



# The Egypt Society of Bristol

## Newsletter

Number 4, September 2000

### Editorial

Another academic year and ESB 'season' is now nearly upon us. As you will see from the enclosed programme, we have aimed to put together a set of lectures that is a mixture of 'big names' and some speakers who may be less familiar to you. The year is essentially bookended by two talks on photography in Egypt, contrasting the glass plates of the nineteenth century with modern SLRs, but emphasising the supreme photogenicity of the country. No matter how many times one has been to a site, there is always a new vista to capture - as the Chairman's ever-expanding slide collection bears witness!

A lecture the Chairman is particularly looking forward to is that on Arthur Weigall in December. He was a fascinating figure, involved in some of the key discoveries in the Valley of the Kings, and a fine writer, albeit with some eccentricities (one of his publications is entitled 'Laura Was My Camel'! The ESB is fortunate in having his granddaughter to speak about her research into his life, and hopefully learn whether he was indeed to man who invented the story of the 'Curse of Tutankh-amun' ....

Although not a formal part of our programme, the University's Amelia Edwards Lecture on 16 October should be a must: the Czech excavations at Abusir have been going on for more than two decades and have made some spectacular finds, in recent years the remains of the mummy of a Fifth Dynasty pharaoh and the completely intact tomb of a fifth century BC nobleman.

In November, the ESB Egypt cruise will cast off, and the Winter newsletter should contain news of how it all went. Plans exist for a second trip to Egypt in the autumn of 2002, based on Cairo and taking in the main sites of the Memphite region and the Delta. Detailed planning will begin once we are back. For those of a more adventurous disposition, the Chairman has been asked by a commercial travel firm to lead a tour of the Fayoum and Middle Egypt (including Amarna), departing 7 November 2001. Details will be included in a later mailing.

As always, the Committee is always on the lookout for new events - so if you have any ideas, please let us know! The next up-dated programme will be out in December, the main planned additions being the 2001 summer trip -and the date of Geoffrey Martin's lecture, which had not been agreed when he headed off to dig in the Valley of the Kings!

Finally, we have to report that Virginia Pearson has resigned as Honourary Secretary. There is nothing sinister behind this, however, as it results from her decision to go and live on a Greek island! Our best wishes go to her for the future - as well as a degree of envy ...! The Committee will be appointing a new Hon. Sec., pending a new election at the AGM in February.

### Messing about by the River

On Sunday 18 June, members of the ESB travelled to Eton College, Berkshire, to view the Myers collection of Egyptian artifacts, which is shortly being sent on loan to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. Unlike a previous summer's trip to Kingston Lacey when it rained heavily nearly all day, this turned out to be the hottest day of the year and was good training for the trip to Egypt in November! Sun hats and a good supply of water were the order of the day, and we sought out any shade available.

We had a few hours spare time before our visit to Eton College, and since the weather was so good, quite a few of us took a picnic lunch and sat beside the Thames in the shade of willow trees watching the boats on the river.

After a brief visit to Eton College Chapel (which was wonderfully cool), we viewed the collection. It is quite small but made up of particularly fine items, including statuettes and mummy masks which I'm sure some of you would recognize from books on Egyptian art. The old sepia photographs of Egypt were particularly interesting, together with the extracts from the diary of Major John Myers, the soldier and Old Etonian to collected the vast majority of the objects. These were written very much in the style of the day and read like a "Boys' Own" ripping yarn.

Sadly, Major Myers was killed during the Boer War but the items he collected whilst serving in Egypt were left to the College.

Look out for details of the Summer Trip 2001 which, it is hoped, will be to Highclere, the home of Lord Carnarvon, the famous victim of the fictional 'Curse of Tutankhamun'.

Margaret Curtis

### Egyptian Evening @t Bristol

The IMAX cinema on the waterfront is currently showing a film on ancient Egypt, in connection with which a special evening is being planned for **Tuesday 19 September, from 1800 to 2100 hrs.** It will be built around the film - which the

President has seen and highly recommends - followed by a lecture, 'The Discovery of Ancient Egypt', by the Chairman. Plans are not yet complete, but the evening may also include oriental dancing and food. If further details become available before this mailing goes out they will be included - otherwise, please contact @t Bristol direct.

### **Books on the Cheap**

It is an unfortunate fact that books on archaeology are not amongst the cheapest of publications. However, the ESB has managed to do a couple of 'deals': one is on the Chairman's new book, *After the Pyramids*, details being on the enclosed flyer. The other is on the publications of the British Museum Press, for which see the advertisement below. Please note that these 'deals' are only available direct from the ESB and BMP, respectively - not from bookshops.

### **Recent & Forthcoming Publications**

The last few years have seen an unfortunate number of books which make spectacular claims about ancient Egypt on the flimsiest of evidence - or no evidence at all. While not in the league of some of the writers on the Great Pyramid and Tutankhamun with whom members will be all too

familiar, **Lorraine Evans' *Kingdom of the Ark*** (Simon & Schuster, £17.99) is an excellent example of the erection of a breathtaking skyscraper on foundations that would just about support a modest bungalow. The book attempts to show that the legendary eponymous ancestor of the Scots, 'Scota' was actually Meryetaten, eldest daughter of Akhenaten, via a series of dubious 'facts' and questionable observations. The Chairman found the book frustrating, in that a potentially fascinating exploration of Scots/Irish tradition had been submerged in a mass of wild speculation that cannot be recommended.

In contrast, **Nick Reeves' *Ancient Egypt: the Great Discoveries*** (Thames & Hudson, £24.95 - due October) provides an authoritative account of some of the most important - yet sometimes little known - pieces of fieldwork in Egypt over the past two centuries. A 'must-have' for your Christmas lists!

