



# The Egypt Society of Bristol

# NEWS UPDATE

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## Chairman's Dig

The Summer is allegedly here, although the leaden sky as I type this doesn't make one feel too summery! However, our annual Summer lecture and party are nearly upon us – and accordingly a booking form for this is included in this mailing.

Also included is a booking form for this year's Summer Trip, after the last couple of years' falling victim to personal problems on my part. We are headed up north to the collections of Bolton and Manchester, which include some particularly important pieces. Both institutions were early subscribers to the Egypt Exploration Fund/Society and the work of Flinders Petrie and his students, and thus have a far higher concentration of provenanced and excavated material than other museums of a similar size. It had originally been hoped to also include Liverpool in the itinerary, but it simply would not work – not unless we wanted to get back at midnight!

There is also a north-western museum link in this autumn's lecture programme, as our first speaker is Tom Hardwick, who is the curator of the Bolton Egyptian collection. Tom is a Bristolian and member of the ESB whom long-time Egyptophiles may remember as a schoolboy attending Pip Jones' lectures on Egyptology. Tom has now recently finished his PhD research at Oxford.

I know that some members confess to becoming slightly lost in the intricacies of Egyptian history: I would accordingly recommend the Bristol Magpies' event in July (see programme), at which the President and I will be giving a beginner's overview of Egyptian history and art.

The big Egyptological 'event' in Bristol is, however, the long-awaited re-installation of the Egyptian display at the City Museum & Art Gallery, and later on there is an article by Sue Giles, the Curator of Foreign Archaeology (and of course long-time committee member of the ESB) on the progress to date. This should be the first of a series of such articles; Sue will also be providing next issue with details of the way in which the ESB's £1,500 donation is being used to help the new gallery become reality.

Speaking of new Egyptian galleries, the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge has just finished a re-display, which opened on 25 May. So if anyone finds themselves in East Anglia, they should certainly make their way to the Fitz!

While there is no intention to make a regular feature of 'Personals' in this newsletter, we cannot

fail to congratulate committee member Dee McKay on the birth of her son, Connor, on 10 April!

Finally, as some of you are aware, the ESB now has its own internet domain name. For the non-technically minded, this means that rather than having to struggle through interminable dots and forward-slashes to try to find the ESB web-site, you simply have to type into your web-browser 'http://www.EgyptSocietyBristol.org.uk', which will take you straight in. For those who have not been in recently, we now have nearly all the back-numbers of the newsletter on line, while the new Bankers Order form and other 'administrative' items will be going on later in the Summer.

See you all soon, *inshallah!*



## Memorandum from the Museum

*A first bulletin on progress with the new Egypt gallery at Bristol's City Museum & Art Gallery*

Work has at last started on the new Egypt gallery! The builders moved in at the beginning of May. They began by demolishing the remaining vestiges of the old gallery such as false walls, and are now in the process of rewiring, re-plastering and installing a new false ceiling that will hide all the wiring.

When the builders move out, they will leave a clean space into which we can start installing the new displays. In the workshop, the museum's technicians have started building the plinths for the new cases. These have to be perfectly levelled with the floor, otherwise the glass walls will not fit together and the doors won't close. Any gaps will also play havoc with the environmental controls we are building into the cases. The new gallery is a great opportunity to improve the conditions in the space. Controlling the fluctuations in temperature and relative humidity inside the cases, by using cold lights and silica gel, will stop any damage to the objects caused by their materials expanding and contracting. The old gallery had no such controls, and so the objects were at risk of damage.

Our conservators are working on a range of objects, from a mummy at one end of the scale to a basket. Almost all the objects going into the new gallery have been surveyed and assessed for what conservation work is needed. Objects in the labs at the moment include two baskets, a Coptic tunic, a mummy, a coffin and a toy ball. Work is about to start on a Late Period bead network from a



mummy, which was lifted by the excavators in 1911 by being smothered in paraffin wax. This had the desired effect of keeping all the beads in the right position, but does not exactly enhance the appearance of the beadwork. The paraffin wax therefore has to go, and another way found to keep the beads in place.

The Design section are working on the gallery design and graphics. A lot of time has been spent on the computer system which will carry labels and various levels of information about the objects. This is a very easy to operate system which will allow us to give far more information than could be put onto text panels and labels in the gallery, and the prototype is working well.

The overall gallery plan is still subject to change, but the basic plan is to divide the gallery space with a partition based on and aligned with the River Nile. On one side, the East, is Life in ancient Egypt: on the other, the West, is Death and the Afterlife.

A lot of thought has gone into the philosophy behind the design. The Curatorial and Learning staff

are working closely together on text and research. One outcome of all this work is the pilot case that is now on display. It is a section of the new gallery that has been worked up in advance, partly to give the Egyptian collection a presence in the museum whilst the gallery was closed, but just as importantly to gave the team the chance to test out our ideas. We can see if the case design is as airtight and controlled as planned, and have been able to try out mounting and display ideas, knowing that we can change them if they don't work. The computer labels are also in place (strangely no one complained for the few weeks when the case was up with no computer and therefore no labels!) and we can evaluate how that system is working for visitors and change things that aren't working.

So, if you have the chance, come and have a look at the Afterlife case and try out the computer system. We welcome any comments on it – love it or hate it!

Sue Giles

## Lecture reports

By Margaret Curtis

**21 February 2006**

*The Mummiform Image in Ancient Egypt*

Dr John Taylor

What did the familiar and compelling mummiform image mean to the ancient Egyptians? Shown in a rigid and immobile pose, wearing a close fitting garment with feet together and the exposed face wearing an alert expression. It was seen everywhere, coffins and shabtis, statues, temples and figures of gods and goddesses.

When a person died they took on a divine, superhuman status having been transformed from a mere mortal. The mummy contained the spirit so the deceased person could continue to live. In order for the mummy to come alive, the image had to be animated and this was achieved during the opening of the mouth and eyes ceremony. This ritual was also carried out on statues, as they were also believed to act as a 'home' to hold the spirit of the deceased. Whilst the statue existed, so did the spirit and the spirit could not survive without a body.

In earlier times, the creation of these images was limited by the materials available and the skill of the

artists. By the Fifth Dynasty the mummiform shape was becoming commonplace to depict Gods such as Ptah and particularly Osiris whose body was chopped to pieces by Seth. The pieces were gathered together again by Isis and Osiris came alive again. This could have been the reasoning for wrapping bodies to keep them together; people wanted to live again like Osiris.

Before 2000BC coffins were mere boxes, but around the end of the Eleventh Dynasty the anthropoid shape appeared. In order for the deceased person to 'live' again, the opening of the mouth ceremony was performed on the coffin itself. After 1800 BC the coffins became more ambitious.

Breakthroughs in mummification were made at the beginning of the Old Kingdom when the body was fully extended rather than in the foetal position. Faces were sometimes modelled in linen and resin or masks of clay and the body dressed in real garments. In the Middle Kingdom the bodies were generally just wrapped but the head was depicted in more detail.

The evolution of mummification took 3,000 years and was first used for kings following the belief that the body should remain whole. Also, the wrappings provided an egg like appearance that perhaps offered the hope of new life. The method evolved into the body being dried using salts or natron, the organs having been removed and preserved separately. The body was then formed by its wrappings into a perfect image.

This lecture was the ideal partner for the lecture of the 24th January this year dealing with coffins and burial rituals.

## 28th March 2006

### *The Drowned Land of Nubia*

Martin Davies

The 'drowned land' of Martin's lecture refers to the region between the first and second cataracts of the Nile. At the cataracts, the river becomes impassable because of rocks and boulders, some of them massive, blocking the flow of water.

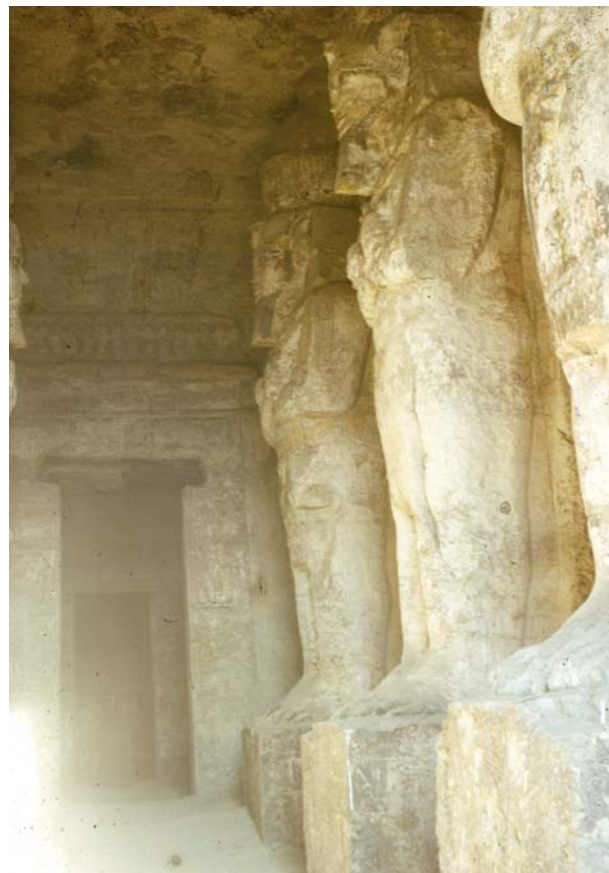
This region was important to the ancient Egyptians for several reasons. Occupation of the area kept the trade routes to Africa open, bringing skins, exotic animals, hardwood and many other goods into the country. It also prevented attack from the south.

Because of the importance of the area and the threat of attack, fortifications were built and the area occupied over a long period of time. Therefore it was rich in archaeology, including prehistoric graffiti, fortresses, both of the Middle and New Kingdom and temples, including one of the most famous of all, Abu Simbel.

In 1902 the first dam at Aswan was inaugurated and it became known that rising waters would flood some important monuments. However, when some fifty years ago, it was realised the old dam was no longer adequate to hold enough water for the dry season, planning for the building of the High Dam commenced. The rising waters would this time flood *all* the temples and archaeological sites of Lower

Nubi, not to mention the homes of the local people. Work started in 1962 and by 1964 more than 100,000 people had given up their homes and were relocated.

As the waters rose, Predynastic rock carvings from 3500 BC had to be removed or at least



*Martin Davies' photograph of the interior of the temple at Gerf Hussein, now lost under the waters of Lake Nasser.*

recorded. At the Second Cataract the fortified mud brick fortresses were excavated, but nothing could be done to save them and they are now underwater and slowly dissolving. Stone buildings were dismantled and re-erected. Two can be seen at Khartoum and because of the higher rainfall in that area, they have had to be covered for protection.. Some monuments were sent overseas as thanks for a country's help with building the dam. One temple was given to Spain and can now be seen in one of the city parks in Madrid. Others (or parts thereof) are to be seen in Leiden, New York, Turin and Berlin.

If it was possible, many of the temples left in Egypt were re-sited on the shores of the new Lake Nasser. That at Amada was moved by the French on rails because dismantling it would have ruined the plaster walls and the artwork inside. The temples at Philae were also saved by building a coffer dam around the site. The water, which was almost as high as the column tops in 1965, gradually receded and by 1972 the buildings were moved to an adjoining island which had been re-contoured for the purpose.

Abu Simbel is probably the most famous of all the temples which were re-sited. Although it was left until it was almost too late to do anything, a dam was finally built around the site to hold back the rising waters and the temple building cut into an amazing jigsaw of numbered pieces. Some of the more

delicate areas had to be cut by hand and protected by linen as the stone used to build the temple was soft and easily damaged. 807 blocks were numbered for reconstruction and, remarkably, the temple was rebuilt without mishap.

Martin's lecture, illustrated by his own photographs, taken while the High Dam was actually being built, allowed us to see again an area long underwater and to appreciate the work involved in preserving the monuments. We wonder how much was left undiscovered, but glad so much was saved.

**9 May 2006**

*The Lost Tomb of Alexander the Great*

Andrew Chugg

Andrew opened his lecture with a question: 'was Alexander the Great a real Pharaoh?' Alexander seemed to love all things Egyptian and is shown on a coin wearing a headdress of the ram's horns of Amun. Andrew is sure Alexander was a real Pharaoh as carvings show he had a prenominal of classic pharaonic pattern: Setepenre-meryamun – 'Selected by Re, Beloved of Amun'. Apparently, he was also fond of purple robes!

The last native Pharaoh, Nectanebo II had been chased out by the Persians and a folk-tale had it that Alexander was his natural son, although he is known to be the son of Philip II of Macedon. But enough about Alexander's life: this lecture was more concerned with his death and what followed.

Alexander died in Babylon on 10 June 323 BC after collapsing with a fever. He died 10 days later, possibly from a powerful strain of malaria. The body was mummified in order for it to be taken to Egypt. Andrew thinks Alexander's mother may have protested against the burial in Egypt, so that it was actually sent off towards the Macedonian ancestral necropolis at Vergina. However, it got as far as Damascus before being diverted to Egypt by the latter's governor, Ptolemy. It was taken to Memphis where, sources suggest, it may have remained for some time. Andrew suggested that remnants of a semi circle of statues which can still be seen at the Serapeum at Saqqara might have guarded a tomb for him there. Although quite badly damaged, some of the statues can be identified and the characters they depict have close connections with Alexander. For instance Homer, who was Alexander's favourite poet

The body was moved from Memphis to Alexandria early in the reign of Philadelphus, possibly in 280BC. At that time Alexandria was a large city and is shown on old maps as being up to 3 miles across.

In 215BC a grand new mausoleum was built in the centre of the town for Alexander and the earlier Ptolemies. References to the tomb can be found up to the time of the fall of the Ptolemies. In about 88BC Ptolemy X replaced the golden coffin with one made of glass in the hope of raising funds with the gold. In 48BC it is recorded that Julius Caesar visited the tomb and in 31BC Cleopatra raided the tomb again to finance war against Rome. In 30BC, Octavian (soon

to be the Emperor Augustus) viewed the body and supposedly damaged the nose of the mummy. From AD19 to AD215 the tomb was visited by many important people of the day, Caligula, Vespasian, Titus, Hadrian, Septimius Severus and Caracalla. Severus ordered the tomb to be sealed as he was concerned that anyone could gain entry to it.

The tomb was last mentioned in about AD361 and the body in about AD390, when Libanius who mentioned the corpse was still on display. This was about the time Paganism was outlawed and could have been the reason the body disappeared. Leo Africanus mentions a small Chapel in Alexandria, where the body is supposed to be held and where people left alms. This site seems to have become part of the Attarin Mosque which was destroyed in 1820. Inside the Mosque was a small chapel with a sarcophagus in it and locals said it was the coffin of Alexander. The sarcophagus, made of green breccia, had been altered to make a cistern for ablutions before prayers. This was taken by the British and can now be seen in the British Museum

The sarcophagus proved actually to have been that made for Nectanebo II, who fled to Nubia in the face of the invading Persians, and thus will never have been used. Andrew argues that it could have been used for Alexander. After all, how and why would the sarcophagus find its way to Alexandria?

There are many suggestions as to the exact spot in Alexandria where the tomb was situated. Suggestions vary from an area known as the Royal Quarter which contained the burials of Kings, an open part of the town known as Alexander and the middle of the town at the central crossroads. Diodorus says the tomb was in a large place and at the eastern side of the town there was a large area where tombs were located. Andrew believes this is the correct area as maps show there was a walled inner enclosure in this part of the town.

Andrew's lecture then turned to another famous mummy residing in Alexandria, that of St Mark the Evangelist, author of the eponymous Gospel. An old map of the town shows the tomb of St Mark appearing at about the same time Alexander's body disappears. Early sources have St Mark's body burned at his martyrdom, but a corpse allegedly of his was to be seen at Alexandria from the fifth century onwards, and was 'kidnapped' by the Venetians and taken home where it now resides in the basilica in St Mark's square as its patron saint. Andrew puts forward the idea that the body in Venice is actually that of Alexander whose body was in the tomb of St Mark, put there in AD390 when Paganism was outlawed. Andrew suggests it should be possible to run tests on the remains to find out if it could possibly be that of Alexander, but the Church remains less than keen!

Andrew's lecture was fascinating and very detailed and if you would like the full story, his book *The Lost Tomb of Alexander the Great* is now available. You can also visit his web site which is at [www.alexanderstomb.com](http://www.alexanderstomb.com).

# Egypt Society of Bristol Programme 2006/7

## Tues 27 June 2006

- Lecture, *British Painters and Egyptian Visions 1850-1900*  
Donato Esposito, University of Plymouth
- Summer Party (at 1945): see separate sheet for booking form

**Sunday 9 July 2006:** Bristol Magpies Lectures (entry £5.00)

*Egyptian History and Art*

Aidan Dodson and Martin Davies, Chairman and President, ESB

**Bristol's City Museum & Art Gallery, Queen's Road (Clifton Triangle), 1415 hrs.**

*NB. This is an event organised by the Bristol Magpies, the Museum friends' organisation, not the ESB. Contact: Mary Bailey, 22 Carnarvon Road, BS6 7DT, tel. 0117-942 1944.*

## Sat 5 August 2006: Day Trip to Bolton & Manchester Museums

- 0700 Depart The Hawthorns, Woodlands Road (diagonally opposite Archaeology & Anthropology Department)
- 0715 Pick-up at Bristol Temple Meads Station
- 1800 Arrive Woodland Road (depending on traffic)

The cost will be £25 per person. See separate sheet for booking form

## Tues 17 October 2006: Lecture, *Monarchs and Miners: What went on in Sinai?*

Tom Hardwick, Bolton Museum.

**Monday 23 October 2006:** University of Bristol Amelia Edwards Memorial Lecture (entry free)

*The Taharqa Wall-Painting Rescue Project*

David Singleton, Bristol's City Art Gallery & Museum

**Reception Room, Will's Memorial Building, Queen's Road (Clifton Triangle), 1715 hrs.**

*NB. This is a University event, not an ESB one. However, all are welcome!*

## Tues 14 November 2006: Lecture, *Egypt in the third dimension: Stereophotography in*

*Egyptology and Archaeology* (this lecture will be in 3D!)

Dr Paul Nicholson, Archaeology Section, University of Cardiff

## Tues 12 December 2006: Lecture, *Art and the Myth of Kingship in Ancient Egypt*

George Hart, lately of The British Museum

## Tues 16 January 2007: Lecture, *John Garstang and the Liverpool Institute of Archaeology*

Pat Winker, School of Archaeology, Classics and Egyptology, University of Liverpool

## Tues 13 February 2007:

- Annual General Meeting (at 1830)
- Lecture: *The Tomb of Osiris at Abydos*  
Dr Aidan Dodson, Department of Archaeology & Anthropology, University of Bristol
- Winter Party (at 1945)

## Tues 6 March 2007: Lecture, *The Wall-Paintings from the Tomb of Nebamun at Thebes*

Dr Richard Parkinson, Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan, The British Museum

**18 March – 2 April 2007:** Bristol Magpies tour of Egypt (approx £1,700)

*Introductory visit to Egypt, including Saqqara, Giza, Islamic Cairo, Faiyum, Luxor, Western Thebes, Nile Cruise.*

To be escorted by Aidan Dodson, Chairman ESB

*NB. This is an event organised by the Bristol Magpies, the Museum friends' organisation, not the ESB. Contact: Mary Bailey, 22 Carnarvon Road, BS6 7DT, tel. 0117-942 1944.*

## Tues 8 May 2007: Lecture, *The Columns of Ancient Egypt*

Peter Phillips