



The Egypt Society of Bristol

NEWS UPDATE

Issue 27

August 2011

Chairman's Dig

For some years the Society has been aiming to do something about the upkeep of the grave of Amelia Edwards in Henbury Churchyard. Following discussions led by the Vice-Chairman, the Committee has donated £100 to the Church to be used to support the maintenance of the Churchyard – with the proviso that Amelia is given special attention. The Chairman has also produced a leaflet on Amelia and her grave – this is being made available at the Church, on its website and that of the ESB. It is also printed on the next two pages of this newsletter. The Church is also planning a fund-raising Open day on Saturday 15 October – the Chairman has agreed to give a talk on Amelia as part of this, and will pass on details when available.

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Since the last issue of this newsletter there has of course been the Egyptian Revolution. While President Mubarak was forced to resign back in February, with the military taking overall charge, the direction of events in the medium and longer term remain obscure, although they may become clearer after parliamentary elections, currently due in November, to be followed ultimately by the election of a new president. From the point of view of the antiquities, the disappearance of the police during much of the Revolution led to a significant amount of looting of sites close to Cairo. However, while some distressing examples of wanton destruction in the store-rooms of various foreign expeditions occurred, thankfully the more apocalyptic reports of tombs being 'totally destroyed' proved to be false.

Nevertheless, the antiquities administration remains in a problematic state, with Zahi Hawass seemingly stuck for some time in a resignation/reinstatement revolving door. At the time of writing he appears now to have gone for good - but the exact status and leadership of what ever the body dealing with antiquities is now called remains somewhat opaque at the time of writing!

Tourism was brought to a halt during the Revolution and is still struggling to

recover – so if one wants to see the sites with a minimal package-tourist factor, now is the time to go (or perhaps when the weather has cooled down a bit!). The Chairman and Treasurer were there in March leading what may have been the first post-Revolution UK tour, and it was amazing to be amongst the only foreigners at Giza and Saqqara. On the down-side, we were the target for pretty well every tout at Giza But everywhere we went we received an even warmer welcome than usual, and it is important to get the message out that Egypt is very much open for business and perfectly safe for travellers.

The Chairman and Treasurer are scheduled to be going to Sudan – a country with more pyramids than Egypt – in November. Assuming all goes well, they hope to give a talk on their experiences in due course. They are also scheduled to be leading a tour of some of the more out-of-the-way sites of Upper Egypt for two weeks from 2 January 2012 for Ancient World Tours. The dislocation of the antiquities authorities has delayed finalisation of details – but they will be e-mailed out as soon as they are.

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You will notice the lack of Lecture reports in this Newsletter, Unfortunately, pressure of work has meant that the Vice-Chairman has been unable to continue to act as scribe: accordingly, should any member wish to pick up the baton (or, rather, pen!) please let one of the Committee know.

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The new Museum of Bristol (or M-Shed) is now open, and although concerned with the history of the city, Sue Giles has managed to sneak two Egyptological articles into the galleries. One is the stela of Iyiy, datable to the reign of Thutmose IV or Amenhotep III, and probably the second major Egyptian artefact to be received by the former Bristol Institution, given in 1825 by a certain Captain Buckham (the first was the Eighteenth Dynasty mummy and coffin of Tay in 1824). The other is a watercolour of the unwrapping of the mummy of the Lady

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ST MARY'S CHURCH, HENBURY

AMELIA ANNE BLANDFORD EDWARDS (1831-1892)



Amelia Edwards was born in London, but lived for much of her life in Westbury-on-Trym, a kilometre to the south-east of Henbury. She began her career as a novelist, producing nine successful books of fiction between 1855 and 1880, besides various short stories, articles and travelogues. The direction of her career was changed, however, when, in 1873-4, she and her travel-companion, Lucy Renshaw (1833-1913), took a trip to Egypt, hiring a local sailing houseboat (*dahabiya*) and voyaging all the way from Cairo to Abu Simbel, close to what is now the Sudanese frontier. This resulted not only in her most celebrated travel-book, *A Thousand Miles Up the Nile* (1877), but also the beginning of a campaign to raise funds to aid the excavation and preservation of the monuments of ancient Egypt, which were suffering widespread neglect, theft and destruction.

As a result, she was instrumental in the foundation of the Egypt Exploration Fund on 1 April 1882, which began its first excavation at Tell el-Maskhuta in the eastern Nile Delta in 1883. Reorganised as the Egypt Exploration Society in 1919, it remains the United Kingdom's premier body dedicated to the study, excavation and publication of ancient Egypt's monuments (see <http://www.ees.ac.uk>). Over the next decade, Amelia worked tirelessly for the cause of the EEF. She carried out extensive lecture tours to raise interest and funds – including a 115-date tour of the United States of America in 1889 – but her health suffered as a consequence.

While in the US, she broke her arm in a fall, and following her return underwent surgery for breast cancer. Then, in 1891, she fell ill with a chest infection, dying the following April at a nursing home in Weston-super-Mare. Under her will, she left her collection of books and Egyptian antiquities to University College London, together with sufficient funds to endow the first Professorial Chair in Egyptology at any British University. The first Edwards Professor was Flinders Petrie (1853-1942), whom she had championed as an excavator for the EEF, and who is generally regarded as the founder of scientific archaeology in Egypt. The current holder is Professor Stephen Quirke, who is also Curator of the Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology at UCL. The college's collection of Egyptological books is still known as the Edwards Library.

For the last three decades of her life, Amelia shared a house with Ellen Drew Braysher (*née* Young 1804-1892), the widow of John Braysher (1789-1863). Known as ‘The Larches’, the house was destroyed by bombing in 1941, although its site is marked by a stone plaque on the front garden wall of 22 Eastfield, Westbury-on-Trym, which occupies part of the site. This was affixed by the Egypt Exploration Society in 1982 to mark its centenary and was restored by the Egypt Society of Bristol in 1999. Mrs Braysher died only a few months before Amelia, and was buried in a grave in Henbury Churchyard in which her daughter, Sarah Harriet (born 1832) had been buried following her premature death in Paris in 1864. There they were finally joined by Amelia. The Egypt Society of Bristol made a donation in 2011 towards the care of the Churchyard in order to help maintain the grave.

The obelisk on the grave dates to Sarah’s interment: although an Egyptian symbol, obelisks are common in Victorian graveyards. Following the addition of the bodies of her mother and Amelia, it was turned through 90 degrees anticlockwise, with Amelia’s epitaph added to the ‘front’, Mrs Braysher’s on the ‘back’, leaving Sarah’s on the ‘side’. The Egyptian ‘ankh’ the sign of life on top of the grave was added for Amelia’s burial. The three ladies’ epitaphs run as follows:

FRONT

Here lies the body of Amelia Ann Blandford Edwards
 novelist and archaeologist
 born in London on the 7th June 1831
 died at Weston-super-Mare on the 15th April 1892
 who by her writings and her labours enriched the thought and interests of her time.

SIDE

To the beloved memory of Sarah Harriet only surviving child of the late John Braysher and Ellen her mother who died in Paris in the flower of her age on the [2]5th of June 1864
 This monument is erected by her bereaved mother in consideration of a grief that knows no ending and a love that knows no change

REAR

Sacred to the memory of Ellen Drew Braysher widow of John Braysher Esq and for some thirty years of her ninety years the beloved companion of Amelia B Edwards
 Born at [.....] Heath
 died at The Larches Westbury-on-Trym on 3rd January 1892 aged 89 years.

Upon [.....]



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 Department of Archaeology & Anthropology
 University of Bristol

Egypt Society of Bristol

<http://www.EgyptSocietyBristol.org.uk>

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Tairy in 1834, one of two (and possibly three) such unrollings that took place in Bristol during the early nineteenth century.

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Finally – on a sad note – some of you will be aware that long-time member and benefactor Bob Skingsley died on 11 May – the day after he had seemed on his usual jovial form at Ashley Cooke’s lecture to the ESB. In tribute to him and his support over the years, the first lecture in each season is



to become the ‘Bob Skingsley Memorial Lecture’.

Also recently taken from us has been Bob Partridge, editor of *Ancient Egypt* magazine, and a former lecturer to the ESB. Both Bobs will be greatly missed: as the ancient Egyptians wish had it *nh̄ rnw.sn dt hn̄ nh̄*: ‘may their names live for ever and eternity’.



ESB Programme and other events of interest in the area **October 2011 – June 2012**

All ESB lectures are held in Lecture Room 1, Department of Archaeology & Anthropology, 43 Woodland Road, Clifton, at 1845. Entry for members is free, £2.00 for non-members; ‘wine and nibbles’ afterwards are available for a nominal fee of £1.00.

Wed 28 September 2011: CHILDREN’S SOCIETY LECTURE, *Hide and Seek: Saving the Royal Mummies of Thebes*, by Dr Aidan Dodson - Lambert Centre, 8 Mount Pleasant, Bradford-on-Avon BA15 1SJ. Tickets £4.50 (£3 accompanied children) Light refreshments will be available afterwards. Book in advance on: 01225 865737 or pay on the door.

Sat 15 October 2011: Open day at St Mary’s Church, Henbury, including a talk on Amelia Edwards and her grave.

Tues 18 October 2011. Bob Skingsley ‘only 67 days to Christmas’ Memorial Lecture: *The Lost Pylon of Shoshenq I at the Temple of Amun-Re at Karnak*
Dr Troy Sagrillo, Lecturer in Egyptology, Swansea University

Tues 15 November 2011. Lecture: *A Desirable Residence in the Delta: or How to Keep Your Feet Dry*
Dr Penny Wilson, University of Durham

Tue 6 December 2011. Lecture: *Defence Against Demons in Ancient Egypt: a Practical Guide*
Dr Kasia Szpakowska, Senior Lecturer in Egyptology, Swansea University.

Tues 24 January 2012: Lecture: *Shelters for Eternity: Egyptian coffins and sarcophagi*
Dr Aidan Dodson, Senior Research Fellow in Archaeology, University of Bristol (& Chairman of ESB!)

Tue 7 February 2012. ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING at 1830 hrs, followed by:
Lecture: *Going to the Dogs: exploring the canine catacombs of Saqqara.*
Dr Paul Nicholson, Cardiff University.

March 2012: TBA

Tue 8 May 2012. Lecture: *The temple of Isis at Shanhur, near Luxor.*
Dr Martina Minas-Nerpel, Swansea University.

Tue 19 June 2012. Lecture: *Theban Land- and Waterscapes: sacred and secular journeys within the Nile valley.*
Dr Angus Graham, University of Sunderland/Egypt Exploration Society