



# ESSEX EGYPTOLOGY GROUP

Newsletter 106

February/March 2017

## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

- 5<sup>th</sup> February Jewellery: Carol Andrews
- 5<sup>th</sup> March New texts from ancient Egypt: revisiting the Egyptian alabaster quarries at Hatnub: Dr Roland Enmarch
- 2<sup>nd</sup> April Mighty in Waking and Great in Sleeping: the history of beds in ancient Egypt: Manon Y Schutz
- 8<sup>th</sup> April Study Day “The Valley of the Kings: Mummies and Gods” – see below for more information
- 14<sup>th</sup> May Ancient craft: modern science and the evolution of mummification: Dr Robert Loynes

Our February speaker, Carol Andrews, was Assistant Keeper/Senior Research Assistant at the British Museum for over 28 years and was closely involved in the Tutankhamun exhibition held there in 1972. Her particular fields of interest are mummification, jewellery and amulets, funerary artefacts and the ancient Egyptian language. She has been a member of excavation teams at Saqqara and Ashmunein and has advised film and opera productions. In this talk she will be discussing jewellery in ancient Egypt.

Our speaker in March Dr Roland Enmarch graduated from Oxford with a BA in Oriental Studies (Ancient Egyptian with Akkadian), and a DPhil specialising in Middle Egyptian pessimistic poetry. As well as continuing to work on literary laments, he also studies quarrying and expeditionary inscriptions, particularly those from the alabaster quarries at Hatnub. In this talk he will be discussing new texts from ancient Egypt from those Hatnub quarries.



### ANNUAL STUDY DAY – SATURDAY 8<sup>th</sup> APRIL

Our fourth annual study day takes place on Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> April, “The Valley of the Kings: Mummies and Gods”. The Valley of the Kings is endlessly fascinating and in this study day we are welcoming two experts in the field. Dylan Bickerstaffe BA, PGCE, ACIM has over 20 years’ experience lecturing in Egyptology and Peter Robinson BA, MPhil is a Trustee of the Society for the Study of Egyptian Antiquities and the cartographical editor of Ancient Egypt Magazine.

The study day will cover discovery of the tombs and mummies; reading a royal tomb, the Amduat and the Valley of the Kings in the Amarna period.

Tickets include refreshments and lunch: EEG Members £35 and non-Members £37.

For more information and a booking form please email [info@essexegyptology.co.uk](mailto:info@essexegyptology.co.uk)

## "Inside the Step Pyramid" Vincent Oeters – November 2016

At our November meeting Vincent Oeters talked to us about the Step Pyramid of Djoser - in particular the inside of it. He doesn't himself work on the Step Pyramid, but while he was working (as an archaeologist) nearby he was able to go into it three times (with the permission of and accompanied by an Inspector from the Ministry of Antiquities, as it's not generally open to tourists). And one of those times he was also allowed to take photos! And it was those photos that formed the core of his talk.

He started his talk with a bit of geographical and historical scene setting. We don't actually know all that much about Djoser - he reigned c.2640 BCE, and the names of his wife and daughter are known and that's about it. There are two known statues of him - one is in the Cairo Museum, and one is a partial statue that has the name of Imhotep on it as well and is now in the Imhotep Museum at Saqqara. The first modern research on the pyramid was done by Lepsius in around 1843 CE. Old drawings and photos from that time show the pyramid still partially covered by sand. Around the pyramid itself is a large enclosure wall, and the pyramid is not exactly centred within the enclosure. And around that is a feature that isn't often mentioned, and certainly I'd not heard of before: a large dry moat, shaped a bit like the hieroglyph for "house". This moat isn't simply a big pit - there are subterranean rooms and corridors, and niches in the walls of the moat at some points too. Some of the corridors from this moat appear to run towards the pyramid. One of the corridors has been reused for later burials, another one was where the wooden harpoon (that I saw when I visited the Imhotep Museum in October) had been found. This wooden harpoon has a snake motif on it that matches a snake motif on columns that are also carved with Djoser's name (also in the Imhotep Museum) by the Polish mission led by Karol Myśliwiec - so it probably belonged to Djoser and was a symbolic burial. Only a very few parts of this moat have been excavated to date so there's still a lot more than these tantalising details to be discovered!

Inside, or rather, under the pyramid is a complex and confusing network of tunnels which extends beyond the edges of the pyramid's superstructure. Oeters had tried to find us a clear map of these corridors, but there doesn't appear to be one publicly available. This is in part because they haven't been fully explored let alone mapped, despite the site having been worked on for over 150 years - there's just that much to investigate that there hasn't been time to look at everything. There are people working on this - in 2007 a Latvian mission made 3D models of parts of the inside of the pyramid. One of the things they found is that there appears to be a tunnel from the pyramid to the South Tomb (which is at the edge of the enclosure, so quite a distance). One thing that makes the tunnel network confusing is that as the construction of the pyramid above evolved, the tunnels underneath needed to change as well. For instance when the original mastaba structure was expanded it covered up the original entrance to the tunnel network, which meant a new entrance (and new connecting tunnels) were needed.

The main portion of Oeters's talk was walking us through the inside of the pyramid via his photos. This is, obviously, rather difficult to write up in detail because it was all about the images. One of the themes that came up frequently through the photos was how unstable the structure is. Oeters's visit was before the pyramid began undergoing restoration - which is controversial, particularly in that it covers up the evidence on the outside of the pyramid for how it was constructed. But it's also a necessity, an earthquake in 2006 destabilised the structure even more than just the passage of time has done and a lot of blocks fell inside the pyramid. He showed us several photos of either unstable looking ceilings with blocks ready to fall, or large blocks on the floor which had fallen from the ceiling. During the restoration work by the Ministry of Antiquities it was also discovered that one of the wooden "beams" supporting the roof was actually a piece of a Late Period coffin - the modern restoration is not the first one! It is a bit more hi-tech, first large "balloons" were put in and inflated to provide pneumatic support to the roof whilst the restoration team drilled holes in the ceiling and injected glue and inserted rods to stabilise the structure. The original plan was that the balloons and internal scaffolding would be removed when the work was finished, but the events of early 2011 in Egypt interrupted and it's all still in there.

Djoser's sarcophagus is still in the burial chamber. It is oddly made compared to late large sarcophagi. It's not made in two parts, base + lid, instead it's constructed out of black granite slabs with a block in the lid that looks like it plugs the gap where Djoser's coffin was put in. It has recently been cleaned up - that was done before in the 1930s, but so much debris had fallen since then that it needed doing again. Some of the stone removed during cleaning had star motifs on it, so this must have been part of a decorated ceiling. While it was being cleaned they discovered that there were inscriptions on the granite slabs! Not religious texts, but notations as to how to put the sarcophagus together - e.g. "4th from the south". Another oddity about the sarcophagus is that it doesn't rest flat on the floor, instead it stands on several small piles of stones. There was a robbers' tunnel underneath that entered the sarcophagus as well, which Oeters went through - he said it was a very tight fit.

Amongst the many tunnels under the Step Pyramid are 11 that were full of broken pottery vessels. These bits of pot are inscribed with the names of Pharaohs pre-dating Djoser, and it's believed that he deliberately brought them here from where they were originally placed in Abydos and reburied them in his tomb to emphasise his link with his predecessors and to show them respect. In these corridors there are also other artefacts, including two sarcophagi which were originally assumed to be from a later period but are now thought to belong to relatives of Djoser.

After our break for coffee and cake Oeters told us about the South Tomb, which is at the south end of the Step Pyramid complex. It has a proper tomb layout with a superstructure above ground, a burial shaft and chambers and corridors below ground - there was even an empty sarcophagus in it. Part of the superstructure is visible at the site today, a wall with protective snakes around the top. Djoser's immediate predecessors had tombs at both Saqqara and Abydos (which is to the south), with the Saqqara tomb being their actual burial place and the Abydos tomb being symbolic. Djoser doesn't have a tomb at Abydos, and it's thought that this South Tomb in the Step Pyramid complex is fulfilling the same symbolic role.

One of the unique features of the Step Pyramid complex is that some of the chambers under both the Step Pyramid itself and the South Tomb were decorated with blue faience tiles. These were, sadly, mostly removed by tourists both ancient and modern and these days are scattered throughout museum and private collections all across the world. There's a reconstruction in the Imhotep Museum that shows what the walls would have looked like - covered in tiles surrounding niches with inscriptions mentioning Djoser and showing his Hebset festival. The tiles were each labelled with a mark on the back, either a hieroglyph or a number. The meaning of the marks isn't clear - the tiles are so dispersed now that no-one's been able to do a systematic survey (and the original positioning of the tiles is lost forever). They might be batch numbers, or positioning marks like those on the sarcophagus slabs. Or they may have had some religious significance. One thing that is known is that they weren't just stuck onto the wall like you would tile a wall today - instead they were strung onto ropes (which have long since decayed) and then fixed to the wall. This is another way that the designers of the complex were mimicking the more temporary materials of daily life in permanent materials: these tiles represent the mats that were hung on the walls of the King's palace rooms.

Towards the end of his talk Oeters again emphasised how much there is yet to be discovered at the site, there is so much that hasn't been fully excavated. For instance the layout of the corridors that are so far known feels very random, yet it would be unlike the Ancient Egyptians not to have had some sort of system when digging them. It seems astonishing that a site that has been worked on for over 150 years has still so much left to tell us, and it was this (as well as Oeters's enthusiastic delivery) that made the talk so fascinating.

Margaret Patterson

## **“From Here to Eternity” Stephen Cross – December 2016**

We welcomed Stephen Cross again who took us on a walk: from Deir el Medina to the west branch of the Valley of the Kings. Stephen is a member of the Egypt Exploration Society as well as archaeology and geology societies. He has been filmed for several TV programmes including Joann Fletcher’s Life and Death in the Valley of the Kings. He was an advisor to the Supreme Council of Antiquities excavations in the Valley for the 2007/8/9 year seasons.

What a wonderful walk it was with the expert eyes of Stephen turning heaps of stones into steps, hut foundations and ancient stone tool workshops. We started in the workmen’s village on the path which rises sharply behind the tombs. Although the views are fabulous, Stephen immediately proved how important it is to look down as well: during one climb he found the fossils of sea creatures (such as the scallops and clams which would have lived here when the Mediterranean extended much further south) and a fragment of a mummy wrapping. Just a short detour away on the path leading to the Queens’ valley at this point are the so called ‘cobra’ shrines – rock cut shrines including ones dedicated to Ptah and Meretseger.

At various points in the walk, the remains of stone staircases can be seen, evidence of the workmen’s’ willingness to invest time in making the path safer and easier. There are also examples of graffiti and rock art along the way particularly at the highest point of the walk at the ‘rest station’. Stephen showed us photographs of ridged pottery fragments he has discovered in this area. The size of the fragments indicate that the pots were large and this, along with the ridges, suggests that they came from water pots: the ridges would have increased the surface area of the pots, enabling greater evaporation and cooling. He identified the flint tools found in the area as Mesolithic – roughly 10,000 to 5,000BC – including an arrowhead, hand axes and an awl. Stephen interpreted one group of tools which had been left in three separate piles as belonging to a family: high quality tools made by the father, lower quality tools made by the child and tools connected with the manufacture of clothing being used by the mother.

Stephen then focussed on the west valley and revealed news of exciting future research. He showed photographs of a number of workmen’s’ and guards’ huts in the west valley. He suggested that the presence of the foundations of so many huts in the west valley pointed to it being more important than previously thought. Why did the valley need to be so carefully guarded? Why did so many materials need to be stored there? Evidence of a door to one hut suggests it might have been used by a scribe as a site office. There is also an inscription which shows that the valley was inspected. Further evidence of the importance of the valley comes with the dams which were constructed to preserve the tombs from flash flooding. All this evidence had led Stephen to believe that there is an undiscovered tomb in the valley. He has identified a likely site and, when permission has been granted, he intends to use Ground Penetrating Radar – GPR – to survey the area and find out what lies beneath all those piles of stones. Watch this space!

Alison Woollard

## **PETRIE MUSEUM FRIENDS IN EGYPT TOUR 2016**

Margaret and John Patterson recently travelled to Egypt with the Friends of the Petrie Museum; they visited Cairo, Saqqara and middle Egypt (Meir, Beni Hasan, Amarna, etc). Please click on the link to read Margaret’s fascinating blog of their holiday.

<http://ninecats.org/margaret/blog/2016/11/21/petrie-museum-friends-egypt-tour-2016>

## EEG Trip to Manchester Museum, November 2016

In November last year the Essex Egyptology Group organised a trip to Manchester to visit the museum there and to get a behind the scenes tour of the Egyptian collections from Campbell Price, the curator of Egypt and Sudan at the museum.

I took quite a few photos on this trip, some are in this post and they are all up on flickr.

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/plingthepenguin/albums/72157678160613755/with/31809903735/>

We arrived at the museum about an hour before it opened to the public and were met by Campbell Price in the foyer. He took us up to the Egyptian gallery, but first we stopped in one of the other galleries where there was a bust of Jesse Haworth so that Price could tell us about the history of the collection. As with so many other museums the earliest acquisitions came from funding archaeologists digging in Egypt, in this case in a slightly roundabout way. Jesse Haworth was a wealthy industrialist in Manchester who funded some of Flinders Petrie's work, and so amassed a notable personal collection of Egyptian items. Later he donated these to Manchester University, founding the museum - although initially his donation was turned down but when he said he'd build a building to house them they changed their minds!



Next Price took us around the Egyptian gallery talking a bit about the highlights of the collection. Amongst other things he told us a bit about the Two Brothers, a pair of mummies plus their coffin assemblages that the museum has. Their coffins list their mother (same woman in each case), but neither mentions the name of a father - not entirely unexpected, Price explained that at this time period (Middle Kingdom) in the area these men lived it was more important to claim your maternal lineage than your paternal lineage. When the mummies were examined in the early 20th Century they were described as one being "black" and one "Egyptian" in the terminology of the time. More recently DNA analysis has been performed which shows that they really are linked via their mother, and that one has Nubian heritage and the other one does not. So the original analysis was in fact correct (which is not always the case!).

Price also talked a bit about the display of mummies in museums - Manchester Museum has one that is visibly displayed, that of Asru who was an elite lady from the 25th-26th Dynasties period. There's been a lot of concern and discussion on the topic in the last few years and Price was saying that he thinks it's important to remember that the Egyptians themselves saw the mummy of the deceased as "just" another of the objects in the tomb that the deceased would need in the afterlife. So whilst they probably would not have appreciated being displayed in a museum it's not in the same way that a modern person might not want their granny dug up and displayed - it's about the objects (including body) having a purpose that they aren't fulfilling.

After the gallery tour we then split into two groups for the behind the scenes part of the visit. I was in the second group, so we spent half an hour or so looking round the Egyptian gallery and taking photos before the rest of the public were allowed in. Then it was our turn to see the storerooms. I always find it surprising how many corridors and rooms are behind the walls in a museum (I've been to behind the scenes tours in the British Museum a couple of times too). Somehow when I'm in the large public rooms it feels like they must fill the whole space of the building, but then there's this rabbit warren of other bits tucked away. Price showed us the stone storerooms first, where there were bits of stelae as well as pots and other such things. After a bit of a look around there he produced a mystery object for us to try and identify - originally a genuine mystery to the museum, but relatively recently with some detective work



they'd figured it out. And after some leading questions from Price so did we - a piece of a chariot fitting inscribed for Amenhotep II.



We were also shown the organics storeroom - this included mummies and coffins (and a box labelled Crocodile, always a good one to know where it is ...!). One of the coffins had a space in the inscriptions where you'd expect the name of the deceased to be - this was probably so that it could be reused. Another later coffin was for a Roman Egyptian woman, and she was very much hedging her bets - some of the decoration (particularly in terms of style) was Roman and other parts were Egyptian. When we had finished looking around these rooms Price led us back through the corridors to bring us back out at the shop - he'd very kindly organised for us to use his staff discount that morning, so as might be expected we came away with a couple of new books.

That was the official portion of the visit over but we all had the rest of the day to spend there, so after a break for coffee we returned to the galleries. John and many of the others headed back to the Egyptian collection but I spent the remainder of my visit walking round the rest of the museum photographing things that caught my eye. As well as the Egyptian stuff they have a very eclectic collection of objects, a lot of them biological in nature. There were dead animals (stuffed, in tableaux), very dead animals (fossilised and reconstructed), model animals (in tableaux) and live animals (mostly frogs and lizards, but some snakes as well). There were also some pieces of art, linked often to the objects nearby in the collection. I came away with an impression that it was all a bit odd, but odd in a way that I appreciated!

It was a good trip! It's always interesting to be told about a museum by someone involved in putting the displays together, and to see some of the extra stuff that doesn't fit into their public displays.

Margaret Patterson

## BOOK REVIEW

**Mrs Naunakhte and Family: the women of Ramesside Deir-el-Medina**

**Koenraad Donker van Heel**

**American University Press, published December 2016**

Van Heel is lecturer in demotic at Leiden University and this is his third book about the "ordinary" people of ancient Egypt. The book is 243 pages long with 14 black and white illustrations. It is indexed and has references to the ostraca and papyrus mentioned in the book. With chapter titles like "Was husband number two a demotion?", and "Was Neferhotep a wimp?", this is not a strictly academic book but something very readable. The Naunakhte of the title is the famous widow of scribe Qenhirkhopshef, and wife of Khaemnun, and she is famous because of the will she wrote excluding some of her children from inheriting goods and property she received from her first husband.

If, like me, you are fascinated by the community of workmen at Deir el-Medina, have a look out for this book. I thoroughly enjoyed it.

Janet Brewer

## BLOOMSBURY SUMMER SCHOOLS PROGRAMME 2017

For more information and fees see

[http://www.egyptology-uk.com/bloomsbury/bss\\_programme.htm](http://www.egyptology-uk.com/bloomsbury/bss_programme.htm)

**Monday 3 to Friday 7 July**

**Coptic: the next step**

**Course Director: Dr Bill Manley**

**Monday 3 to Friday 7 July**

**Prepared for Eternity: ancient Egyptian mummies, ritual and representation**

**Course Director: Dr Campbell Price**

**Monday 10 to Friday 14 July**

**Hieroglyphs: the next step**

**Course Directors: Dr Bill Manley and Dr José R. Pérez-Accino**

**Monday 10 to Friday 14 July**

**Reading Hieroglyphs: classic literature with a taste of hieratic**

**Course Directors: Dr Bill Manley & Dr José-R. Pérez-Accino**

**Monday 17 July to Friday 21 July**

**The Ancient Near East in 100 Objects**

**Course Director: Professor Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones**

**Monday 17 July to Friday 21 July**

**The Subtle Science: magic in ancient Egypt**

**Course Director: Dr Joanna Kyffin**

**Monday 24 July to Friday 28 July**

**Technologies of Ancient Egyptian Writing**

**Course Director: Dr Kathryn Piquette**

**Monday 24 July to Friday 28 July**

**Underwater Archaeology of the Eastern Mediterranean: shipwrecks, sunken cities, drowned landscapes and the ancient world**

**Course Director: Mr Peter Campbell**

Thanks go to Alison Woollard and Margaret Patterson

## **The Essex Egyptology Group Committee**

**Chairman : Dr Hannah Pethen (Honorary Fellow, University of Liverpool)**

**Treasurer: Rosemary Ackland**

**Secretary/Membership: Janet Brewer BEM**

**Programme: Tilly Burton**

**Publicity/Facebook: Dick Sellicks**

The Newsletter Editor, Janet Brewer, welcomes all articles, letters, reviews and quizzes.

All articles express the views and opinions of their authors

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