Hellene Team summer get-together
by Dr. Kerry Phelan (@KerryLPhelan on X/Twitter) – Attachment D

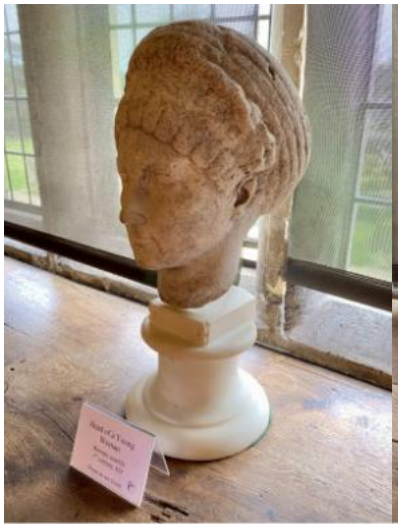
During a balmy weekend in August, the Hellene School Travel team came together to review the past academic year's trips, to brainstorm new ideas for future groups, and generally to enjoy a catch up with one another! With Lingfield in Surrey as our base for a couple of days, we all met on Friday evening for (some!) drinks and a meal.

More formal plans were set in place for the next day. Our Saturday morning was spent exploring the regal splendour of **Hever Castle** in Kent. Originally constructed in 1270, the Castle is now a bustling tourist attraction (as we found out when we arrived just ahead of opening time and saw the crowd already gathered to enter it's gates!); it's most famous for being the seat of Boleyn family from 1462 until 1539, and it specifically served as the childhood home of Anne Boleyn

The Castle itself is surrounded by a moat and visitors are guided into the stately home by the whimsical animal-shaped trees surround it. Once inside Hever Castle, we wandered through the very apartments where Anne Boleyn and King Henry VIII once frequented. Many of the rooms are a blend of historical styles from the 16th and the 20th centuries, since the wealthy William Waldorf Astor bought the property in 1903 and made it his family home. Indeed, the Astors were especially respectful in their renovations to the property, as they were keen on preserving as much of the original building as possible, and their subsequent refurbishment focused on designs authentic to the Tudor period. Hence being able to still enter the house over a moat!

For the true Tudor history buffs, Anne Boleyn's intricate prayer books – in which she signed her name and made little notes and inscriptions – were a particular highlight. And, for fans of a compelling BBC drama, the many costumes on display from *Wolf Hall* (2015-2025) were really quite impressive in terms of their detail and resemblance to the portraits hanging in the Long Gallery.

Since the Hellene team are, of course, most interested in the ancient world, we were were drawn to the **Roman artefacts dotted throughout the house**; there was a 1st century AD female bust, and a funerary urn from the 2nd century AD. But I loved the marble statue of a Molossian mastiff nearly hidden from view in the corner of a narrow passageway; a Roman copy of a Greek bronze original (isn't that always the way, James!), the dog is often referred to as the 'The Dog of Alcibiades' because of it's broken tail.



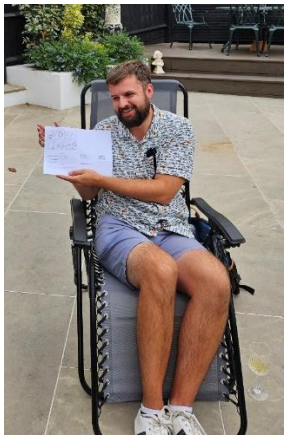
But, being Classicists through and through, the really exciting part of the visit actually lay *outside* the castle walls. The gardens at Hever Castle, stretching over 125 acres of land and with a life-size yew maze too, also include the aptly named **Italian Garden**. In amongst the gorgeous roses and long sweeping lawns, the so-called **Pompeiian Wall** sits on the north side of the Garden and contains several small bays off to the side, made especially to showcase the Astor's collection of Classical sculpture which they had imported from Italy.

And, at the very end of the Garden, the monumental **Loggia** allows visitors to take in the views over a placid lake. Flanked by pillared colonnades, the elaborate balustrade steps lead to a paved area overlooking the water; there, the centrepiece is the marble Nymph's Fountain – installed in 1908 – which was specifically inspired by the Trevi Fountain in Rome.

When we reluctantly left the beautiful surrounds at Hever Castle, we travelled to East Grinstead in Sussex for some more history (there can never be enough, can there?!). Here, we first passed by **St Swithun's Church;** in the graveyard, a memorial stone has been erected for three Protestant martyrs who were burned at the stake in 1556, under the rule of Catholic Queen Mary. From there, we made our along the Medieval hight street, looking at where the prison and the gallows site once stood. Though there are a number of listed timber-framed buildings

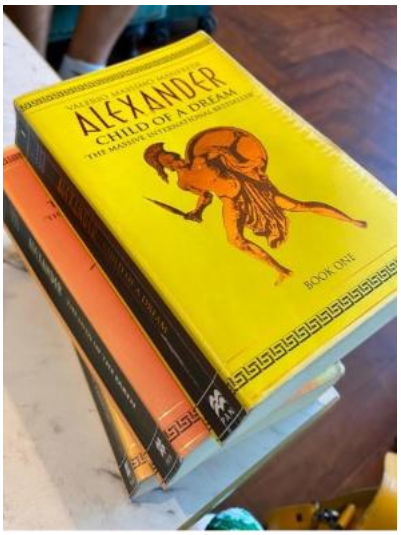
to see, one of the most notable **Sackville College**, which was built in 1609. The college was founded as an alms house and later became the birthplace of the hymn, *Good King Wenceslas*.

For the evening, we rested weary feet in the lovely surrounds of Sarah and John's garden of their new home, and enjoyed an amazing BBQ together with a side of archaeological-themed games! James won the 'Identify the Artefact Quiz' and received an Amazon Voucher! Woo!



And finally, before we all went our separate ways once again, there was just enough time on Sunday to make a last-minute second-hand book purchase before visiting the **Church of St Peter & St Paul** in Lingfield for some Medieval (sorry, we'd already covered much of the Classical stuff nearby!) statuary.

The Church is most well-known for its three table tombs, two complete with very detailed effigies. We spent a lot of time pondering – and certainly *not* arguing! – over the details on the impressive monument to the First Lord Reginald Cobham (*c*. 1295–1361); the building in which the tomb lies and indeed much of what can be seen of it today dates from early 1360,

but the Church was considerably rebuilt and enlarged by the deceased's grandson, another Reginald Cobham, in 1431.

And with that, we said our goodbyes to one another after lunch and made our respective ways home – via car, train, boat, and plane! – ready to hit the ground running for the new academic year of group trips; all of us in the Hellene School Travel team are looking forward to many new adventures in the coming months…