

A Short History of the Cuneiform Collection in the World Museum Liverpool

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The Mayer Collection

Joseph Mayer (1803-1886) was a prosperous Liverpool gold and silver smith and watch and clock maker. A Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries, he assembled considerable if somewhat eclectic collections of antiquities and other artefacts. His collection majored on Egyptian objects but also contained a wider variety of other collectables.¹ In 1852 he established his own 'Egyptian Museum' in Liverpool. By 1867 this had become a 'Museum of National and Foreign Antiquities' which he opened to the public.² In 1852 Mayer had expressed the hope that Liverpool would build a public museum worthy of her great name and in 1859 the town council opened 'The Liverpool Free Library and Museum', the municipal progenitor of the now 'nationalised' World Museum Liverpool (WML).³ The Liverpool Free Public Museum moved into its new William Brown Street building in 1860. In 1867, Mayer gave his collection of over 14000 items to the town of Liverpool requiring that the collection be kept together and called 'The Mayer Collection'.⁴

At the time of his gift to the Liverpool Museum, Mayer's collection contained several Assyrian and Babylonian objects, mainly cylinder seals.⁵ However, the collection of cuneiform tablets of the World Museum Liverpool (WML) began life a decade later in the 1877 Mayer Collection housed in the municipal museum. Four neo-Babylonian tablets were purchased in that year via Samuel Birch, Keeper of the Department of Oriental Antiquities at the British Museum.⁶ In letters in March and April 1877 to Charles Gatty at the Liverpool museum, Birch identified them as texts from the Egibi archive acquired for an expensive £8 from a dealer named Mr. Shembol.⁷ The four tablets had the accession numbers 4.5.77 1-4, the first of which is translated in Gatty's catalogue (1879: 81-82).⁸ The text witnessed the sale of a male child to a member of the Egibi family and was dated to the ninth regnal year of Nabonidus, c.546 BC.

Gatty (1879: 80-83) also catalogued an 1877 purchase via William St. Chad Boscawen of some thirty-four baked clay tablets with funds raised from the sale of duplicate artefacts from the Mayer Collection. In a letter to Charles

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I am especially grateful to Ashley Cooke, Senior Curator of Antiquities at the WML for much valuable information from the museum archives which has helped me to write this history. I am much indebted also to Alan Millard, Emeritus Rankin Professor of Hebrew and Ancient Semitic Languages in The University of Liverpool and Honorary Senior Fellow in ACE for his help with information for this article. It has benefitted greatly from his knowledge nonpareil of the cuneiform collection in the WML. My thanks, too, to Magnus Widell, Senior Lecturer in Assyriology in ACE in the University of Liverpool for his help in providing notes left with him by Alan Millard. Errors and omissions are my own.

¹ For the full scope and provenance of Mayer's collections see Margaret Gibson and Susan M. Wright (1988) (eds.) *Joseph Mayer of Liverpool 1803-1886*. Occasional Papers XI. London: The Society of Antiquaries of London in Association with the National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside.

² Margaret Gibson (1988: 8, 20) "Joseph Mayer" in Gibson and Wright pp.1-27.

³ See John Millard (2010) *Liverpool's museum: the first 150 years for the history of the museum in Liverpool and its various name changes since its beginning*. National Museums Liverpool: https://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/wml/history/WML_150_years.pdf).

⁴ A. F. Shore (1988: 67) "The Egyptian Collection" in Gibson and Wright pp. 45-70 and cf. Margaret Gibson (1988: 20).

⁵ A. R. Millard (1988) "Assyrian and Babylonian Antiquities" in Gibson and Wright pp. 71-76. On p. 72 Alan Millard refers to 'cylinder seals such as Mayer owned'. Also, the seals Alan Millard describes have accession numbers in the system devised by Ecroyd Smith and Charles Gatty, the first two curators, to organise the objects in the Mayer collection when it was transferred to the Liverpool Free Museum in 1867. Accession numbers of artefacts acquired for the Mayer collection after 1867 are year-based, as they are in the WML today. See M. Gibson in Gibson and Wright p. 43.

⁶ Samuel Birch visited and examined the collections in March 1877 and advised Gatty in the production of his catalogue (Shore 1988 *op. cit.* pp. 45, 55). It may be that the subject of adding cuneiform tablets to the collection of Assyrian and Babylonian objects was discussed then.

⁷ I suspect that Samuel Birch wrote Shembol here and that the typed transcription of his letter in the WML archive is a misreading. J. M. Shembol was a dealer in Oriental antiquities in London from whom Wallis Budge learned Arabic at the behest of Birch, (E. A. Wallis Budge 1920, *By Nile and Tigris*, London: John Murray. see pp.128, 343). 'Shembol regularly sold authentic Babylonian objects to the then Department of Egyptian and Assyrian Antiquities'. Julian Reade (2001: 197) "More about Adiabene" *IRAQ* 63 pp. 187-199.

⁸ Charles T. Gatty (1879). *Catalogue of the Mayer Collection. PART I. The Egyptian, Babylonian, and Assyrian Antiquities*. Second and Revised Edition. London: Bradbury, Agnew & Co.

Gatty in November 1877, Samuel Birch had proposed a further purchase of a selection from neo-Babylonian tablets recently discovered in a Baghdad market and in the possession of Messrs. Hurortz, Shemtob and Hassoon. The tablets were probably looted from the site of Babylon after exposure by rain in 1875, thence "into the hands of a Jewish dealer in Baghdad".⁹ Birch recommended the young talented Assyriologist Boscawen, even though he had been recently dismissed from his employment at the British Museum, as the person most suitable to advise Gatty on which selection to make.¹⁰ Boscawen's inventory of the tablets and fragments indicates that they were purchased for the museum in Liverpool for the sum of fifty guineas. The acquisitions were numbered in the accession series 29.11.77.1–34.

Table 1. Chronology of the earliest cuneiform collection in the WML

<i>Accession Numbers</i>	<i>Neo-Babylonian Ruler</i>	<i>Date range of tablets</i>
29.11.77. 1–4	Nebuchadnezzar II	603–562 BC
29.11.77. 5–6	Amel-Marduk	561 BC
29.11.77. 7–8	Neriglissar	559–556 BC
29.11.77. 9–11	Nabonidus	555–540 BC
4.5.77. 1	Nabonidus	546 BC
29.11.77. 12–13	Cyrus II	537–536 BC
29.11.77. 14–16	Cambyzes II	528–526 BC
29.11.77. 17	Arakha (Nebuchadnezzar IV)	521 BC
29.11.77. 18	Bardiya	521 BC
29.11.77. 19–23	Darius I	519–486 BC
29.11.77. 24–34	Undated tablets and fragments.	

Number 29.11.77.24 was also from the Egibi family archive.

Only two tablets [29.11.77.11](#) and [29.11.77.4](#) from this early collection survived the highly destructive firebombing of the museum in William Brown Street in May 1941. An edition of the second of these was published by Martha Roth as no. 6 in *AOAT* vol. 222.¹¹ The neo-Babylonian tablets described in Gatty's catalogue were published by Johann Strassmaier in 1885.¹²

In the period from Gatty's catalogue to the second world war (WW2), some fifteen cuneiform tablets were added to the collection. Fourteen of these were purchased in 1897 from a collector named Captain Cowley. Again, only two of these survived WW2 and are Ur III tablets dated to the reigns of Šulgi and Amar-Suen with a Ĝirsu (mod. Tello) provenance. They are published as [Orient 16, 85 127](#) and [97 144](#).¹³ By the end of WW2, therefore, a relatively small cuneiform collection, along with many other ancient near eastern artefacts, had been mostly destroyed and needed to be replaced and enlarged. After the war, the collections of the Liverpool Museum were mainly reconstituted with a series of purchases and donations of many artefacts among which were collections of cuneiform tablets.

The Garstang Purchase

John Garstang was the John Rankin Professor of Methods and Practice of Archaeology at the University of Liverpool from 1907 until his retirement in 1941. He had been instrumental in creating the Institute of Archaeology at Liverpool in 1904 and was involved in its organisation as secretary until its incorporation into the University in

⁹ Manchester Guardian, December 10th, 1877.

¹⁰ For a full account of the disturbing career of Boscawen cf. Ruth Horry (2015) "Assyriology at the Margins, the Case of William St. Chad Boscawen (1855–1913)". *IRAQ* 77 pp. 107-128. Of interest to this history of the Liverpool collection is that Boscawen was replaced as Birch's assistants by Wallis Budge and Theophilus G. Pinches, who had been his classmates in the Society for Biblical Archaeology's classes in Egyptology and Oriental Archaeology.

¹¹ Martha T. Roth (1989) *Babylonian Marriage Agreements, 7th - 3rd centuries B.C.* AOAT 222. Kevelaer: Butzon & Bercker.

¹² Johann Strassmaier (1885) "Die Babylonischen Inschriften Im Museum Zu Liverpool: Nebst Anderen Aus Der Zeit Von Nebukadnezar Bis Darius". *Actes du sixième Congrès Internationale des Orientalistes tenu en 1883 à Leide*, Partie 2, section 1, Leiden : Brill, 1885, 574-622. His edition was reprinted in 2010 in Kessinger Legacy Reprints, Whitefish MT: Kessinger Publishing.

¹³ Tohru Gomi (1980) "Administrative texts of the Third Dynasty of Ur in the Merseyside County Museums, Liverpool". *Orient* 16 pp.1-110.

1948.¹⁴ The first number of the Institute's *Annals of Archaeology and Anthropology* appeared in 1908 and they were published for most years excepting war years until 1948. Garstang did little teaching but undertook archaeological excavations abroad during term times on behalf of the Institute and the University. Many of the artefacts from his digs were distributed to financial supporters like John Rankin, while others were presented to the Institute for its own museum. With the support of the Turkish Government he founded the British Institute of Archaeology at Ankara in 1948 of which he was successively Director, Chairman and President.¹⁵

In 1947 Garstang donated some of his collection of antiquities to the Liverpool Museum and in 1949 sold it the remainder.¹⁶ This included 25 cuneiform tablets and fragments, nine of which featured among the Old Assyrian tablets from ancient Kaneš (mod. Kültepe) first published by T. G. Pinches in 1908.¹⁷ Pinches' no. 24 also survives in the WML collection, was republished by Edmond Sollberger in 1978 as *MVN* 5, 249, and is an Ur III text from ancient Ġirsu (Tello). A further nine fragments from the same source were also published by Pinches in 1910¹⁸. The second of the fragments from Pinches' 1910 publication was republished as *JEOL* 25, 67-74 and is dated as Middle Hittite ca. 1500-1100 BC¹⁹. The six remaining unpublished fragments of Old Assyrian tablets and envelopes purchased from Garstang were published by Yasushi Kawasaki in 1998.²⁰

These tablets and fragments were acquired by Garstang during his journey through Anatolia in 1907 examining and photographing Hittite monuments.²¹ From the 27th May to 4th June during the trip he was in Bogazkale, Yozgat and Kayseri where he examined small objects, seals, terra-cottas etc. in the bazaar. Garstang's notes which accompanied the sale of his "Hittite Antiquities" to the Liverpool Museum, refer to purchases of cuneiform tablets and fragments at Yozgat and Kayseri and of others "acquired" or "procured", which suggests they came to Garstang via dealers or other locals and clearly were not finds. Although Garstang seems to have considered his collection to comprise Hittite tablets, most of them are written in Akkadian from the Old Assyrian period, have a provenance in Kaneš and were from the Assyrian colony there. The nine fragments published by Pinches in *AAA/3*, however, were

¹⁴ The Institute of Archaeology and the University provided a symbiotic environment in which a cuneiform collection in the municipal museum could establish a *raison d'être*. It is of note that when the Institute was created, T. G. Pinches was given a provisional appointment to a position in Assyriology and gave an inaugural lecture in November 1905. It is not known if he had any students. "Whether he taught, or not, Pinches busied himself in copying cuneiform tablets in Liverpool". He was also Lecturer in Assyriology at University College London from 1904 to 1928. He continued to be listed as an honorary member of the Institute's staff until his death in 1934. Courtesy of Alan Millard (2004) "The Study of the Ancient Near East at Liverpool", an unpublished lecture given at the Centenary of the School of Archaeology at Liverpool.

¹⁵ G.M. Fitzgerald et al. (1956). "Special Number in Honour and in Memory of Professor John Garstang (1956)". *Anatolian Studies* 6. p. 29.

¹⁶ It is not obvious how separate Garstang's collection was from the Institute of Archaeology Museum's collection. The Garstang Museum in the Department of Archaeology, Classics and Egyptology (the direct descendent of the Institute) houses artefacts and records from Garstang's excavations which were housed in the Institute Museum. Curiously however, the cuneiform tablets and fragments bought by the WML and reputed to be from Garstang's collection were published by T.G. Pinches as belonging to the Liverpool Institute of Archaeology, *vide infra*.

¹⁷ Theophilus G. Pinches (1908) "The Cappadocian Tablets belonging to the Liverpool Institute of Archaeology". *Annals of Archaeology and Anthropology*. Vol 1. pp.49-80 with Plates 17-31. Liverpool: University Press. The nine tablets housed in the WML and purchased in 1949 are numbered in an accession series 49.47 and were published in the University of Liverpool Institute of Archaeology *Annals* as numbers 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 8, 10, 14 and 16. The remaining nos. in Pinches' 1908 edition, nos. 4, 7, 9, 11-13, 15 and 17-23 cannot be traced (Kawasaki (1998: 79). Illustrations of the missing tablets are archived in the CDLI database as from a collection of the Liverpool Institute of Archaeology and each is given a LIA museum number. Each is illustrated with Pinches' copy of the tablet and its museum number is clearly derived from its number in *AAA/1*. It is possible that they were lost if moved for safekeeping from the Institute Museum during WW2. It is equally likely, however, that Garstang had already sold the missing tablets. That he sold antiquities to raise funds for his expeditions, is well documented for Egyptian objects, but was also true for others. He sold the famous 'Yuzgat Tablet' in the Institute of Archaeology to the Louvre. A.H. Sayce acquired the tablet on a trip to the Yozgat region in the spring of 1905 and gave it to "The University of Liverpool", more precisely the Institute of Archaeology, where it was cleaned (Sayce and Pinches 1907: 23). The Institute and therefore Garstang, rather than the University, sold it to the Louvre in 1910 (Gernot Wilhelm, "Yozgat-Tafel". *RIA* 15. 1/2 (2016) p.160). **A.H.Sayce and Theophilus G. Pinches (1907) *The Tablet from Yuzgat in the Liverpool Institute of Archaeology*. Asiatic Society Monographs 11. London: The Royal Asiatic Society.

¹⁸ Theophilus G. Pinches (1910) "Notes upon the fragments of Hittite Cuneiform Tablets from Yuzgat, Boghaz Keui". *Annals of Archaeology and Anthropology*. Vol 3. pp. 99-106 with Plates 26-28. These nine fragments are also numbered in the WML 49.47 accession series.

¹⁹ Johan de Roos (1977-1978) "A Hittite Tablet in Liverpool Museum". *JEOL* 25, 67-74.

²⁰ Yasushi Kawasaki (1998) "An unpublished Old Assyrian Tablet in the "Prof. Garstang Collection", housed in Liverpool Museum". *Oriens* 33 pp. 79-87.

²¹ John Garstang (1908) "Notes on a Journey through Asia Minor". *Annals of Archaeology and Anthropology*. Vol 1. pp.1-12 with Plates 1-15.

from Hittite tablets and may have been acquired in Bogazkale (Bogaz Keui) during Garstang's visit to the Hittite capital Hattusa. The Ur III tablet is in Sumerian and is from Ġirsu.

Table 2 Concordance of WML cuneiform tablets from the Garstang purchase in 1949

WML accession no.	Pinches Vol.1	Pinches Vol. 3	Kawasaki <i>Orient</i> 33 ²²	Period
49.47.41	Fig. 14			Old Assyrian
49.47.42		No. II		Middle Hittite
49.47.43	Fig. 1			Old Assyrian
49.47.44	Fig. 8			Old Assyrian
49.47.45	Fig. 2			Old Assyrian
49.47.46	Fig 24(MVN 5,249)			Ur III
49.47.47	Fig.10			Old Assyrian
49.47.48		No. V		Middle Hittite
49.47.49		No. III		Middle Hittite
49.47.50	Fig. 16			Old Assyrian
49.47.51		No. IV		Middle Hittite
49.47.52		No. VIII		Middle Hittite
49.47.53	Fig. 3			Old Assyrian
49.47.54		No. I		Middle Hittite ²³
49.47.55	Fig. 6			Old Assyrian
49.47.56	Fig. 5			Old Assyrian
49.47.57		No. VI		Middle Hittite
49.47.58		No. IX		Middle Hittite
49.47.59		No. VII		Middle Hittite
49.47.60			No. 2.	Old Assyrian
49.47.61			No. 1	Old Assyrian
49.47.62			No. 3	Old Assyrian
49.47.63			No. 6	Old Assyrian
49.47.64			No. 5	Old Assyrian
49.47.65			No. 4	Old Assyrian

The Philip Nelson Purchase

Dr Philip Nelson (1872-1952) was an eminent Liverpool born antiquarian, who graduated from the Victoria University Liverpool in medicine in 1896. His career as a consultant surgeon was curtailed by injury enabling him to devote his abilities to becoming a fulltime and discerning collector and expert especially in numismatics and mediaeval and ancient antiquities.²⁴ His collection was bought by the WML from his estate in 1953. Included in the purchase were about 184 cuneiform tablets providing a substantial addition to those from the Garstang collection.

These had been loaned to the museum by Philip Nelson in May 1951 shortly after he had bought them himself at auction on 24th April 1951. The tablets were from the collection of the late John Quinn and were lot 15 in a sale by Brown and Brown of Liverpool, catalogued as 190 ancient Assyro-Babylonian inscribed tablets from various collectors including Lord Amherst.²⁵ The museum purchased them with war damage compensation funds in

²² See Kawasaki (1998) for collations of some of Pinches' Vol. 1 editions and references to other secondary publications.

²³ This fragment was also published by Albrecht Goetze (1930) *Verstreute Boghazköi-Texte* Marburg: Selbstverlag des Herausgebers, No. 108 p.32. At the time Goetze visited Liverpool Museum the Hittite fragments were packed and he thought there were more than the one he was able to copy since Pinches had published others in *Annals* 3 (Goetze 1930: iv). Curiously in his list of previous publications on p. 43, Goetze notes that the tablet was in "Liverpool Free Public Museum". It arrived in the WML with other purchases from Garstang in 1949. We would expect it to have been in The Institute for Archaeology's museum. If it was in the Liverpool Museum it could only have been temporarily, the reason perhaps that the fragments were packed when he visited Liverpool.

²⁴ Obituary: *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire* Vol 104: 173 (1952).

²⁵ John Quinn was a Liverpool solicitor and collector of a wide variety of Greek, Roman, Egyptian and Anglo-Saxon Antiquities in addition to Assyrian and Babylonian tablets. He seems to have had a special interest in cuneiform tablets since he communicated with T. G. Pinches throughout the period from 1904 to 1932, lending Pinches tablets to be copied and transcribed and who, if Quinn was agreeable,

December 1953 from the estate of Dr Nelson. 182 of the cuneiform tablets have accession numbers in the 51.63 series, being numbers assigned when the tablets were loaned and two are numbered in the 53.114 series arriving with the 1953 purchase of the Nelson Collection.

Table 3. The chronology of the Philip Nelson cuneiform collection

<i>No. of objects</i>	<i>Object type</i>	<i>Period</i>	<i>BC Era</i>	<i>Publication</i>
1	Tablet	ED IIIb	ca. 2500-2340 BC	Cripps No. 49 ²⁶
3	Tablets	Old Akkadian	ca. 2340-2200 BC	Cripps Nos. 15, 31, 38 ²⁷
144	Tablets	Ur III	ca. 2112-2004 BC	Gomi <i>Orient</i> 16 ²⁸
3	pisag̃-dub-ba ²⁹	Ur III	ca. 2112-2004 BC	Gomi <i>Orient</i> 16
1	Tablet	Old Babylonian	ca. 1900-1600 BC	Fish <i>MCS</i> 7, 3
8	Tablets	Old Babylonian	ca. 1900-1600 BC	Unpublished
2	Pyramid Bullae	Old Babylonian	ca. 1900-1600 BC	Unpublished
10	Tags	Old Babylonian	ca. 1900-1600 BC	Unpublished
1	Lentil tablet	Old Babylonian	ca. 1900-1600 BC	Unpublished ³⁰
1	Tablet	Arsacid/Seleucid	ca. 94 BC	Hackl No.2 ³¹
8	Tablets	Unidentified	Undated	Unpublished ³²

The Old Akkadian tablet Cripps no. 31 = [51.63.133](#) was originally in the now dispersed Amherst collection and was published as text number 10 by T.G. Pinches in his 1908 edition of *The Amherst Tablets*, verifying the presence of tablets from Lord Amherst's collection in Nelson's acquisition. Two of the Ur III tablets republished by Gomi in *Orient* 16 were also published by Pinches in his 1908 edition of the Amherst texts.³³

The Old Babylonian tablet MCS 7, 3 published by Thomas Fish in 1957 is a *bit asiri* "house of the prisoners" text from the Uruk of Rim-Anum. It is dated to Rim-Anum's second year (= Samsu-iluna 10 [ca. 1739 BC]) and is an account of the allocation of flour *ana gešbun* "for a daily meal" to war prisoners held in the *bit asiri*.³⁴

Hackl No. 2 = [51.63.126](#) is from the archive of *Rahimesu*, a banker in Babylon during the Arsacid Era in 93/4 BC to whom the temples farmed the right to collect temple income against the obligation of paying temple salaries and other temple expenses (Hackl 2016: 88). The tablet was probably originally kept within a temple complex such as the e₂-saĝ-il₂, the temple of Marduk. The text is a fragmentary list of income deposited with *Rahimesu* (Hackl 2016:93).

Table 4. Historical provenances of the Philip Nelson cuneiform objects

<i>No. of objects</i>	<i>Object Type</i>	<i>Period</i>	<i>Historical provenance</i>
1	Tablet	Ed IIIb	Ĝirsu (mod. Tello)

wished to publish the texts of his tablets in a journal. In 1904 Quinn was sending his own copies of some of his tablets to Pinches for advice as to interpretation. Pinches thought them "very good indeed for a first attempt".

²⁶ Eric L. Cripps (2010) *Sargonic and Presargonic Texts in the World Museum Liverpool*. BAR International Series 2135. Oxford: Archaeopress. This tablet had been published in 1954 by Thomas Fish as Manchester Cuneiform Studies (*MCS*) 4, p. 12 no. 1. It is dated to the 7th year of UruKagina, king of Lagaš, i.e. ca. 2341 BC.

²⁷ See Cripps (2010) for previous publications.

²⁸ Tohru Gomi (1980). Some 34 of these Ur III tablets had previously been published by Thomas Fish in his *MCS* 4-8.

²⁹ pisag̃-dub-ba were clay tags attached to baskets in which tablets were archived. The stored tablets were accounts and the tag described the kind of accounts filed in the basket. These Ur III tags have accession numbers [51.63.50](#), [51.63.112](#) and [51.63.171](#).

³⁰ Lentils are round and made to fit the hand. In Sumerian they are called im šu or "hand tablet." They are school tablets and usually contain two or three lines in a teacher's hand beneath which they are copied by a pupil.

³¹ Johannes Hackl (2016) "New Additions to the *Rahimesu* Archive: Parthian Texts from the British Museum and the World Museum Liverpool". Pp. 87-106 in Kristin Kleber and Reinhard Pirngruber (eds.) *Silver, Money and Credit*. A Tribute to Robartus j. Van Der Spek on the Occasion of his 65th Birthday. PIHANS 128. (Leiden: Nederlands Instituut vor het Nabije Oosten.)

³² The eight tablets have accession numbers [51.63.14](#), [51.63.15](#), [51.63.49](#), [51.63.97](#), [51.63.117](#), [51.63.129](#), [51.63.152](#), and [51.63.168](#).

51.63.129 may be a fragment of an Ur III tablet (the penultimate line on the obverse reads šu 'ba¹-ti in what appears to be an Ur III script)). Other legible tablets in the group may be either Middle to Late Assyrian or Babylonian but require detailed study to confirm the period.

³³ *Orient* 16, 94 138 (*Amherst* 55) = [51.63.167](#) and 99 151 (*Amherst* 99) = [51.63.163](#).

³⁴ Andrea Seri (2013) *The House of Prisoners. Slavery and State in Uruk during the Revolt against Samsu-iluna*. SANER 2. Boston/Berlin: De Gruyter). See pp. 57-67, 89, 355, 377. See p. 35 for the synchronism between the regnal dates of Rim-Anum and Samsu-iluna.

1	Tablet	Old Akkadian	Adab (mod. Bismaya)
1	Tablet	Old Akkadian	Umma (mod. Tell Jokha)
1	Tablet	Old Akkadian	uncertain
48	Tablets	Ur III	Ĝirsu (mod. Tello)
3	pisaĝ-dub-ba	Ur III	Ĝirsu (2), uncertain (1)
55	Tablets	Ur III	Puzriš-Dagan (mod. Drehem)
29	Tablets	Ur III	Umma (mod. Tell Jokha)
12	Tablets	Ur III	uncertain
1	Tablet	Old Babylonian	Uruk (mod. Warka)
8	Tablets	Old Babylonian	uncertain
2	Pyramid Bullae	Old Babylonian	uncertain
10	Tags	Old Babylonian	uncertain
1	Lentil tablet	Old Babylonian	uncertain
1	Tablet	Arsacid/Seleucid	Babylon
8	Tablets	Undated	uncertain

Pinches thought that the text [51.63.133](#) came from Ĝirsu, but it is very likely that the tablet originates from Adab rather than Ĝirsu, see Cripps (2010: 96-7).

The Norwich Castle Museum Purchase

In 1956 the Liverpool cuneiform collection was enlarged with the purchase of 82 tablets from Norwich Castle Museum. This purported to be the whole of the Norwich collection of cuneiform tablets donated to the museum by Arnold Keppel at the beginning of the twentieth century, though a small number were inadvertently excluded from the sale because they were mislaid in the museum stores.³⁵

The Hon. Arnold Keppel gave his cuneiform tablets to the Norwich Castle Museum in 1912 according to a letter in his hand and dated May 1st, 1912. Most of them were from the Old Akkadian period, but a good number were Ur III tablets. Keppel had acquired them a year before in May 1911 from an Arab in Basra and states that they had been excavated from "Tell-loh", though it is now certain that perhaps only one of the tablets originates from Ĝirsu. In 1911, Arnold Joost William Keppel, the second son of the eighth Earl of Albermarle, was twenty-seven years of age and held the British Foreign Service post of honorary attaché in H.M. Legations in Bucharest and Teheran. In the same year he went as The Times special correspondent with the British government expedition to the Persian Makran and it is possible that during these travels he journeyed back up along the Gulf and crossed into Mesopotamia where he acquired the tablets. On his return to England he showed them to Wallis Budge at the British Museum. Budge confirmed their antiquity.

Soon after Keppel's acquisition of them in May 1911, the texts appear to have been in the keeping of the Castle Museum almost a year before they were formally donated by him. However, they may have passed temporarily into the possession of Francis Llewellyn Griffiths, the Oxford Egyptologist, who in a June 1911 letter to Mr Frank Leney, the Curator of the Castle Museum, Norwich, requested that his brother-in-law, C.H.W. Johns, the Assyriologist and Master of St. Catharine's Cambridge, be allowed to look at the tablets, to list them and any others at the Norwich Museum.

Johns identified them as from the "time of the Dynasty of Agade". He listed and catalogued forty-four tablets (only forty-one were from the Old Akkadian period) in the Keppel collection and copied and transliterated them as far as he could. Johns' draft notes and copies are in the WML archive and are entitled "Collection of archaic (cuneiform) tablets from Telloh, Mesopotamia". They are dated August 1912. John's notes and copies amounted to a first incomplete and unpublished edition of the Old Akkadian tablets.³⁶ Johns also records that later tablets in the Norwich/Keppel collection are probably from the Ur III period. It is unclear from Johns' analysis that all 82 of the

³⁵ E. Robson and G. Zólyomi (2014) "Mesag reports a Murder: Cuneiform Tablets in the Collections of the Norwich Castle Museum and Cambridge University Library". *IRAQ* 76 pp. 189-203. viz p.189.

³⁶ Trevor Donald (1964) *Old Akkadian Tablets in Liverpool Museum*. MCS 9. (Manchester: University of Manchester) is the first published edition of tablets from the Keppel collection. It has now been superseded by Cripps (2010).

cuneiform tablets purchased from the Norwich museum are from the Keppel collection. Certainly, there are 43 Old Akkadian tablets in the WML which were acquired by Keppel, but there are also 37 from the Ur III period and an Old Babylonian clay tag with a 56.22.n accession number. Johns merely says that there are later tablets probably dated to Ur III, so some at least were also collected by Keppel.

Table 5. Dating and Historical Provenances of the Keppel Tablets.

<i>No. of tablets</i>	<i>Period</i>	<i>Regnal Year(s)</i>	<i>BC dates</i>	<i>Historical provenance</i>
33	Old Akkadian	Šarkališarri	ca. 2175-2150	Umma
10	Old Akkadian	Unknown	ca. 2296-2150	uncertain
1	Old Babylonian	Unknown	ca. 1900-1600	uncertain
13	Ur III	Šulgi 37-48	ca. 2058-2047	Umma (1 Ĝirsu, 1 un.)
18	Ur III	Amar-Suen 1-7	ca. 2046-2040	Umma
1	Ur III	Šu-Suen 3	ca. 2034	Umma
1	Ur III	Ibbi-Suen 1	ca. 2026	Umma
4	Ur III	undated		Umma 2 (2 uncertain)

Notably, thirty-three out of the thirty-seven Ur III tablets have the same historical provenance (ancient Umma or modern Tell Jokha) as most of the Old Akkadian tablets, perhaps indicating that all the Ur III tablets with 56.22.n accession numbers were part of Keppel's purchase in Basra. The Umma provenance of many of the Old Akkadian tablets held by the WML was established by Foster in his study of the "mu-iti" texts (Foster 1982).³⁷ He suggests that his Group C archive of the mu-iti texts of which twenty-eight of the Keppel texts are members arrived on the antiquities market when the ruins of the e₂-ĝidru "house of the sceptre" temple at Umma were plundered in 1911. Foster also proposed that a further five tablets purchased by Keppel were from the e₂-ĝidru and were members of his C archive even though they were undated.

The mu-iti dating system arguably refers to the rule of the Umma governor. Each series starts with the beginning of a governor's period in office. Foster's Group C archive refers to Mesag's governorship in Umma, the beginning of which is thought to coincide with the accession year of Šarkališarri as king of Agade (see Cripps 2010: 11). While most of Keppel's Old Akkadian tablets are dated to Šarkališarri's reign the length of the Old Akkadian period represented in his purchase is extended by a letter which suggests that Irgigi is the king of Agade.³⁸ Irgigi is the king of Agade who is purported to have reigned for a short period following the death of Šarkališarri (Cripps 2010: 109-110). Although bought by Keppel, its historical provenance is uncertain.

According to Tohrū Ozaki (Gomi 1980) twenty-seven of Keppel's Ur III texts have an Umma provenance, whereas almost all Ur III tablets purchased by him are from Umma. Many of the tablets so identified contain the names of members of the ruling family of Umma such as Ur-Lisi, Ur-e'e, Ur-niĝar, Dadaga and Gududu and of other Umma officials and merchants such as Lu-kala and Šeškalla.³⁹ Ur III tablets are dated from the year names, month names and the day in the month given in each text. The year names are associated with the activities of the kings of Ur so that regnal years and calendar dates are readily computed from them.

Royal inscriptions of Šîn-Kāšid of Uruk (mod. Warka)

Šîn-Kāšid, king of Uruk (ca.1865-1833 BC) is known primarily from his royal inscriptions which record the rebuilding of the Eanna temple and the construction of his palace. These are to be found on many clay cones (pegs) and tablets which were buried in the palace walls and its mudbrick foundations.⁴⁰ The cones and tablets found during various excavations at Warka have been dispersed widely around the museums of the world and have also found

³⁷ Benjamin R. Foster (1982) *Umma in the Sargonic Period*. (Connecticut: Archon). For his specific discussion of the WML tablets see pp. 6-7, 79 and 146.

³⁸ [56.22.252](#).

³⁹ Cf. Jacob L. Dahl (2007) *The Ruling Family of Umma. A Prosopographical Analysis of an Elite Family in Southern Iraq 4000 Years Ago*. PIHANS 108. Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten.

⁴⁰ See Douglas Frayne (1990) *Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia. Early Periods; 4.The Old Babylonian Period (2003-1595 BC)* Toronto:Buffalo:London: University of Toronto Press (RIME 4). pp. 441-450.

their way into the hands of various private collectors. Five clay cones and a single clay tablet bearing *Sîn-Kāšid* inscriptions have been donated to the WML by several collectors since 1953.

Table 6. *Sîn-Kāšid* inscriptions donated to the WML

<i>Date donated</i>	<i>Collector</i>	<i>Accession No.</i>	<i>Object</i>	<i>Inscription Type</i>
1953	Arnold S. White	53.63.1-3 ⁴¹	Clay Cones	RIME 4.4.1.3
1956	J.E. Phillips	56.83	Clay Cone	RIME 4.4.1.4
1973	Sir Henry Wellcome	1973.4.304	Clay Cone	RIME 4.4.1.3 ⁴²
1978	Not recorded	1978.116.13	Clay Tablet	RIME 4.4.1.3

The RIME 4.4.1.3 inscription says, "*Sîn-Kāšid*, mighty man, king of Uruk, king of the *Amnānum*, provider of the Eanna, built his palace of kingship". RIME 4.4.1.4 on the other hand states, "*Sîn-Kāšid*, mighty man, king of Uruk, king of the *Amnānum*, provider of the Eanna, when he built the Eanna, built his palace of kingship".

*Royal inscriptions on bricks*⁴³

In the 100 years from 1886 up to a dozen inscribed bricks and fragments of bricks have been added to the cuneiform collection of the WML. Except for three in 1956 purchased from the collections of the Norwich Castle Museum, all have been donated. The two from 1886 and 1933 survived the losses of the collections in the second world war.

Table 7. Cuneiform Inscribed Bricks donated to the WML

<i>Date donated</i>	<i>Collector</i>	<i>Accession No.</i>	<i>Period/BC Dates</i>	<i>Inscription</i>
1886	Dr Ewing Whittle	12.8.86.1	Neo-Babylonian/(626-539)	
1933	F.T.Haigh	33.160	Old Assyrian/(2015-1781)	RIMA 1.0.32.2
1946	Sir W.H. Himbury	46.65.1	Neo-Babylonian/(626-539)	
1952	Rossal School	52.79.48	Old Assyrian/(2015-1781)	RIMA 1.0.33.4
1955	Sir W.H. Himbury	55.128.46	Ur-Nammu /(2112-2095)	RIME 3/2.1.1.2 ⁴⁴
1955	Dr. Hunbury	55.128.56	Neo-Babylonian/(626-539)	
1956	R.Glasspoole	56.19.50	Neo-Babylonian/(626-539)	
1956	D.H. Hanbury	59.19.64a-b		
1963	Myra Asquith	1963.188		
1973	Sir H. Wellcome	1973.4.245a,b,c,e	Amar-Suen/(2046-2038)	RIME 3/2 1.3.15 ⁴⁵

⁴¹ [53.63.1](#), [53.63.2](#), [53.63.3](#)

⁴² Donated by the trustees of the Wellcome Historical Medical Museum.

⁴³ This account of the inscribed bricks is a reconstruction from WML archive records and notes on the brick collection in the then named Merseyside County Museum made by Alan Millard at some time during the period 1975-1985. The present existence of all these bricks in the WML store is yet to be confirmed from physical inspection. The list cannot at this stage be reconciled with the four texts archived as bricks in the CDLI record. The Old Assyrian bricks with accession numbers 33.160 and 52.79.48 were in the store in the 1980s when they were collated by Alan Millard for Kirk Grayson, *vide infra*. However, they were not scanned by Ludek Vacin for the CDLI in 2010 and may have been missing or elsewhere at the time. Vacin did however scan an unnumbered brick [WML unn 001](#), not in the above list, which from its much abraded inscription appears to be another example of RIMB 2. 6.32.16, "For the god Enlil, lord of the lands, his lord; Ashurbanipal, his obedient shepherd, mighty king, king of the four quarters, rebuilt Ekur, his beloved temple with baked bricks", see p. 223 in Grant Frame (1995) *Rulers of Babylonia from the Second Dynasty of Isin to the End of the Assyrian Domination (1157-612 BC) - The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia Babylonian Periods. Vol. 2.*

⁴⁴ The inscription reads ur-^dnammu, lugal uri⁵-^{ki}-ma, lu² e²-^dnanna, in-du³-a. "Ur-Nammu, king of Ur, who built the temple of Nanna". This is a standard royal inscription from the early years of the first king of the Ur III dynasty. See Douglas Frayne (1997) *Ur III Period 2112-2004 BC. The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia Early Periods. Vol. 3/2.* (Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press) p. 24. The historical provenance of the brick is the city of Ur where Nanna, the moon god, was the tutelary god and where his temple was located.

⁴⁵ [1973.4.245c](#) is a fragment containing a nearly complete inscription of Amar-Suen. For the complete 13 line inscription see Frayne (1997:24). The eleven surviving lines on this fragment are:

- | | | |
|----|--|------------------|
| 1. | ^d amar ^ˀ - ^d ZU.EN ^ˀ | Amar-Suen |
| 2. | ^l en-lil ² -le | by the god Enlil |
| 3. | ^ˀ nibru ^ˀ -a | in Nippur |

1985

Not recorded

1985.354.511

The two Old Assyrian bricks were published in 1987. WML 33.160 is from Aššur and is an inscription of *Ilu-šumma* (ca. 1970-1939 BC) the governor of Aššur and describes his building at the temple for the goddess Ištar, "A façade and new wall I constructed and subdivided house-plots for my city. The god Aššur opened for me two springs in Mount Abih and I made bricks for the wall by these two springs".⁴⁶ 52.79.48 is a large brick fragment with a largely complete inscription. Its historic provenance is again Aššur. It is inscribed by *Ilu-šumma's* son *Erišum* I (ca. 1939-1900 BC), his successor as governor of Aššur. The inscription describes extensive building operations at the temple and cella of the god Aššur.⁴⁷

The bricks and fragments from the neo-Babylonian period can all be dated to Nebuchadnezzar II (604-562 BC) and are from temples at Babylon and nearby cities.⁴⁸

Small donations and purchases of cuneiform tablets

Table 8. Miscellaneous tablets and fragments

<i>Date donated</i>	<i>Collector/donor</i>	<i>Accession No.</i>	<i>Period/BC dates</i>	<i>Publication</i>
1956	E. Timperley	56.5.1	Old Babylonian (1900-1600)	Wilcke <i>AfO</i> 24 ⁴⁹
1963	Myra Asquith	1963.188.1-6 ⁵⁰	Old Babylonian (1900-1600)	Unpublished
1976	Cheltenham College	1976.159.312	Neo-Assyrian (ca. 647 BC)	AAA/20 pl. C no.106 ⁵¹

- | | |
|---|----------------------------|
| 4. mu-pa ₃ -da | by name was chosen, |
| 5. saĝ-us ₂ | supporter |
| 6. e ₂ en-lil ₂ -la | of the temple of Enlil, |
| 7. lugal kal-ga | mighty king |
| 8. lugal 'uris ^{ki} -ma | king of Ur |
| 9. lugal an-[ub]-'da'-limmu ₂ -'ba'-[ke ₄] | king of the four quarters, |
| 10. ^d en-ki | for the god Enki |
| 11. lugal ki-[aĝ]-[ĝa ₂]-ni-ir | his beloved lord |

broken: remainder destroyed
restore from RIME E. 3/2.1.3.15

- | | |
|---|------------------|
| 12. [abzu ki-aĝ-ĝa ₂ -ni-ir] | his beloved Abzu |
| 13. [mu-na-du ₃] | he built. |

The historical provenance of the brick is Eridu (mod. Tell Abu Sharain) and records Amar-Suen's construction of the god Enki's temple, the (e₂)-abzu, there. Unfortunately, the inscription is broken a line or two prior to where it would confirm this. But it is clearly the RIME thirteen-line brick inscription quoted above, see Frayne (1997: 262).

[1973.4.245a](#) is a fragment of a brick from the same source and with eight lines of the same inscription surviving. It reads, [amar-ZU.EN], [^dnibru^{ki}-[a], mu pa₃-[da], saĝ-'us₂, e₂-^den-lil₂-la, lugal kal-ga, lugal uris^{ma}^{ki}, 'lugal' an-'ub'-'da'-limmu₂-ba-'ke₄, ^den-[ki], 'lugal' ki-[aĝ]-'ĝa₂-'ni'-ir', 'abzu' ki- remainder broken.

[1973.4.245e](#) is a small fragment of a brick which is inscribed with a few of the lines of the same Amar-Suen inscription: [lugal kal]-ga, 'lugal' uris^{ki}-ma, 'lugal' an-'ub'-'da'-limmu₂-ba-'ke₄, [^den'-ki. It clearly has the same historical provenance as the two previous bricks. Indeed, the Wellcome Collection labels relating to these bricks and retained in the WML archive show that they share the same modern provenance. They were brought from the mound at Abu Sharain by Col. C.de. J. Luxmoore and presented to the Wellcome Historical Medical Museum in 1935. C. J. Gadd's contemporary translation of the inscriptions supplied to the W.H.M.M confirms the Amar-Suen dating.

[1973.4.245b](#) is probably a complete brick of the same origins. It is currently enclosed within a stitched conservator's jacket. It was however, identified as a complete brick with this inscription in Alan Millard's notes of the 1980's.

⁴⁶ A. Kirk Grayson (1987) *Assyrian Rulers of the Third and Second Millennia BC (TO 1115 BC)*. *The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia Assyrian Periods*. Vol. 1. (Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press) pp. 16-17.

⁴⁷ Grayson (1987: 25-6).

⁴⁸ The dating of the neo-Babylonian bricks is from Alan Millard's notes.

⁴⁹ Claus Wilcke (1973) "Sumerische literische Texte in Manchester und Liverpool". *Archiv für Orientforschung* 24 pp. 1-17, see pp. 15-17.

⁵⁰ [1963.188.1](#), [1963.188.2](#), [1963.188.3](#), [1963.188.4](#), [1963.188.5](#), [1963.188.6](#)

⁵¹ R. Campbell Thompson and M. E. L. Mallowan (1933) "The British Museum Excavations at Nineveh, 1931-32". *Annals of Archaeology and Anthropology*. Vol. 20. pp. 71-186 with Plates XXXV-CVI. Plate C has a transliteration of the text by Campbell Thompson who offers a translation of it on pages 103-4. Campbell Thompson had copied the tablet in transliteration at around 1907 and at that time it was in the possession of Mr (by 1933 Sir) Reginald St. Johnston who gave him permission to publish it. Campbell Thompson wrote that St. Johnston had ultimately deposited it in a public museum where it had been destroyed due to an accident to the museum building. Clearly it wasn't destroyed though it appears more damaged than the lacunae in Campbell Thompson's transliteration suggest. Alan Millard points out that its pieces had been joined with candlewax in the 19th century. However, if it was relatively intact in 1907, it may have been so joined later. The

The text donated by E. Timperley was published by Claus Wilcke and is a large fragment of an Old Babylonian balaĝ "lamentation" mainly written in the Emesal dialect of Sumerian. In 1963 Myra Asquith of Wallasey donated Egyptian and other antiquities collected by her father which comprised objects obtained from other collections including that of Lord Amherst. Given the large quantity of Babylonian tablets in the Amherst Collection prior to its dispersal it must be the most likely modern provenance for these tablets. The Neo-Assyrian tablet purchased from Cheltenham College was given to the school by Reginald St Johnston. St Johnston "was almost certainly given it by a Mrs. Charlotte Rolland who had assisted Layard at the excavation".⁵³ The tablet came from Layard's excavations at Nineveh in late 1849. It can be assigned a Nineveh provenance beyond doubt as it is part of the archive of Ashurbanipal letters recovered there by Layard from Ashurbanipal's library. Like many of the texts from the library it is written in Neo-Babylonian script. The text is a royal edict of Ashurbanipal to Hundaru, King of Dilmun in the Persian Gulf and is dated by the limmu *Nabû-nādin-ahi*.⁵⁴

Afterword

Except for perhaps four tablets and some inscribed bricks, the cuneiform collection in the WML was acquired after the second world war in which many of the collections of the museum in William Brown Street were destroyed when it was bombed. Most of the cuneiform tablets arrived with three purchases of Ancient Near Eastern and Egyptian artefacts made between 1949 and 1956. These were from John Garstang (1949), Phillip Nelson's estate (1953) and from the Castle Museum Norwich (1956). These acquisitions provided 287 of some 302 tablets in the collection. The balance of fifteen tablets and cones were all from small donations of a single or several objects. The last accession of cuneiform tablets comprised an Ur III text and a *Šîn-Kāšid* foundation cone in 1978. In addition to the 302 tablets, cones and tags about a dozen bricks inscribed with cuneiform script have been purchased or donated over the years, the last of which was in 1985. Since then the WML collection has remained stable and although the future bequest of a collection formed years ago is not impossible, the likely absence of donations from authenticated collections means it is unlikely to expand much further.

Firstly, it is doubtful that the WML could secure the financial resources to add substantially to its cuneiform collection via purchases on the market. Secondly, since the beginning of the Iraq War in 2003 a significant limitation of the supply of tablets on the market has been created by the controls on the import of artefacts from Mesopotamia. These particularly affect the availability and prices of cuneiform tablets which are the most readily looted artefacts in Iraq and most easily end up on the illegal antiquities market. The British Museum works with the UK Border Force and other agencies to identify tablets looted since the war and to return such items to the Iraq Museum in Baghdad. Unless they have a provenance in a collection from before 2003, it is impossible for a UK museum to augment its collection of cuneiform tablets.

It is clear from this history that the WML acquired practically all its present corpus from other collections. This was not so of its first collection of 1877. The present day policing role of the British Museum (BM) seems almost

museum in question was Cheltenham College Museum which had an emphasis on Natural History. The College museum was closed in 1976 and part of its collection was sold to the WML when the tablet is reputed to have arrived in Liverpool in a consignment of stuffed birds probably destined for the Derby Collection in the Liverpool Museum.

⁵² See Tohru Gomi's no. 107 in *Orient* 16. The historical provenance of the text is again Umma.

⁵³ q.v. Julian Reade corresponding with Ashley Cooke, Senior Curator at the WML on 5th February 2016. Charlotte Rolland and her husband accompanied Austen Henry Layard during his second period of excavation at Nimrud (1849-51). Layard may have given Charlotte Rolland the tablet as he saw her as a "most valuable asset" to the excavation team. For the relationship between Charlotte Rolland and Layard see pp. 76-78 in Amanda Kelly (2012) "A neo-Assyrian relief in the Weingreen Museum of Biblical Antiquities, Trinity College Dublin – A case study in artefact acquisition". *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy: Archaeology, Culture, History, Literature. Vol. 112C.* 61-93. Sir Reginald St Johnston who was an alumnus of Cheltenham College, a barrister of the Middle Temple in 1906, a British colonial administrator from 1907-1936 and a writer. According to his Who's Who entry he was also interested in travel. His dates are 1881-1950 so that Charlotte Rolland would have been quite elderly when she gave a young St Johnston the tablet. She was almost certainly young, probably in her twenties when she assisted Layard, who was only 34 years old himself in 1851 when he left Mosul for the last time to go into politics. We know that St. Johnston owned the tablet when he was young. He could not have been older than twenty-six when Campbell Thompson copied it.

⁵⁴ Alan Millard (1994) *The Eponyms of the Assyrian Empire 910-612 BC*. State Archives of Assyria Studies Vol. 2. University of Helsinki: The Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project. See p. 105 for the identification of the limmu in this text.

ironical when in those days it was instrumental via Samuel Birch in acquiring tablets for Gatty from a dealer of looted tablets on the Baghdad antiquities market.⁵⁵ There was also a BM involvement with the Keppel/Norwich collection, an acquisition by Keppel of looted tablets from an "Arab" in the Basra market. Wallis Budge certainly advised Keppel on their antiquity and may have engineered their study by Johns at Cambridge, though the BM was not involved in their purchase. The tablets purchased from Garstang were probably obtained from local markets during his 1907 trip to Anatolia rather than excavated by him. None of his notes accompanying the purchase by the WML suggest otherwise. Like most cuneiform tablets in collections throughout the world, therefore, those in the WML have their origins on formal or informal antiquities markets.

Many of the tablets in the modern collection have been studied and published at some time by several well-known Assyriologists. T.G. Pinches in 1908 was the earliest in the twentieth century and over the years they have included Albrecht Goetze, Thomas Fish, Claus Wilcke, Ben Foster, Tohru Ozaki and most recently Johannes Hackl. I also published an edition of the Old Akkadian tablets. The neo-Babylonian tablets in the destroyed Mayer Collection of 1877 were published by Johann Strassmaier. Only one of those he edited has survived.

Perhaps the most important recent development in the collection has been its digitisation in 2010 by Ludek Vacin for the Cuneiform Digital Library Initiative. The tablets in the collection are now available to scholars and others at <https://cdli.ucla.edu/collections/liverpool/liverpool.html>. The internet access to the WML collection provided by the CDLI database has already led to the publication of the previously unpublished WML [51.63.126](#) by Johannes Hackl. Further scholarly interest is to be anticipated.

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Lazonby, Cumbria
Revised December 2019

⁵⁵ "Dealers in antiquities were frequent visitors to Birch's room, and the objects which they offered for purchase were sometimes of very considerable interest. By listening to Birch's remarks on the objects brought to him I learned a good deal about them, and also about their market value. I noted also that antiquities possessed commercial as well as archaeological value, and that the acquisition of the knowledge of the current prices of antiquities among dealers and collectors formed a very important part of the education of a British Museum official". (Budge 1920: 27). Budge's ensuing expeditions on behalf of Birch and the British Museum to Mesopotamia and Egypt involved escapades with dealers to acquire cuneiform tablets in local markets and attempts to inhibit filching by dealers from sites being excavated with Museum resources. The buying and selling of antiquities were clearly very much activities pursued by the 19th century British Museum).