



The Egypt Society of Bristol

NEWS UPDATE

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Chairman's Dig

This Newsletter is produced in a degree of haste, owing to a family bereavement taking up much of the Chairman and Treasurer's time in recent weeks. However, it is hoped that the dust will have settled over the next couple of months!

In addition, we have been away in the USA on a lecture tour, travelling the UK to Seattle, then on to Portland, Los Angeles, Dallas, Chicago and Boston — all within just over a fortnight Tiring, but fun. Amazingly, the States has far fewer Egyptological societies than the UK, although the number is steadily growing.

Speaking of Los Angeles, the last lecture of this season, accompanying the Summer Party, will focus on the (mis)representation of ancient Egypt in films. Our speaker, John Johnson, is a superb raconteur, and it should be a great evening. A booking slip for the party is included with this Newsletter. We look forward to seeing everyone there.



Lecture report

Lecture 11th January 2005: Diane Bergman

F.L.I. Griffith and C E Wilbour: Two Very Different Egyptologists and Two Very Similar Libraries

This evening's lecture by Diane Bergman of the Griffith Institute at the Ashmolean Museum Oxford was "a tale of two libraries" and how they came into being.

The first character in the tale is Charles Edwin Wilbour, born in Little Compton, Rhode Island, USA in 1833 from descendants of the *Mayflower*. He was a student at Brown University the class of 1855, studying classics. He also had a talent for languages. Unfortunately, due to illness he did not complete his time there.

Early in his career he worked in New York, building his fortune which enabled him to study Egyptology. During this time he worked for the infamous New York businessman William Murray ("Boss") Tweed who embezzled millions of dollars from the American government over a period of approximately 7 years. Wilbour ran the newspaper in which Tweed advertised. Wilbour was also a Court Reporter, devising his own shorthand.

In 1870 "Boss" Tweed's business collapsed and all involved "got out of town". Following this in 1874, Wilbour went to Paris where he found his fluent French very useful, becoming friends with Victor Hugo and translating his work. Wilbour even named his son Victor.

In Paris, Wilbour met with Gaston Maspero, studying with him and travelling in Egypt. He would compare the sites he visited with books on the subject and he made corrections to several publications. On his travels he liked to collect Aramaic papyri and buy antiquities, but didn't like paying too much for them!

When Wilbour died in 1896 he had made no plans for his books and collection after his death. His wife and children decided they wanted to create a place where his collections could be kept and used in the future. They approached the Metropolitan but a curator there gave a poor assessment of the works and declined the collection. The Brooklyn Museum was then approached and they accepted. Theodora, Wilbour's daughter also gave money for a Department of Egyptology

In Wilbour's time, Brooklyn was separate from New York and had its own museum where building was still being carried out, but in 1898 Brooklyn became part of New York proper and some wings of the building were never completed as planned but was finally completed in 1914.

The "Wilbour Library" started in 1916 and was modernised in following years with new items being added. By the 1950's the collection had grown to such an extent space was a serious problem, so it was decided only books on the subject of Egypt would be held there.

The library is still in use today and is a lasting and monument to Wilbour's interest in Egyptology and to the foresight of his family.

The second character, Francis Llewellyn Griffith, was born in Brighton in 1862, the son of a schoolmaster. He attended Queens College, Oxford during which time he studied Egyptology by choice whilst formally studying other subjects. Like Wilbour, Griffith was also gifted at languages.

From 1884 to 1888 he was with Petrie in Egypt. He later took a job at the British Museum as there were no other openings in Egyptology at that time. Griffith's wife was a friend of Amelia Edwards, one of the founders of the Egypt Exploration Society, and travelled with her in Egypt. When Amelia Edwards died she left a bequest in her will for the Chair of Egyptology at University College London. Petrie was the first incumbent and, because of his work with him, Griffith came too. He later became the first Professor of Egyptology at Oxford.

He wrote over 260 books, reviews and articles and also bought objects, which went to the Ashmolean.

Sadly, Griffith's wife died early leaving a fortune to her husband. In 1901 Griffith married again, to a mature student of his named Nora Macdonald. Griffith himself died in 1934 at the age of 67 and Nora died shortly afterwards; their personal fortunes and Griffith's library were bequeathed to Oxford.

In 1937 the books moved to the University and the course of events over the following years were much the same as with Wilbour and the Brooklyn collection. The collection outgrew its surroundings and was moved and extensions built to accommodate it. Eventually, it was split, with items on subjects other than Egyptology being housed elsewhere. In the 1990's the Griffith Institute building attached to the Ashmolean was overflowing with books. A new library, incorporating Griffith's collections, was opened a couple of years ago.

It was far sighted of the individuals involved in these stories to have created a lasting memorial and something many students use today in their research. Far more useful and far reaching than an elaborate stone monument.

Margaret Curtis

Egypt Society of Bristol Programme 2005/6

Tues 24 May 2005; Lecture, *Tracking and identifying artistic hands in Middle Kingdom sculpture*
Dr Marcel Marée, Department of Ancient Egypt and the Sudan, British Museum

Tues 28 June 2005

- Lecture, *Mummies, Asps ... and far too much eye make-up: Ancient Egypt in the Movies*
John Johnston, University of London
- Summer Party (at 1945: see form below)

Tues 18 October 2005: Lecture, *Life and devotion in New Kingdom Asyut*
Terence du Quesne

Tues 15 November 2005: Lecture, *New discoveries at Tell Edfu*
Dr Nadine Moeller, University College, Oxford

Tues 13 December 2005: Lecture, *Ramesses II's Poisoned Legacy.*
Dr Aidan Dodson, Department of Archaeology & Anthropology, University of Bristol.

Tues 24 January 2006: Lecture, *Chests of Life: Coffins and Burial Ritual in Ancient Egypt*
Peter Robinson, Poynton Egypt Group

Tues 21 February 2006:

- Annual General Meeting (at 1830)
- Lecture: *The mummyform image in ancient Egypt*
Dr John Taylor, The British Museum
- Winter Party (at 1945)

Tues 28 March 2006: Lecture, *The Drowned Land of Nubia and the Rescue of its Monuments*
Martin R. Davies, President ESB.

Tues 9 May 2006: Lecture, *The Lost Tomb of Alexander the Great*
Andrew Chugg

Tues 27 June 2006

- Lecture, *British Painters and Egyptian Visions 1850-1900*
Donato Esposito, University of Plymouth
- Summer Party (at 1945)

ESB lectures are held in Lecture Room 1, Department of Archaeology & Anthropology, 43 Woodland Road, Clifton, at 1845. Doors open at 1815. Limited off-street parking available; plentiful on-street parking available in the vicinity. Disabled access is available.

Accommodation for members from distant parts

A limited number of University rooms are available nearby, at a current B&B cost of £52 (single)/£65 (twin). Bookings may be made on 0117-954 5555 or Hawthorns-reception@bristol.ac.uk.

Also, our member Nigel Venner is generously offering ESB members a 25% discount on rooms at the Castle of Comfort Country House Hotel, Dodington, Nether Stowey, Bridgwater (01278 741264/reception@castle-of-comfort.co.uk: normal rates from £38 single and £95 double).

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

Please send me tickets for the ESB Summer Party, @ £7 each. I enclose a cheque for £
(payable to 'Egypt Society of Bristol') & a stamped addressed envelope.

Name

Address