ESSEX EGYPTOLOGY GROUP

Newsletter 98 October 2015 / November 2015

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

4th October	**Understanding Egypt: Landscape, layers and meaning in the Nile Valley: Carl Graves**
1st November	**New light on the Narmer Palette with Advanced Digital Imaging: Dr Kathryn Piquette**
6th December	**Reflections on the Dendara Zodiac - addressing the what, when and why: Roz Park**
3rd January 2016	**Lunch at Crofter's (details below)**

In October we welcome Carl Graves from the Egypt Exploration Society. Carl obtained a first –class degree in Ancient History at The University of Birmingham in 2009, after completing a dissertation in the development of ancient Egyptian town planning. He then completed a MPhil(B) in 2010 and is currently studying for his PhD. He has spent time excavating for the DAI at Elephantine in Upper Egypt and acted as Postgraduate Curator of the Eton Myers collection of Egyptian antiquities while it was on loan to Birmingham University. Since November 2013 he has been the Education and Public Engagement Manager at The Egypt Exploration Society. His passion for Egyptological archives has allowed him to explore EES material and create new ways for furthering engagement. He regularly writes news pieces on the EES website (www.ees.ac.uk), as well as in their Newsletter and Egyptian Archaeology magazine.

Our speaker in Novemberis Dr Kathryn Piquette who had the good fortune of being permitted to have the Narmer Palette removed from display in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo earlier this year. She was able to apply Reflectance Transformation Imaging to it and was able to reveal exciting new details about the scenes, and especially the techniques of manufacture.

For more than two decades Dr Kathryn Piquette has pursued her passion for the archaeology of ancient Egypt. After obtaining a BA at the University of Pennsylvania, she earned her MA and PhD in Egyptology at University College London's Institute of Archaeology, where she specialised in early Egyptian writing and art. Kathryn has held research positions at Trinity College Dublin, the University of Oxford, and University College London, Free University Berlin, and the University of Cologne — all with a focus on the use of advanced digital imaging technologies for the study of ancient writing and art. She is currently part of a team based at the UCL Centre for Digital Humanities which is applying imaging techniques to papyri cartonnage in an effort to reveal hidden texts.

Kathryn also pursues her interests through field excavation. In addition to work at Wadi Natrun, Giza and Hierakonpolis, Kathryn has excavated at the necropolis of Qubbet el-Hawa in West Aswan and is now working with a German project at the nearby St. Simeon Monastery where she is documenting Coptic and Arabic graffiti and wall paintings.

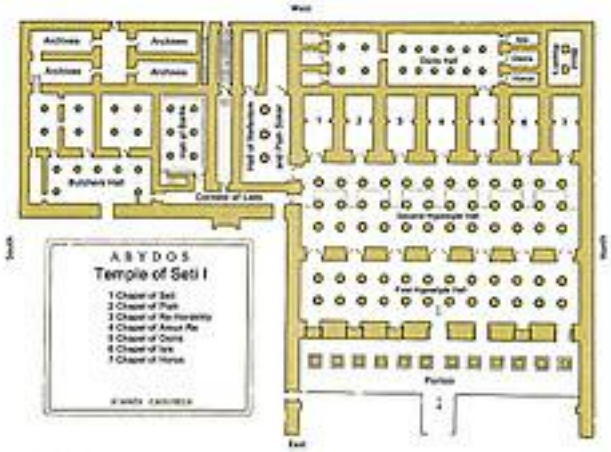
JANUARY LUNCH

Alison Woollard has volunteered to take the bookings for the January lunch. It is open to members and guests and will be at 12.30 on Sunday 3rd January. The cost is similar to last years, about £25 per person. A deposit of £5 per person is needed; to be paid by the December meeting.

The Slaughter Court in Seti I Temple, Abydos ; Mohammed Abu el-Yezid

In August Mohammed Abu el-Yezid, from the Ministry of Antiquities in Egypt, came to talk to us about the Slaughter Court in Seti I's temple at Abydos. He is the Egyptologist and site manager for the province of Sohag (which includes Abydos) and he researched the Slaughter Court for his MA from Ain Shams University where he is currently studying for his PhD.

An important part of the rituals in an Egyptian temple was the feeding of the god(s) the temple was dedicated to - with meat, as well as other foodstuffs. A temple was a place of purity, common people weren't allowed in at all and only the High Priest or the King were permitted in the innermost sanctuary where the statue of the god lived. The priest had to purify himself before entering, performing the appropriate rituals around opening the doors and so on. And clearly any food taken into the sanctuary for the god must also be pure. The best way to ensure this is to slaughter the animals on site where the meat cannot be contaminated by anything impure - but this would then generate a lot of mess, noise and smells which would also contaminate the purity of the temple. Mohammed Abu el-Yezid's research has looked at how the Slaughter
Court in Seti I's temple was designed to minimise this.



He began by telling us a bit about the overall temple layout - the plan shows the L-shaped design of the temple. Previously it was thought that this was done accidentally, because when building they discovered the Osireon and had to modify the intended design. However it's now known that the Osireon was also built by Seti I and thus the complex was designed as a cohesive whole. The top right corner (on the plan) of the temple is the most holy area with the 7 shrines for the 7 deities and the complex of Osiris (the primary deity of the temple). The top left area contains the service rooms for the temple - the Butchering Hall and other storage rooms - and is linked to the main temple by the corridor that has the famous King List on the wall.

The Slaughter Court (labelled Butchering Hall on the plan) has scenes of butchering on the walls (see left) indicating its function, but it could still be a symbolic slaughter court rather than a real one and there are other examples of both scenarios. For instance the 5th Dynasty temple of Raneferef had a functional slaughter court. It could be accessed from both inside and outside the temple, and when it was excavated butcher's equipment and animal remains were found in the room. There was also textual evidence talking about the number of animals slaughtered daily to feed the god. On the other hand Medinet Habu has what is clearly a symbolic slaughter court. Deep inside the temple there is a small room with butchering scenes on the walls. This room is only accessible from inside the

temple, and it has no windows and no ventilation. If there had ever been butchery taking place in there then the butcher wouldn't be able to see what he was doing, and the mess would contaminate sacred areas of the temple.

Mohammed Abu el-Yezid looked at models of butchers from Middle Kingdom tombs to get a good idea of what Ancient Egyptian slaughterhouses looked like. He came up with a list of features to use to determine if a slaughter court was functional or symbolic and then examined the room at Abydos to see which possibility was more plausible. A real slaughter court should be away from the main temple axis and downwind of it so any noxious smells are blown away from the sacred areas. It must be accessible from both inside and outside the temple so that animals can be brought in without profaning the temple and meat can be taken to the god without coming into contact with the outside world again. The external entrance must be large enough for oxen to fit through, and once inside there must be enough space to manoeuvre the animals and rooms to keep them in while the work is taking place. Good hygiene practice required sunlight, ventilation, water and drainage. There should also be archaeological evidence of slaughtering and of butchering tools.

The Slaughter Court at Abydos has all of the requirements except archaeological evidence of butchery equipment. Mohammed Abu el-Yezid thinks this lack is because that area of the temple was used as a nunnery by Coptic nuns after Pharaonic times and so they cleaned it up.

As you can see on the plan there are two accesses to the Slaughter Court - one via the Kings List corridor to the inner sanctuaries, and one in the eastern wall to the outside world. The prevailing wind in the area blows from the north-eastern side of the temple so the air from the slaughter Court would be blown out to the desert away from the temple. The Slaughter Court itself (Butcher's Hall on the plan) is open to the sky, so is well ventilated and well lit. There is an area where water jars could be stored. The floor may once have had drainage channels on it, but Mohammed Abu el-Yezid said he hadn't found much evidence of them. This area was used as a storage room from 1930 to 1985 and there was quite a bit of damage done to the floor.

The biggest room to the west of the Slaughter Court is the room where the slaughtered animals were butchered. This room is well designed for this task. The roof is raised compared to the surrounding rooms, and this allowed the architect to put in six windows at the tops of the walls. Three of these are on the southern side and three on the northern. This allows light in and keeps the room ventilated (and again the prevailing wind blows the smell out to the desert). The roof outside overhangs these windows and there are drainage channels to carry away water if it rains. The room is also unusual in having a sandstone floor and first course of building block. Sandstone is much less susceptible to water damage than limestone (which the rest of the temple is built from) and so this room could be washed out daily with no ill effects.

The corridor with the Kings List also has design features intended to keep the profane slaughtering area separate from the sacred temple space. At the Slaughter Court end there is a 5m stretch of corridor that is open to the sky for ventilation. There is also a screen wall at that end that prevents direct line of sight into the Slaughter Court from the corridor. This would stop the priests accidentally seeing the animals or the butchering, which would pollute them. The screen wall is also interesting because it is the first time this particular design was seen in Egyptian temples (with a three part structure of base, body and corniche) - it becomes the standard design after this.

The Kings List corridor isn't just functional, it also serves more than one ritual purpose. At the temple end of the corridor are scenes showing Seti I purifying meat offerings - which symbolically purify every offering carried past them. The two lists along the walls - Kings on

one side and Gods on the other - are there so that they also receive the offerings being taken to the sanctuaries. (Once all the gods and kings, in the lists and in the sanctuaries, had spiritually eaten the meat (or rather the Ka of the meat) the tangible meat that was left was eaten by the priests.)

This was a very interesting talk about a subject I hadn't really thought about before, and I was impressed how much of the practicalities of ancient temple rituals can be discovered when someone starts to research it. When John and I visited Egypt last year our group was lucky enough to be let in to see the Slaughter Court even though it's not yet open to the public - the photos in this article are two that I took on that visit. And at the end of his talk Mohammed Abu el-Yezid explained that his research is part of the process of getting this area opened to the public - it needs to be published and restored before this can happen.

Margaret Pattison

Rescuing History: ARCE Recording Sheikh Abd el-Gurneh: Andrew Bednarski

In September Andrew Bednarski came to talk to us about an American Research Centre in Egypt (ARCE) project to document the now-demolished village of Qurna. He was involved in the project from 2011-2014, so this is the time period he told us about but the project is still ongoing. This is a bit of a departure from our usual sort of talk - whilst still Egyptian archaeology, most of the subject was considerably more modern.

The "village" of Sheikh Abd el-Gurneh (or Qurna) is located in the Valley of the Nobles. This area is best known as the place across the mountains from the Valley of the Kings where the New Kingdom aristocracy built their tombs. There are also older tombs (Old Kingdom and Middle Kingdom) in the area, and more recent tombs too; and various waves of habitation including Coptic monasteries. The most recent phase of occupation started in around the 16th Century when people who lived near the area began using the tombs as places of refuge from a variety of circumstances ranging from political unrest to the heat of summer. By the 18th Century there was some sense of particular tombs belonging to particular families. In the 19th Century and afterwards these families began to build houses in the area as well as making use of the tombs. Calling Qurna "a village" is a bit of misnomer, it is more a series of loosely connected hamlets each of which is associated with a particular family. Because the Egyptian government in the 1980s was concerned that modern building methods would damage the local antiquities the Qurnawi (the villagers) were forbidden to use concrete. So unlike in the rest of Egypt, traditional methods and materials (mostly mudbricks) were still used up to the early 21st Century.

The Qurnawi have an uneasy relationship with the archaeologists, government and the archaeology of the region. Much of the labour force for archaeological projects is drawn from the local population, and so the Qurnawi have been involved in and useful to many high profile digs. However they have also exploited the antiquities for their own benefit in the past - one of the most famous tomb robbing stories is about a Qurnawi family, the Abd el Rasuls. They discovered a cache of Royal Mummies in TT320 in the 1880s. These mummies were reburied in that tomb in around 900BC as the tombs they had come from were no longer secure (and the administration of the time also used the opportunity to recycle some of their tomb goods). When the Abd el Rasul family found them they didn't let anyone else know and removed items from the mummies bit by bit to sell on the antiquities black market. They were eventually stopped by the Antiquities Service. After tracking the items back to the Abd el Rasul family, "persuasion" was applied by the police to find out the location of the tomb so it was official excavated. Bednarski recommended the film "The Night of Counting the Years" (or "Al Mummia") which is a dramatisation of this story.

As a result of this concern about the Qurnawi damaging or otherwise misusing the antiquities they live in and around there have been a succession of efforts made by the Egyptian government to encourage them to move elsewhere. For instance in the 1940s a model village

was built nearby as New Qurna and it was hoped the Qurnawi would like it better than their homes and so move in - but that didn't really happen. In the early 21st Century a concerted effort was made to relocate the villagers - they were moved several miles to the north to (another) New Qurna purpose built village. This time their houses were bulldozed after they left to prevent them returning; despite the fact that this meant driving heavy machinery over a site with many underground tombs. In 2011 the money and the political will to finish the job vanished, so the site was left covered in rubble preventing archaeologists from working as well as being unsightly if any tourists did visit.

The ACRE project started at this point. They had several aims - to clear the site and study the village, to open and re-open monuments to tourists, to employ locals and to train inspectors and conservators. For the work on Qurna they employed about 600 local workmen for 3 years, and tried to pick one person from each household of Qurnawi to spread the money evenly. They moved the rubble left by the bulldozers by hand as any more machinery on the site would only further damage the antiquities. The project was fairly low budget, which meant there was some controversy about them doing the work at all. Bednarski was sure they'd made the right decision - yes, a 20 year high budget project would've been able to do more, but the money wasn't there and time was potentially limited (if the political will to demolish the site returned).

They aimed to record the stratigraphy of the site through to the most modern time as it's not a separate thing from the antiquities - it's a part of the continual use of this land for the last several millennia. The work was primarily done by Egyptian archaeologists, who were trained in Western archaeological methods, and used to train more archaeologists. They tried to only remove loose debris, and also took care not to expose walls too much as the government was concerned people might move back in if that was done. Because the people who had lived in these houses were involved in the excavation it was possible to get a much more completely picture from the evidence than is usually possible. When there were features that weren't clear they could ask questions. Despite these houses being built in, on and around tombs the archaeologists and workers were forbidden to enter any tombs as the government was convinced that they were "really looking for the next KV62", they couldn't see why anyone would be interested in the last 200 years of the site's history. Bednarski said he wouldn't really have wanted to enter the tombs they did clear modern debris off - several had been used as latrines!

Overall the project found and recorded over 3000 features, and recorded more than 1000 objects. Some of these objects were small pieces of ancient material sometimes damaged during the bulldozing of the site. These included limestone fragments and mudbricks. There were also bits of tourist souvenirs from the last couple of hundred years - ranging from local crafts to pieces of imitation antiquities. And other more unusual objects - like a modern magic/curse object intended to render a man impotent which had to be ritually disposed of before the workers would continue excavating. As well as these sorts of things they found a lot of pottery, and now have the largest corpus of modern Egyptian pottery. They've constructed a typology, and what they found has helped date the earlier parts of the settlement. This corpus has also opened up more questions - for instance there's no fineware (the equivalent of a fancy dinner service for guests), why not? Or was that all taken away when they moved? But you'd still expect some broken and discarded over 200 or so years. There is also nothing between the end of the Christian period and the beginning of the modern period - no Islamic wares. But there is textual evidence of people living in the area during this period, so it seems odd not to find pottery (or the textual evidence is wrong).

Despite being forbidden to enter tombs during the excavations at Qurna, the ARCE (and Bednarski) did have permission for some excavations of antiquities. He finished his talk by telling us a bit about the excavations at TT110, which is the tomb of Djehuty, Royal Cupbearer to both Hatshepsut and Tuthmosis III. Even though this tomb has been damaged in the past (and was dismissed by early 20th Century archaeologists for this reason) it is still of historical interest - it has representations of both Pharaohs that Djehuty served, even though Hatshepsut fell out of favour late in Tuthmosis III's reign. The project also provided a training opportunity for Egyptian archaeologists, and a third aim was to provide a new tourist site. A lot of the tomb was filled with debris, and they discovered that this included about 60 bodies. There was

evidence that the tomb had been reused as a tomb in antiquity particularly during the Greek and Roman periods, but a lot of the fragments came from its use in more modern times as a "mummy processing area" by tomb robbers. They took mummies from other tombs and burnt them to release the gold and other precious objects. The fires are part of why the tomb was so damaged, and the leftover parts of the mummies were flung into another room of the tomb to dispose of them. The project was able to clear the pillared hall of the tomb from debris and clean up the reliefs in the transverse hall to allow them to be read and recorded. There is evidence of the removal of Amun's name during the Amarna period, which adds to the historical interest of the tomb.

The forecourt of TT110 showed evidence of changing use throughout the millennia since the tomb was first constructed. The top layer was village rubbish as expected. Below that there were more pieces of antiquities, indicating it had been used a dump by tomb robbers just as the inside of the tomb had been. Below that was evidence that the forecourt had been lived in during Late Antiquity. The original forecourt had included a mudbrick wall to shore up the rock face that the tomb was cut into - clearly some worry that it might collapse. During the very last week of work on the site that season, whilst they were clearing the forecourt for tourist access they discovered two New Kingdom era coffins containing Late Period mummies, buried next to a pottery assemblage from the Late Period or Greek era. And since Bednarski has left the project they've also discovered two more tombs that share this forecourt - a tomb of an 18th Dynasty doorkeeper called Amenhotep (or Rabiu) and the tomb of his son Samut.

Bednarski's talk was more focussed on the archaeology than the history (as it was mostly modern-ish structures he was excavating). One of the things that made it particularly interesting to me was the idea that he kept coming back to about how they were in a unique position of being able to excavate and record at a point where they could still ask people who'd lived there questions. The data from that project could be invaluable in future when interpreting other similar sites excavated when they are less contemporary.

Margaret Pattison

Received from Dr. Sarah K. Doherty on receiving the information that we had raised £242.60 for their excavation.

"That is wonderful news! The money that you raised will be used for archaeological equipment for the site and much-needed boxes for the ceramics to be safely stored. Please thank everyone at the Essex Egyptology Group, it is wonderful what you have done for us at the Gebel el Silsila Project!!" Dr. Sarah K. Doherty, Archaeologist and Ceramicist, Gebel Silsila Epigraphic Project

THANK YOU FROM THE GEBEL EL-SILSILA TEAM

On behalf of the entire Gebel el Silsila Team, I wish to thank you and the Essex Egyptology Group for your generous donation/sponsorship that came out of the annual book auction. Sarah Doherty shared the excellent news with me, and because of her own part in spreading the word about our work, we have chosen to put the funds into equipment needed in her pottery analysis for the winter season.

Thank you once more, and please know that the group and its members have an open invitation to visit us on site at Gebel el Silsila!

Maria Nilsson
Post Doc
Dept of Archaeology and Ancient History
Lund University
Mission Director for the Gebel el Silsila Project

ON-LINE COURSES AT EXETER UNIVERSITY

Lucia Gahlin teaches on-line courses at Exeter University and starting in October are

Introduction to the world of Ancient Egypt
Ancient Egypt: the Middle Kingdom
Religion and Art of Ancient Egypt
Ancient Nubia: an Introduction

for further details see http://education.exeter.ac.uk/dll/list_courses.php?code=dle

GLYPHSTUDY – FREE ON-LINE HIEROGLYPH STUDY GROUP

The online study group GlyphStudy are intending to start a new Allen group and a new Collier & Manley group in January - details will be announced on GlyphStudy at the end of October.

Both books are suitable for beginners: Allen is a full grammar book and C&M is an introduction to the world of hieroglyphs, suitable for anyone who does not want to start their studies with a full grammar.

That is not to say that C&M is 'easy' - it isn't, and some students find it difficult to immediately grasp the concepts of the AE language. If you think you might be one of those students, then you may want to consider reading Bill Manley's 'Egyptian Hieroglyphs for Complete Beginners' (published by Thames & Hudson, London, in 2012).

It is aimed at students who have no particular knowledge of any language (other than English!), and no particular knowledge of grammar or specialised terminology. It gently takes you through the first steps of learning hieroglyphs and will give you the confidence to move on to either C&M or Allen in January.

If you would like to join GlyphStudy (all study groups are free!) please send your full name and the grammar book you think you would be interested in studying, to Karen at:
kmotc@swbell.net

STUDY DAYS IN LONDON

17th October – Egypt Exploration Society – On the Trail of Imhotep
18th October – Bloomsbury Summer School – The Great Oasis

HEATHER GUTRIDGE, 1950-2015

Some of you will remember Heather, who joined us on our early Luxor holidays and made the tea/coffee at meetings. It is with sadness I report that she passed away in September, suddenly, after some years of illness.

This month thanks go to Margaret Pattison

The Essex Egyptology Group Committee

Rosemary Ackland - (Treasurer) – Janet Brewer BEM (Secretary/Membership) – Tilly Burton (Programme) - Dick Sellicks (Publicity/Facebook)

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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