



# The Egypt Society of Bristol

## NEWS UPDATE

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### Chairman's Dig

Writing this against the background of the icy drizzle of a Bristol New Year is particularly hard with the memory of two recent treks to Egypt, both of which, although not 'official' ESB jaunts, had Society participants other than the Chairman and Treasurer (and Bruin the teddy bear!).

The first, including ESB stalwarts Richard Clements and Reg Clarke, plus new recruit Mark Tomlinson, took us from Aswan in the south to Alexandria in the north — where we are all seen below in front of the fortress of Qait Bey, the site of the former Pharos lighthouse.



Thanks to the expertise of our guide, Medhat Saad, we managed to get to all the out-of-the-way places on the itinerary, including the impressive but mysterious Third Dynasty mastaba K1 at Beit Khallaf, plus an unexpected bonus, the Second Dynasty royal funerary enclosure at Abydos known as the Shunet el-Zebib.

More mainstream, but still great fun, was a Christmas Nile cruise, amongst whose participants were the ESB's Dee and Neil Marshall. Christmas Day at the temple of Isis on the island of Philae certainly beat trying to digest turkey in front of the TV .... The Chairman and Treasurer were also victorious in the mummy wrapping competition — with toilet rolls substituting for linen bandages!

Bookings are now coming in for the ESB tour planned for next December — and we look forward to receiving more now the dust of the Festive Season has now passed. The trip covers some of the most out-of-the-way, but also some of the most famous sites of Egypt with, for many, the top attraction being a whole day and a half at Tell el-Amarna, the capital city of Akhenaten and Nefertiti. This includes the heretic's

little-visited tomb, as well as the main city and a selection of the sepulchres of the Atenist nobility.

A taste of one of the sites on the itinerary was given in Andrew Ganley's lecture, reported below. Meir is a stunning place that is but rarely visited today, in spite of containing extremely important tombs of the Old and Middle Kingdoms. Full details are given in the enclosed flyer, and the Chairman will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Two other enclosures include the calling notice for the AGM and Winter Party, and a flyer for a fund-raising day-school being held in support of the re-installation of the Egyptian gallery at the City Museum and Art Gallery. Further events will follow, and it is intended that an enlarged and wholly new display should open in 2006. The ESB will of course be kept fully informed with progress!

Finally, there are flyers for two conferences, one on the Exodus, in Reading, and the other, on Luxor, in Luxor. Both feature familiar names, Luxor's list being headed by Professor Alan Lloyd, famously described at an earlier Reading gathering as one of the 'big beasts' of Egyptology. The other Luxor speakers are Dr Penny Wilson, from Durham, Dr Peter Janosí from Vienna, David Rohl who — no matter how questionable some of his conclusions — is an excellent speaker, with many intriguing observations and ideas, and a certain Dr Aidan Dodson .... The main draw for the Luxor gathering, however, are the various special visits to places only accessible with very special permission — including the tomb of Sethy I, which will probably *never* again be open to tourists.

Planning is now under way for the 04/05 lecture programme, which we hope will be ready for the Easter mailing. As usual, any suggestions for speakers will be welcomed.

Wishing everyone a happy, prosperous and Egyptophile New Year!



### Lecture reports

by Margaret Curtis

"Here I am": *Servants for the Hereafter* by Peter Clayton. Peter, amongst other distinctions an Editor of *Minerva* magazine and author of *Chronicle of the Pharaohs*,

presented on a subject which is clearly close to his heart — shabti figures.

These generally small items are amongst the most common ancient surviving Egyptian artefacts, and come in various sizes and materials, including wood, alabaster, faience, red granite and even bronze. So many survive because the figures were overlooked by the ancient tomb robbers as being of no value as most were stone or wood. Quality varies from little more than a rough wooden figure, referred to by Peter as 'tent pegs', to finely detailed miniature works of art in the case of some of the royal shabtis. Some have their own coffin.

Most of you will know shabti figures were buried in tombs to act as servants to the deceased in the afterlife. The ever-ingenious Egyptians did not fancy the idea of working in paradise so these figures were introduced to take on any work the deceased may be required to do. In particular, the dreaded 'moving the sand from the east to the west and moving the sand from the west to the east'. If work need to be done the shabtis would come forward with the miniature tools provided and announce "Here I am!".

Many of the figures discovered over the years have been scattered far and wide in museums and collections, but there is evidence of there being ideally 365 figures in a 'set', one for each day of the year. There are also 10 reis shabtis, dressed in heavy wigs and pleated kilts, to act as overseers to the workforce. The Egyptians also considered the matter of payment in case there should be any workers' disputes. The makers of the shabtis were paid for their work and this payment documented to prove the figures were the property of the person they were intended to accompany to the afterlife, therefore obliged to work for their master.

Peter's lecture also included picturesque details of the fake shabti market and an occasion where he had to appear as an expert witness in a case where fake shabtis had been sold as genuine. High prices are currently being paid on the antiquities market therefore encouraging the forgers to produce more fakes or 'Mickey Mouse' shabtis. His many years of experience have taught him to spot a fake a mile away and I'm sure he relishes finding them!

This was an excellent way to open the new lecture season and our thanks go to Peter for bringing these little workers to life.

*The Rock Tombs at Meir*, by Andrew Ganley

Unfortunately Nadine Moeller was unable to present her October-scheduled lecture to the ESB owing to her relocation to Germany — too far for the ESB's budget! Luckily, Andrew Ganley was able to step into the breach.

Until 1997 a lecturer in Law and then studying Egyptology at Oxford, Andrew took us to Middle Egypt for the evening. He started the lecture with the sights to be seen in Minya, a city of nearly a quarter of a million people. He visited the town in the 80's and took some interesting photos of the town and its inhabitants, including the local 'spiv' who followed him around. He recalled the delivery of Cleopatra cigarettes which were 8p a packet! At that time he was able to wander the town

quite freely but he advised that today the zeal of the police would make this difficult.

Being a preserved railway enthusiast, he was interested in the local station and showed photos of the locals on the platform. He was shocked to see people wandering across the level crossing paying little attention to the huge diesel loco was pulling out of the station. He also recalled a (hopefully apocryphal!) story of a train guard who shouted at the driver when the signals changed. When asked why, the guard responded that the driver was blind .....

Meir, known as the Bride or Pride of Egypt, depending on the translation, is situated some way upstream of Minya. The tombs Andrew described are some of the least visited in Egypt. Sadly, they are not in good condition, having been pillaged and quarried in the 19th century and have deteriorated even since they were published. Nevertheless, he was able to show fascinating glimpses of the site, providing those of you going on the 2004 trip with a taste of the things you will be seeing. This is a very rarely visited site, well off the beaten track of even the keenest of tourists.

*The Western Desert Oases of Egypt*,

by Dylan Bickerstaffe

It was a pleasure to welcome Dylan back to the ESB. On cold, winter evenings it's pleasant to remember the warm, sunny days of summer holidays and Dylan's lecture, together with wonderful photographs, took us on a tour of the Western Desert. The lecture made me think that, perhaps, the brochure would read something like this:-

Depart Luxor (very early) - We leave Luxor this morning on our way to Kharga, a journey of approximately four and a half hours on a good road. In ancient times, this journey would have taken a week, a journey started by the 50,000 strong army despatched by the King Cambyses in 525 BC as mentioned in Herodotus. It would need a good, well organised army to complete the journey even in a week whilst carrying all its supplies.

Kharga Oasis is a large depression in the desert approximately 70 miles long and 20 miles wide and features the typical green patches of an oasis area. The oases of the desert thrived at different times from the Nile Valley, therefore giving us the opportunity to see remains from periods not seen at the more well known historic locations.

On our way, we visit Baris where we have an opportunity to explore the southernmost fort, built in the Roman period, which was erected around a temple.

We continue our journey along the Dar el-Arbain (40 days road). This was an ancient slave route from central Africa to the coast, and, as the name describes, was a journey of 40 days. We shall have the opportunity to visit some of the fortified temple posts built along the route. The treasure of Dush was found in this area which consisted of Roman costume jewellery. Some of the wall carvings we shall see are still in excellent condition despite having been exposed to the desert climate through the ages.

Our next stop is at Zian. This will be a very brief stop to see the less interesting, more crude Roman remains.

Gheita is the next site we visit on our journey. Here we shall see a fortified temple of the Persian period with beautiful columns and clear carvings. This fort is from the period of Darius I, the more balanced successor to Cambyses

We continue our journey through dramatic landscape to Nadura situated north of the modern day Kharga town. Another Roman fort can be found here with a temple building inside the fortified ruins. Although the carvings are not well preserved, the site affords us an excellent view over the green landscape of the oasis. The Hibis Temple, situated amongst the trees is, unfortunately, in a poor state of repair and has been shored up for safety. You will notice the temple has been marked out with white lines. This is due to the fact the temple was going to be moved to a more stable location. Unfortunately, some of the building has been dismantled and some of the pieces have been lost, although we may get a chance to see some of the reliefs which still retain a lot of their original colouring. The carvings include a unique depiction of Seth with the head of Horus. If time permits, we may have time to explore Bagawat, a Christian cemetery near Hibis Temple. Christianity was established by the third century AD and there is a scene Pharaohs army chasing Moses and his followers.

We now travel further west to the Dakhla Oasis. Along our way we may encounter the huge sand dunes which move across the dessert and sometimes block the road completely, causing the route to be diverted. We shall also see the rocks which have been carved into many strange shapes by the wind and sand, some of which are said to look like camels.

A team of archaeologists are in the area and we may be lucky enough to meet Professor Mills who leads the

group. Finds include the world's earliest books, made of wood, consisting of a series of philosophical discourses and agricultural returns. The agricultural returns are of particular use to science as they detail the crops growing in this once prosperous region. The books are now held in the Kharga Museum. Pottery, which was used to fill cracks in walls, was also found all over the site. As the walls decay the pottery falls out. There is a Christian church of the third century AD and interesting reliefs of Pharaonic registers and Greco Roman vines. The little known God Tutu is mentioned here.

Interesting vases were found featuring famous Gladiators of the period. A little like the Beckham memorabilia which can be bought today.

Still travelling west we see Mut el-Harab with remains from the Roman period and at Musawata many tombs cut into the sandstone.

At Deir el Hagar we see a very well preserved temple where the carvings were buried in the sand and therefore still crisp. Many are of Titus of the Ptolemaic period and have very good colour remaining. This is the area explored by the Rolf Expedition to Gilf el-Kebir, featured in the film *The English Patient*.

We shall see the medieval town of El-Qasr (the Palaces) built of decorative brickwork and carved wooden lintels in a labyrinth of streets.

Leaving the Dakhla area we travel through the region where it is thought the army of Cambyses was lost. The theory is the army had stopped, possibly to rest or eat and a sudden sandstorm engulfed them.

We finish our journey by travelling through the dramatic scenery of the White Desert near the Oasis at Farafra. The chalk was deposited by the sea leaving a strange, alien landscape of sand blasted rocks and slopes of what looks like snow.

We arrive at our hotel in time for a cold beer before dinner!

## Newsletters by e-mail

Something around half of our members now have e-mail facilities, and currently receive advance copies of the Newsletter and any other mailings by e-mail, as well as printed versions a week or so later.

The ESB is perfectly happy to continue this pattern for those who wish to receive both electronic and paper versions. However, given the costs and time associated with paper distribution, it has been decided to ask members with e-mail accounts whether they would be prepared to receive their mailings electronically only.

If so, please e-mail [Aidan.Dodson@bristol.ac.uk](mailto:Aidan.Dodson@bristol.ac.uk) confirming your e-mail address. We wish to emphasise, however, that everyone who wishes to receive a paper copy as well is perfectly at liberty to do so!

## Egypt Society of Bristol Programme 2004

**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)

**Monday 1 March 2004:** University of Bristol Amelia Edwards Memorial Lecture,

*The Drowned Land of Nubia and the Rescue of its Monuments*

Martin Davies, President, Egypt Society of Bristol

Reception Room, Wills Memorial Building at 1715

*NB: this is a University event, not organized by the ESB, but all are very welcome.*

**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)

**Saturday 20 November 2004:** City of Bristol Museum & Art Gallery — New Egyptian Gallery Fundraiser

*The Rediscovery of Ancient Egypt: the Pioneering Years*

Speakers: John Ruffle, Dr Patricia Usick, Dr Aidan Dodson & Dr John Taylor

University of Bristol Chemistry Theatre 2, Cantocks Close, Bristol 8, from 0945 to 1645

*NB: This is a Bristol Magpies event; tickets £25 (whole day)/£15 (half day); booking details enclosed.*

**Mon 6 to Tues 14 December 2004:** Trip to Middle Egypt: cost for person sharing a room £1,103 (an 8% saving on the regular price). See separate sheets for booking.

Mon 6 London to Cairo

Tue 7 Cairo Museum

Wed 8 Biahmu, Hawara (monuments and pyramid of Amenemhat III); Medinet Maadi (temple of Amenemhat III & IV)

Thu 9 Deir el-Bersha (Middle Kingdom tombs, including the famous scene of dragging a colossus), Tuna el-Gebel (Graeco-Roman tombs), Ashmunein (site of city of Hermopolis)

Fri 10 Tell el-Amarna: the city and private tombs

Sat 11 Tell el-Amarna: the tomb of Akhenaten; Mallawi Museum; Meir (Old and Middle Kingdom tombs)

Sun 12 Beni Hasan (Middle Kingdom tombs), Speos Artemidoros (temple of Hatshepsut), Zawiyet Sultan (early Old Kingdom pyramid and later tombs), Tihna el-Gebel (Old Kingdom tombs; Roman temples, &c)

Mon 13 Dishasha (Old Kingdom tombs)

Tue 14 Cairo-London