



The Egypt Society of Bristol

NEWS UPDATE

Issue 11

May 2003

Chairman's Dig

Greetings! This newsletter finds the Chairman and Treasurer recovering from jet lag after a three-week trek around the USA, including lecture dates in California, Oregon and Missouri, ending with the American Research Center in Egypt conference in Atlanta, Georgia. The hospitality shown by our American hosts was superb – particularly the games room in Santa Ana, with a pinball machine and 1980 space invaders machine: free! – and next year's programme is already pretty well sorted.

Speaking of programmes, as you will see, the ESB's is largely complete for the 03/04 season, with just one or two possible additions to come. One will be the University's Amelia Edwards Memorial lecture next spring. This will be given by the President, and will take us back to the days before the High Dam, with evocative images of the vanished land of Nubia.

As you will also see, we have had to withdraw the proposed trip to Belgium and the Netherlands in the autumn. While there were a number of people keen to go, the numbers did not come up to the 'critical mass' to make such a venture viable.

On the other hand, there are plenty upcoming events for those who wish to get out and about. One is the **'Legend'** conference, whose brochure is enclosed in this mailing. The Chairman has spoken at a number of the previous years' events, and can commend them as both enlightening and enjoyable. Much less expensive (and time consuming!) is a study day on **Saturday 21 June** in London, run by the **Egypt Exploration Society** on aspects of Egyptian kingship – details from the EES office (020 7242 1880 – eeslondon@talk21.com).

You may be aware that the City Museum and Art Gallery is planning an expansion and complete reinstallation of its Egyptian displays. The Magpies, the Museum's friends organisation, is planning a fund-raising campaign, with which the ESB intends to collaborate. Details should be forthcoming in the next mailing.

See you all soon!



PS: please note that e-mails to the Society should now be addressed to Aidan.Dodson@bris.ac.uk, the old address having become chronically clogged with SPAM

Event Reports

EGYPT '02

From 7 to 20 December, several intrepid members of the society followed our Chairman out into Egypt for a trip to see both the major pyramid sites and also to explore the seldom-seen Delta sites.

Having never been to Egypt before (and having wanted to go for many years), it felt strange stepping down from the plane and onto Egyptian soil for the first time. Driving through Cairo to the hotel and passing the pyramids of Giza lit up at night was an amazing experience.

The first day itself got off to a stunning start – not least of which was pulling back the curtains in my hotel room to find the pyramids of Giza facing me (how I wish I could have taken that view with me when we came back!). Our first stop was the Workmen's Village at Giza where we had a chance to wander and explore amongst the remains of the tombs, and got a good view across to both the Sphinx and the pyramids. From here we moved on to the pyramids themselves, and I got a chance to experience firsthand what I had heard so many times from so many people – that photographs simply do not do justice to the scale and grandeur of these monuments. After a short stop to see Khufu's impressive Solar Boat and another stop to take some photographs of the entire plateau, we made our way to the pyramid of Khafre. Here a few of us bravely ran the gauntlet of smiling vendors armed with postcards and trinkets and ventured inside. Though it was a hot and tiring experience, it was certainly worth it.

After Giza we moved south to Abu Sir and took some time to explore the area around the pyramid of Sahure. We also climbed over the wall and took a look around the mastaba of Ptahshepses. Here we had the option of crawling down the narrow descending passage to the burial chamber, hard and dusty work but well worth doing to get a close up view of the two sarcophagi there.

The next day we set off bright and early and headed to Saqqara, a site which I will admit to falling in love with. We made our way around the *heb-sed* court and the pyramids of Djoser and Unas and the remains of the pyramid of Sekhemkhet. We also got to see a particularly impressive shaft tomb and walk a short distance down the causeway of Unas. Then we made our way over to the tomb of Mereruka and the pyramid of Teti, where once again I made my way inside (despite the protests of my legs that didn't seem to welcome going into another pyramid!) to look at the beautifully preserved pyramid texts on the walls of the inner chambers.

The next day we arrived at the Cairo Museum – an absolutely staggering place. I'm sure somebody was creeping around behind me moving things, because every time I turned around I spotted something I hadn't noticed before. At this point I confess to slipping away from the rest of the group, and a visit was paid to the gleaming treasures of Tutankhamun and the royal mummies. I also recommend the amazing collection of ostraca that the museum has on display.

Day five saw us arriving at Dahshur, where just the mention of the 'Black Pyramid' was enough to elicit pained groans from certain members of the group that recalled hiking over to it five years previously in the blistering heat. After a quick trip around the Bent pyramid (and a close encounter with an inquisitive scorpion) we made our way over to the black pyramid via the bent pyramid's valley temple. Then we made our way over to the red pyramid. We were warned this wasn't an easy pyramid to enter but the rewards inside were well worth it, despite the hot, crowded spaces. Finally we concluded the day with a visit to the pyramids at el-Lisht.

Meidum was the first stop on the 6th day. The impressive and unique profile of the 'false' pyramid greeted us through the early morning haze as we approached in the coach. We spent some time around the pyramid, once again venturing inside, and then we made our way over to mastaba 17. We crawled into the narrow opening – a robber's tunnel – leading into the mastaba, and made our way down the cramped space into the burial chamber to where an impressive sarcophagus (now empty) awaited us. After this we made a quick stop at mastaba 16 and then we made our way to the Fayoum. Here we visited the pyramid of Amenemhat (Ammenemes) III at Hawara and saw the site of the mortuary temple that had become known in the Classical period as "the Labyrinth" – although sadly, virtually nothing is left apart from a few fragments of columns and decorative elements. After a quick visit to the remains of the pyramid of Amenemhat's daughter Neferuptah, we also stopped in Karanis, a Roman-period settlement that had a magical feel about it and a nasty habit of using up more camera film than I'd thought to take with me.

The final day of the first week included a visit to Abu Rowash and the remains of the pyramid of Djedefre and also an optional tour of Islamic Cairo culminating in a shopping expedition to Khan el-Khalili and a chance to practice some haggling skills.

Alexandria was the destination for those doing the second week, and the first day ended with an "ice cold in Alex" at the bar in the Cecil hotel, after a tiring day of travelling (and an unexpected change of hotel from the Landmark to the Mercure).

Day 9 of the trip gave us a chance to explore some of the hidden gems of Alexandria – from the stunning catacombs at Kom el-Shugafa to Pompey's Pillar, a visit to the Graeco-Roman museum and a chance to see the Roman theatre at Kom el-Dikka.

Taposiris Magna was the first destination on the next day, and gave us a chance to climb not only the remains of a pylon, but also a lighthouse-like structure,



A last view of Cairo — for the time being! Our view from Shepherd's Hotel, overlooking the Nile and only a five-minute walk from the Egyptian Museum.

whose exact nature is the subject of some dispute. We also stopped at Rosetta and saw the location in which the famous stone was discovered. We ended the day by arriving in Tanta and our next hotel. Tanta has to be one of the hidden gems of the Delta, very welcoming and as yet untouched by the commercial side of the tourist industry.

Day 11 saw us in Sais and also wandering amongst the stunning ruins of the temple of Isis at Behbeit el-Hagar, marvelling at the beautiful carvings to be found there, and picking our way between the fallen blocks of the temple. We concluded the day with a visit to Mendes where we saw the remains of the tomb of Nephertites I and the cracked remains of a naos dating to the time of Amasis.

The following day we made our way to Tell Basta (Bubastis) and saw the remains of the temple of Bastet, like Behbeit el-Hagar the area is a seemingly haphazard gathering of beautifully carved relief and statue fragments. There were also hordes of Egyptian schoolchildren that descended upon the site during our visit, all eager to try out their English, and all very friendly and welcoming. We also explored the nearby remains of some New Kingdom tombs (taking great care to duck out of sight if we saw Dyan raise her camera!). We concluded the day with a trip to Zagazig museum and a visit to the utterly spectacular site of Tanis. Tanis is another one of those places that has a sense of magic about it. It's hard to define, but we knew the moment we started walking amongst the remains of statues and fallen columns and obelisks that we were somewhere special – and one of those places that can consume camera film at an alarming rate! Many of the statues here have been transported from all across Egypt and it really is an interesting collection of artefacts from different periods of Egyptian history – huge statues from the reign of (who else?) Ramesses II rub shoulders with blocks inscribed with the names of Khufu, Teti and Pepy II to name but a few. We also took the time to visit the 22nd Dynasty tombs of Osorkon II, Takelot I and Shoshenq III.

The final full day came around all too soon, with a trip to Heliopolis and the oldest standing obelisk in Egypt. Sadly, we got to see all too clearly the problem faced by Egypt with the rising water table as we discovered the open-air museum was now a murky swamp with the submerged artefacts just visible beneath the water. And finally another welcome stop at the Cairo museum –

where I finally got to find the statues of Rahotpe and Neferet that I missed on my first visit!

With a trip this packed, it's hard to do it justice in a short account like this, when I could probably fill half a dozen pages – suffice it to say, the main flaw of the whole trip for me was that it ended! As I am sure many of you have discovered, there is a special feeling from visiting the sites in person that books and documentaries fail to capture – a sense of magic and history, from the glorious monuments and the intricate wall-reliefs to the mesmerising treasures in the Cairo Museum. I am certainly counting the days until I can go back!

Simon Bleaken

LECTURES

26 November 2002

Dylan Bickerstaff: **'Caches, Cliffs and Kings'**

This lecture concerned the cache of royal mummies discovered in the hills above the Valley of the Kings at Deir el-Bahari, holding bodies were rescued by the priests for safe keeping following increasing tomb robbing and damage taking place in antiquity.

Some locals, the Abd el-Rassul brothers, who lived in the area, discovered the tomb around 1871 and had been gradually removing and disposing of items from the tomb over a long period. During her visit to Luxor in 1874, Amelia Edwards had heard of a tomb that had been discovered and actually purchased items from it. It turned out to be this very same tomb.

Torture had failed to make the brothers reveal their secret, but eventually one of them, Mohammed, told the authorities for which he was paid the princely sum of £500 with which he built a large house. When the authorities moved in the tomb was cleared in about 48 hours and the bodies sent to Cairo in 1881.

Although the tomb provides much information and gives us the opportunity to see the faces of some of the famous people in Egyptian history, unfortunately some of the mummies were put in the wrong coffin, or a lid from one coffin mixed with another. This may have happened due to the tombs being robbed or the priests not being as careful as we would have like them to be. Some of the mummies were damaged and one in particular, Thutmose III, was unwrapped and was found to be in very poor condition. The remaining bodies were eventually unwrapped in 1886. I left the lecture thinking how different things would have been if the bodies had all been carefully packed and labelled!

One thing I will remember about this lecture will be the slides Dylan presented to us. These must have been some of the most beautiful views of the Valley of the Kings and the surrounding area we have seen so far. Dylan could have made a complete day school out of the information he had to tell us: perhaps he can make a return visit.

Margaret Curtis

7 January 2003

Colin Reader (National Museums of Scotland Expedition to Saqqara): **'Saqqara: A Personal Perspective'**

Colin opened the lecture by giving us some background information on the type of work the team have been conducting at the site. The focus being a geophysical survey using a magnetometer, a method of surveying which is totally non-invasive to the site. The equipment detects disturbances underground and a map can then be drawn showing features such as walls that lie under the surface. Actually found at the site so far are pots, amulets and coins, quite a number of which were Greek and some fine Tura limestone steps.

Colin then took us on a tour of the Saqqara site describing the many features to see. From his talk, it is clear the step pyramid is only one of the many interesting things to explore at this site, which extends for miles and shows signs of use from the early non-pharaonic times. Evidence from 30 dynasties has been found.

To date, the area open to tourists is relatively small, but as further exploration is made hopefully the area will expand and allow us to visit all these new interesting places.

Margaret Curtis

11 February 2003

Dr Aidan Dodson (who?): **'The God's Wives of Amun'**

The evening of the Winter Party 2003 saw our illustrious Chairman providing us with fascinating insight into the grand title of 'God's Wife of Amun.' also known during the ages as 'God's Adorer' or 'God's Hand', the latter a reference to the Egyptian creation myth which was explained very delicately by Aidan.

This title was awarded to a senior female member of the Royal family, at first usually one of the king's wives, but later one of his daughters, and the role could have been introduced in order to have some control over the Amun priests. During the many dynasties the title fell in and out of prominence, but some of the known holders of the title are Hatshepsut, her daughter Neferure and Iset, one of the daughters of Rameses VI.

The later God's Wives are thought to have been celibate and eyebrows were raised when one of the mummies found in the Royal Cache, Maatkare, a God's Wife of Amun, was found with what was thought to be a baby.

When technology allowed, a dentist from Michigan x-rayed the 'baby' and it turned out to be a baboon, possibly a pet! Not only will Maatkare's name live forever, but happily so now will her reputation.

Most God's Wives appeared to live to a good old age and this is possibly due to the fact they were celibate and were spared the risks of having children. Some are known to have lived to be 80 or 90 – or maybe it just felt like that!

Margaret Curtis

4 March 2003

Dr Salima Ikram (Associate Professor of Egyptology, American University in Cairo): **'Creatures of the Gods: Animal Mummies in Ancient Egypt'**

It was with great delight that we welcomed Dr Salima Ikram to lecture on the ongoing Animal Mummy project at the Cairo Museum. In fact, it was so popular that there was standing room only in the lecture theatre. However, this did enable us to sell plenty of raffle tickets, the proceeds of which are being donated to adopt a mummy in need of a little TLC for the Society. Dr Ikram showed us slides of two mummies to choose from, a dog and an Anubis figure and with only a 'little' persuasion the vote was overwhelmingly in favour of the Anubis figure.

There are three main categories of animal mummies, pets (either beloved friends or as useful intermediaries to the gods), divinities (like the sacred bulls) and food. Cairo Museum has the largest collection of these mummies, which due to neglect have suffered over the years since they were last catalogued in 1905. The project's aims are to use non-destructive methods to study, record and catalogue the collection culminating with the publishing of a new catalogue, to conserve the mummies and reinstall them in a refurbished gallery.

The project has enabled new light to be shone on how the animals were mummified, whether evisceration, exsanguination, enema and/or desiccation as little evidence of these practices exist for the animals. Experiments by the team with rabbits enjoyed success (although the fate of one poor exploding bunny should perhaps be passed over) and the reasons for thorough massaging of the bodies after desiccation with oils and painting with resin were made apparent to the team. The first enabling the bodies to be manipulated into a more lifelike appearance, and the second to kill bacteria and give a pleasant aroma prior to bandaging.

Many animals are found amongst the animal mummies, from dogs, cats, snakes, shrews, beetles, monkeys, bulls, birds, rams and fish up to crocodiles over 5 metres in length. They were buried with their owners (pets or food), offered to the gods as votives, or were sacred animals. The study has also found mummies that contain only parts of animals, which appear to represent the whole especially with the birds of prey. Another interesting find is the existence of fake mummies formed of mud; speculations of the reasons for these are generally divided between whether there was a deficiency in numbers of the animal available or as a con job. The food mummies are found to contain all kinds of meat, prepared as if for the table to accompany the

dead to the afterlife, Tutankhamun alone had 42 boxes of food.

It was a fascinating lecture into an overlooked subject arousing the curiosity in the macabre details of mummifying experiments, finding out about how the Egyptians worshipped their gods or cared for their pets, right down to what joints of meat they ate.

Nikki Blake



The ESB has been running a raffle to allow the Society to sponsor the conservation of one of the Cairo Museum's animal mummies. A total of £175 was raised, and dedicated to an image of Anubis, containing dog bones. Here we see the draw ...



... and Salima with the winner, Ray Warburton.

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c/o Department of Archaeology, University of Bristol
43 Woodland Road, BRISTOL BS8 1UU

Tel.: 0117-942 1957; e-mail: Aidan.Dodson@bris.ac.uk

<http://www.bris.ac.uk/Depts/Archaeology/staff/egyptsoc.html>

Egypt Society of Bristol Programme 2003/4

Brussels & Leiden

Thank you to everyone who responded regarding the potential Brussels and Leiden trip. Unfortunately, there was insufficient interest to make the jaunt viable. Our apologies on this, and perhaps we will be able to revive the idea in a future year.

Tues 13 May 2003: Lecture, *Prof Plumley, Qasr Ibrim, and the Egypt Exploration Society in Nubia.*
Chris Naunton, Librarian, Egypt Exploration Society.

Tues 10 June 2003

- Lecture: *Dark Passage: Dreams in Ancient Egypt*
Dr Kasia Szpakowska, Lecturer in Egyptology, University of Wales, Swansea
- Summer Party (at 1945 – see form below)

Tues 23 September 2003: Lecture, *“Here am I”: servants for the Hereafter*
Peter Clayton, FSA.

Sat 27 September 2003: Day trip – London (assorted Egypt-related things!)
Depart Woodland Road 0800; return 1830. £17.00 (see form below)

Tues 21 October 2003: Lecture, *The First Intermediate Period and Tell Edfu*
Nadine Moeller, Christ’s College, Cambridge

Tues 13 January 2004: Lecture, *Fortress at the end of the World: the latest excavations at Zawiyet Umm el-Rakham*
Dr Steven Snape, Lecturer in Egyptology, University of Liverpool

Tues 24 February 2004:

- Annual General Meeting (at 1830)
- Lecture, *A Load of Old Bull? The Serapeum of Saqqara.*
Dr Aidan Dodson, Department of Archaeology, University of Bristol
- Winter Party (at 1945)

Tues 30 March 2004: Lecture, Title TBD

Dr Mark Collier, Lecturer in Egyptology, University of Liverpool

Tues 18 May 2004: Lecture, *Making stone statues and cutting reliefs and hieroglyphs into hard materials*
Denys Stocks

Tues 22 June 2004

- Lecture, *Flinders Petrie & the Politics of Archaeology*
Dr Bill Manley, National Museums of Scotland and Universities of Glasgow & Liverpool
- Summer Party (at 1945)

ESB lectures are held in Lecture Room 1, Department of Archaeology, 43 Woodland Road, Clifton, at 1845. Doors open at 1815. Street parking available in the vicinity. Disabled access is available.

To: Dr Aidan Dodson
93A Redland Road
Bristol BS6 6RB

PLEASE RETURN THIS FORM BY 1 SEPTEMBER 2003

Please send me/us tickets for the ESB **London Trip**, @ £17.00 each, and enclose a cheque for £..... and a **stamped addressed envelope**.

Name

Address

..... e-mail

To: Dr Aidan Dodson
93A Redland Road
Bristol BS6 6RB

PLEASE RETURN THIS FORM BY 1 JUNE 2003

Please send me/us tickets for the ESB **Summer Party**, @ £6.00 each, and enclose a cheque for £..... and a **stamped addressed envelope**.

Name

Address

..... e-mail