble relief fragment" in his letter to the Managing Director of Tyne Tees Television Limited (see above).

⁹ For an overview of the distribution of Greek antiquities from the Wellcome collection to other UK institutions, see de Peyer and Johnston (at 290 on the material in Newcastle).

¹⁰ See Kroll no. 39b with *SEG* 34.137.

¹¹ We are grateful to John Kroll for his advice on this bronze plaque: in an email of March 2016 on the basis of a photograph, he expresses doubts that this fragment was part of an Athenian allotment plate on the basis of the lettering and the position of its hole. He suggests that it should be cleaned before further work on its identification is undertaken; cf. Kroll 2015, publishing an allotment plate from central Greece.

1 FUNERARY STELE OF PANTAKLES. Inv. no. Shefton 641. Purchased in 1980. Findspot unknown, but perhaps from Attica. Upper part of a stele of yellowish-white marble with golden-brown patina; crowned with horizontal moulding and triangular finial. Broken at the bottom and damaged at the upper left hand side; the rear (which seems to be original) is roughly finished, as are the upper surfaces of the finial; there are diagonal flaws in the marble on the upper right of the main body of the stele. The triangular finial is decorated with two lateral acroteria carved in shallow relief, between which there is a sunken panel containing the sculpted figure of a mourning siren, facing frontally, her right hand held up to the side of her head and her left held flat against her chest. Her hair is short-cropped. Her plain-surfaced wings are spread out behind her. Her torso is that of a human female but from the hips downward she becomes avian, with birds' legs which may have ended in webbed feet (now missing owing to damage). Behind her legs the faint traces of a broad tail are visible. Beneath the moulding, the main body of the stele preserves the neck and handles of a loutrophoros in low relief; the slightly thicker central part of the lower band of horizontal moulding merges with (and functions as) the top of the loutrophoros. Dimensions: h. 0.368-0.512; w. 0.412-0.44; th. 0.065-0.10. The inscription, located on the moulding at the base of the finial, is faint and is written between upper and lower guide-lines; letters are widely and evenly spaced. Lettering is neat and square, without serifs. The first alpha has curved hastae, the second is straight; pi has a short right vertical; the right stroke of the nu does not extend as far down as the left. L.h. 0.016; interval between letters 0.025

Autopsy Liddel and Low 2019 and 2020. On display: Greek Gallery of the Great North Museum: Hancock. *Figs.* 1, 2, 3.

ca. 375-325 BC

Παντακλῆς

Pantakles

During the classical period, sirens were closely associated with the mourning of the deceased,¹² and perhaps had a particularly strong association with the commemoration of those who had suffered an unnatural or untimely death. They appear as free-standing statues in funerary *periboloi*,¹³ but from about 360 BC they are also represented on Attic funerary *stelai* as bird-woman hybrids, often within the upper register of monuments and sometimes (appropriately enough, given their avian qualities) perched within an anthemion (as, for example, in *Agora XXXV* no. 147).¹⁴ Their significance in the context of the funerary

¹² Helen invoked the sirens during a moment of deep sorrow: Euripides, *Helen*, 167-78. For interpretation of the significance of sirens especially as representatives of the mourning process, see Woysch-Méautis, 96-108. The idea (expressed in, e.g., Weicker and Collignon, 76-79) that they represented the souls of the dead is now obsolete. Harrison (204) argued that their role in tombs was originally apotropaic, warding off evil spirits.

¹³ For an example of a free-standing siren, see *CAT* 2 = Garland A 1, one of a pair deriving from the *peribolos* of Dexileos (*IG* II² 6217); another example (fragmentary): Garland L 4.

¹⁴ For discussion of the date, see Grossman in *Agora XXXV* p. 130 n. 339, drawing on the stylistic chronology established by Vedder, 99-114. The most comprehensive collection of representations of sirens on Athenian funerary *stelai*, consisting of over 50 examples, is Woysch-Méautis, 135, 137-40 (nos. 370-74 and 392-440); see also *Agora XXXV* nos. 143-47, Vedder, 276-81, index in

monument is manifested in two epigrams preserved in the literary tradition. One verse, for a girl who killed herself, envisages the role played by representations of sirens in the act of lamentation: “We stones in the semblance of sirens stand on thy tomb tearing our cheeks for thee and weeping” (*Greek Anthology* 7.491, tr. Paton). Another epigram, for Baukis (who is said to have died “as a bride”), voiced by her companion Erinna, envisages the stelai and sirens of the tomb as attracting the attention of the passer-by: “Ye columns and my Sirens, and thou, mournful pitcher that holdest the little ash of death, bid them who pass by my tomb hail, be they citizens or from another town ...” (*Greek Anthology* 7.710, tr. Paton).

Sirens on grave monuments could be represented in lamentation or as musicians (holding a lyre or flute and perhaps singing praise of the dead, or even, as Stephen Lambert suggests to us, luring them to their fate).¹⁵ In the case of the Newcastle stele, the position of the siren’s arms with right hand raised (as if tearing hair from her head) and left touching the chest (as if beating it) suggest that she is a symbol of mourning and intense lamentation for the deceased. This was a common pose among those sirens appearing on Attic funerary epitaphs.¹⁶ Sirens are depicted usually upon funerary monuments for those who died unmarried or prematurely.¹⁷

A further aspect of this stele verifies the youthful nature of the deceased: the body of the stele represents a loutrophoros, the upper part of which is extant. The style of the loutrophoros, and its placement on the stele in relation to the moulding, closely resembles the monument for Nikomachos of Piraeus, *IG II²* 7180 (= Clairmont, *CAT* 1.303), tentatively dated to the first quarter of the fourth century BC. As in that example, the loutrophoros on Pantakles’ stele likely bore painted or sculpted decoration, representing the deceased alone or with others. As we note elsewhere, the loutrophoros motif indicates that the deceased

Clairmont, *CAT* vol. VI pp. 156-57 and Kokula, 98-99 n. 32. For an overview of their iconography on funerary monuments, see Woysch-Méautis, 135, 137-40; Vedder, 134-39; Hofstetter, 1101-1102. On their iconography generally, see Hofstetter *passim*.

¹⁵ In lamentation Woysch-Méautis nos. 370-77, 392-433; as musicians Woysch-Méautis nos. 434-40. Sirens luring individuals to their fate: in *Odyssey* 12 Odysseus had himself bound to the mast of his ship so that his response to the seductive song of the sirens was restricted (*Od.* 12.184-91).

¹⁶ For this pose, see, for example, Woysch-Méautis nos. 370 (= *IG II²* 7090), 371 (= *IG II²* 10846), 372 (= *IG II²* 8421), 373 (= *IG II²* 6484), 374 (= *IG II²* 7610), 376 (= *IG II²* 5749), 394 (no inscription), 396 (= *IG II²* 7272), 398 (= *IG II²* 5239), 399 (no inscription), 400 (= *IG II²* 11851a), 406 (= *IG II²* 5732), 407 (= *IG II²* 11660), 408 (= *IG II²* 10133).

¹⁷ For this norm, see Cook 67; Woysch-Méautis, 94; Grossman in *Agora* XXXV p. 130. One apparent exception is the mid fourth-century stele, with siren, for Philodemos and Lysimache (perhaps husband and wife) in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford (*IG II²* 7807 = Scholl, *Bildfeldstelen* tab. 47.1); but in this case it appears that the monument was originally set up for Philodemos (who may have died young), and that Lysimache’s name was added later. For discussion see *AIUK* 11 (Ashmolean). The traditions about the sirens commemorating Sophocles (*TrGF* IV 37 [T1, 15]) and Isocrates ([Plut.] *X Or.* 838b-d) suggest that exceptions were possible: for Isocrates [Plutarch] maintains that a siren sat upon a column 30 cubits high but also acknowledges, later in this work, that he was married ([Plut.] *X Or.* 839b). On the reception of and sources for Isocrates’ grave monument, see Roisman and Worthington 13 and 162. Sirens were considered appropriate representations at the tombs of poets and orators owing to their association with the singing of poetry: see Garland, 129 n. 19.

was unmarried when he or she died.¹⁸ In Demosthenes' speech *Against Leochares* a loutrophoros was used to support the claim that Archiades died a bachelor (Dem. 44.18). Given that the symbolism of siren and loutrophoros have overlapping significance in commemorating those who had died prematurely, it comes as no surprise that the two representations sometimes coincide on grave monuments.¹⁹ Indeed, the representation of a mourning siren standing above a loutrophoros carved on the slab below is paralleled in several instances.²⁰ The combination of representation (siren and loutrophoros) makes it likely, then, that Pantakles died prematurely and unmarried.

Although we lack any information about the provenance of this stele, the representation of a siren and a loutrophoros make it likely that it derives from Attica.²¹ We have found no exact parallel for the combination of decorative elements in the Newcastle stele, although its constituent parts are widely attested (individually and in combination). As already mentioned, the combination of siren and loutrophoros is common in Attic funerary monuments. The positioning of a siren in a finial, between rounded acroteria carved in low relief, finds a close parallel in Clairmont, *CAT* 2.355d, a monument for Planthane and Soteira (now in the Musée Rodin, Paris; the inscription appears to be unpublished). In this instance, the finial is semi-circular, rather than the more triangular shape seen in Pantakles' stele, but the placement of a siren in a triangular finial is not uncommon. One might compare, for example, *IG* II² 12138 (= Woysch-Méautis, 399), a monument from Piraeus, dated to the second half of the fourth century, although this example (and others with triangular finials) lacks the lateral acroteria of the Newcastle stele.²² Triangular finials without sirens are, of course, a common feature of Attic grave monuments; note in particular Clairmont, *CAT* 2.339c, which features a combination of triangular finial and rounded lateral acroteria very similar to that of our stele.

The name Pantakles is well-attested in ancient Athens, with 36 examples listed in the *Athenian Onomasticon*, 15 of them from the fourth century BC. (One of these 36, the

¹⁸ See [AIUK 3 \(Fitzwilliam\)](#) no. 5 (with fig. 10) and [AIUK 6 \(Leeds City Museum\)](#) no. 1 (with fig. 1).

¹⁹ Kokula, 111-12.

²⁰ Woysch-Méautis nos. 374 (= *IG* II² 7610); 376 (= *IG* II² 5749 = Kokula H 18 = Vedder L 17+L18); 394 (no inscription); 406 (= *IG* II² 5732 = Kokula L 41 = Vedder L8); 435 (no inscription).

²¹ Most funerary representations of sirens on funerary stelai derive from Athens and Attica, but a few are known from elsewhere, such as Thebes (*SEG* 64.438) and Soloi (Cilicia) (*SEG* 37.1332); see also Hofstetter, 1101, pointing to examples from Illyria and Taras.

²² See also Woysch-Méautis nos. 407 (= *IG* II² 11660), 408 (= *IG* II² 10133), 427 (= *IG* II² 11798), 428, 429 (= *IG* II² 11579); Clairmont, *CAT* 2.848. Two examples with non-Athenian provenance are also worth noting. One is Clairmont, *CAT* 2.322b (= *I. Cilicie* 23 bis), a monument for Choirine and Philokalos, found near the city of Mersin in Turkey, dated to the second quarter of the fourth century. The stele has a triangular finial, with a siren in a very similar pose to that of the Newcastle stele; the main body of the stele depicts a conventional *dexiosis* scene, between standing female and seated male. Clairmont *ad loc.* concedes that the monument is carved on local (i.e. Cilician) stone, but argues that "one can hardly doubt that the gravestone is of Attic workmanship". The second is Clairmont, *CAT* 3.423a: triangular finial, in which a siren is depicted standing on a triangular pediment, all carved in low relief; the finial has lateral acroteria (in the round, rather than carved). This inscription was found in Istanbul, but has conventionally been interpreted as a *pietre errante*, deriving from Attica.

Pantakles of [IG I³ 1032](#) line 439, might be a metic; the *Onomasticon* considers the others to be either definitely or probably Athenian citizens.) The name is also relatively well-attested outside Athens (*LGPN* lists 81 instances in total). The absence of patronymic or demotic means that any attempt to identify the Newcastle Pantakles with one of the already-known bearers of this name would be futile.

The size and spacing of the stele's lettering is similar to that of a fragmentary fourth-century BC grave monument for a person from Piraeus (*Agora* XXXV 114 = *Agora* XVII 282), recently dated by Grossman (on sculptural rather than epigraphic grounds) to the third quarter of the fourth century BC. Its letter-forms are also broadly comparable with those of the *Agora* monument, but the style of lettering is not so distinctive as to allow for a precise dating. More useful as a diagnostic criterion for dating is the form of the sculpted siren, which is very similar in body shape, in the form and angle of her wings, and in her gesture to the siren of *Agora* XXXV 145 (dated by Grossman to the second quarter of the fourth century); it also seems to resemble the less well-preserved siren of *Agora* XXXV 146 (which Grossman places in the middle of the fourth century).

In summary: the style of the monument, and in particular its decoration, provides the strongest evidence in favour of it being an Athenian funerary monument dating to the second or third quarter of the fourth century BC. Its lettering, and the name of the deceased, are compatible with this conclusion. We cannot rule out the possibility that the monument derives from some other part of the Greek world, but if this is the case it must have been commissioned by someone who wanted to emulate a distinctively Attic form of funerary commemoration.



Fig. 1. 1. Photograph: P. A. Low.



Fig. 2. 1. Detail of inscription. Photograph: P. A. Low.



Fig. 3. 1. Detail of inscription, traced. Photograph: P. A. Low. Tracing: I. Vagionakis.