ESSEX EGYPTOLOGY GROUP

Newsletter 102 June / July 2016

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

5th June	**Seeking Senenmut: Statues, Status and Scandal: Dr Campbell Price**
18th June	**Study Day: Art in Ancient Egypt: Essex Egyptology Group**
3rd July	**Howard Carter: An alternative view of the man through his art: Lee Young**
7th August	**Book Auction and Annual General Meeting**
4th September	**Pyramid evolution and construction in ancient Egypt: Stuart Baldwin**

Essex Egyptology Group Study Day 2016

Saturday 18th June 10.30am-4.30pm
The Barn, Spring Lodge Community Centre, Witham

"Art and Artists in Ancient Egypt" will explore the purpose of ancient Egyptian art and its role in its wider social context, as well as the technology used to produce it. Our speakers will be Dr Christina Riggs, Reader at the University of East Anglia and Dr Sarah Doherty, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.
Tickets (including refreshments and lunch): £33 (members)/£16 (student members); £35 (non-members)/£18 (student non-members).
More information: info@essexegyptology.co.uk

ANNUAL SUBS

Annual subs were due in May, £33 adult: please renew as soon as possible.

Our speaker for June is, Dr Campbell Price, Curator of Egypt and Sudan at The Manchester Museum, one of the UK's largest Egyptology collections. He undertook his BA, MA, and PhD in Egyptology at the University of Liverpool, where he is now an Honorary Research Fellow. Campbell has undertaken fieldwork at the sites of Zawiyet Umm el-Rakham and Saqqara.

Recent publications include chapters in the Oxford Handbook to the Valley of the Kings (Oxford) and Architecture: The Whole Story (Thames and Hudson). Campbell has lectured widely throughout the UK, and around Europe. He will be discussing Senenmut "Seeking Senenmut: Statues, Status and Scandal".

In July we welcome Lee Young who is an independent researcher and lecturer who has been working (for a few years now) as a research volunteer for The Griffith Institute Archive which is part of Oxford University. She has also worked on a project for the Egyptian Exploration

Society. She is currently working on the letters of Myrtle Broome for the Griffith and her research into the archaeological artists, takes up most of her time together with lectures and writing articles for various publications. She is also a partner in a travel company that organises Specialist Archaeology tours to Egypt and the European Egyptology collections.

She will be talking about an alternative view of the Howard Carter of archaeological fame. He was first and foremost an artist, and in this talk she will tell his story in Egypt, by focusing on the artistic side of the man, through the legacy of wonderful paintings left to us by this prolific artist.

Our August meeting is threefold – the AGM (short as possible and held over the tea-break), the speaker/s (to be announced soon) and our annual book auction in aid of an Egyptological Good Cause (members vote).

Would you please, all, look through your Egyptology book collection (and others!) and see if there is anything that could benefit from a new loving home and bring them with you to the next meeting (June, July or August) and Dick will store them until the auction.

The Good Cause is your choice – so nominations for THREE causes (name and a couple of sentences about the good cause) and the membership will have the opportunity to vote for their preferred good cause at the June and July meetings. Only one can win, so please make your couple of sentences attract votes. (Note: if we receive more than three good causes, the committee will decide which to hold over until August 2017 auction.)

Current British Archaeology in Egypt Conference

Egypt Exploration Society
9-10th July, Institute of Child Health

During 2015-16 the Egypt Exploration Society supported over 20 projects in the field and in archives. This summer, to showcase the achievements of British archaeology in Egypt over the past year, the Society will host a two day conference allowing you to meet the experts, network with other interested delegates and chat with representatives from the Society about future projects.

Current British Archaeology in Egypt will be held on the 9th and 10th July 2016 at the UCL, Institute of Child Health, Guilford Street, London WC1N 1EH.

Tickets for this landmark conference are available online or over the phone (0207 242 1880)

As well as presentations and a networking evening, a number of publishers will also be on hand with new releases and conference discounts.

Annual British Museum Egyptological Colloquium "Statues in contexts: production, meaning and (re)uses" and Sackler Lecture

13th-14th July - £70 (£45 BM Friends, EES Members)
BP Lecture Theatre, British Museum

Speakers come from numerous universities and museums from around the globe. This two-day colloquium will look at how and why Egyptian statues were originally displayed or kept invisible, transported, transformed or buried, with recent research and discoveries providing significant new insights

Bloomsbury Summer School Study Day

Saturday 17th September 2016
Sunken Cities and Shipwreck Archaeology

Confirmed speakers:
Dr Aurélia Masson-Beghoff , Curator of the British Museum's current exhibition: Sunken Cities, Egypt's Lost Worlds
Dr Paul Roberts, Curator of the Ashmolean Museum's upcoming exhibition: Storms, War and Shipwrecks: Treasures from the Sicilian Seas
Peter Campbell, Project Co-Director for the recent discovery of 22 ancient shipwrecks in the Fourni archipelago in the Greek Islands

The Mechanisms and Practice of Egyptian Tomb Robbery: A View from Ancient Thebes
Nigel Strudwick

At the beginning of April Nigel Strudwick came to talk to us about tomb robbers. He said that the origins of this particular talk were in trying to understand why most of the Egyptian tombs are in such a chaotic mess when they are first excavated. He started by showing us pictures of tombs that were discovered intact and tombs that had been robbed before they were discovered. There are actually very few tombs that made it to modern times without having been robbed - the two examples he showed us were the tomb of Kha and Merit in Deir el Medina, and the tomb of Sennenmut's parents (Ramose and Hatnefer). Kha and Merit's tomb was fairly neatly organised, with the funerary goods and meal laid out in front of the two large shroud-covered coffins. Ramose and Hatnefer's tomb was more untidy, and had some extra anonymous burials haphazardly stacked up in a second chamber of the tomb. However both were significantly more well organised than the two examples he showed us of tombs that had been robbed - TT253 and TT99. Both of those were in utter chaos. A single broken pot might be scattered across every chamber in the tomb. In TT99 there were pieces of mummy tossed aside in corners, and ripped up pieces of cartonnage were found scattered through the whole of the tomb (which included 8 burial shafts).

Tomb robbery seems to have always been with us. There are burials at Naga ed-Der dating to around 3,500 BCE which have evidence that they were robbed soon after burial. These burials date from the time when the Egyptians placed their dead directly in the sand, and they became naturally desiccated. There are marks on the bodies that are the result of damage to the body after the person was dead, but whilst the tissue was still soft (so after rigor mortis wore off, but before the body dried out). So that indicates they were manhandled not all that long after they were buried, and this is likely to be the result of robbers removing their more valuable grave goods.

The New Kingdom era tombs of Thebes are the ones that Strudwick is most interested in, and he's identified six phases of robbery that took place in this area. These are: opportunistic tomb robbery in the 18th Dynasty; systematic tomb robbery of minor tombs in the 20th Dynasty; systematic robbery of royal tombs in the late New Kingdom; later opportunistic tomb robbery during Pharaonic times; tomb robbery during the 1st Millennium CE; tomb robbery during the more modern period (from the Arab conquest through to modern times). Tutankhamun's tomb is a pretty good example of the first phase - his tomb was very slightly robbed shortly after his burial. The robbers broke in through the door, which was subsequently resealed. They didn't take much, the evidence inside is of a few things being disorganised and boxes with their lids off. It looks like they took small valuable objects like bottles of oils, which they could easily carry off and sell on.

The major phases of tomb robbery are during the late New Kingdom period when tombs of all sorts were robbed in a systematic fashion. There is documentary evidence for this phase of robbery in a collection of papyri known as the Tomb Robbery Papyri. These date to the 20th

Dynasty, and were probably dug up (illicitly) in Medinet Habu - they are now in several different museums worldwide, and a lot of them are in the British Museum. One of the most important of these is called the Abbott Papyrus and it talks about an inspection of the tombs on the West Bank at Thebes. It's clear from the document that there are political reasons why this inspection has happened (he didn't go into the details of this as it wasn't relevant to this talk). The inspectors visit several Royal Tombs, but only the 17th Dynasty (and 11th Dynasty) ones that are between Deir el Bahri and the Valley of the Kings, not the 18th Dynasty and later tombs inside the Valley of the Kings. The 17th Dynasty tombs were excavated relatively early in the modern period of archaeology so sadly aren't properly recorded - but some of the objects mentioned in the Abbott Papyrus are in museums, so clearly the inspectors did actually visit the tombs they said they did.

At this point in the talk Strudwick showed us a YouTube clip from a drama called "Ancient Egypt: The Tomb Robber's Tale". This showed some robbers breaking into a tomb, taking some stuff out and then setting it on fire! As he pointed out, this feels sensationalised and "hollywoodised" - but then he read us excerpts from several of the Tomb Robbery Papyri that describe similar scenes. One of the excerpts, from the Leopold Amherst Papyrus was the words of an (extorted) confession from one of the robbers, and was the account that the dramatisation was based on. So why burn the coffins? Most coffins weren't solid gold, instead they were gilded wood and there are a couple of different ways to get the gold off the wood - you could chisel it off (which is sometimes described as taking place) but that is time consuming, or you could burn the coffin and collect the gold out of the ashes.

The robbery of royal burials was a separate sub-phase of late New Kingdom tomb robbery. Of all the royal burials in the Valley of the Kings only Tutankhamun and Amenhotep II were found in their own tombs. The robberies appear to have been systematic, possibly using Ramesses IX's tomb as a stripping place, and then reburying (the relabelled) mummies in caches. Strudwick explained that Nicholas Reeves's theory is that this was state sanctioned robbery to fund the military campaigns of this era. But there was also reuse of funerary equipment, like the sarcophagus of Merenptah is found in a different Dynasty 21 burial (which helps to date the robberies).

Strudwick finished up this section of his talk by giving some examples of the remaining phases of robbery. For instance the coffins in TT358 (a Dynasty 21 burial) the coffins have no faces - this would have been the gilded bit of the coffin. This would've been an opportunistic robbery, that probably happened while the burial was actually taking place! Towards the end of the 1st Millennium CE there must have been lots of robbery: "mummia" was a medieval medicine or aphrodisiac made from mummies, and there's evidence in Arab texts that a lot of this came from Luxor. Later still, after Napoleon invaded and into the modern era, the robbery of tombs is driven by selling antiquities to foreigners. Strudwick also pointed out that none of these phases are mutually exclusive - a tomb might be robbed multiple times - which makes the work of archaeologists even harder.

Having considered when and why the tombs were robbed Strudwick moved on to what was taken and who was doing the robbing. The Tomb Robbery Papyri collectively give quite a bit of evidence for who was doing the robbing. Strudwick told us about three different gangs, each of which was a different type. The first was the gang of Amenpanefer, who are mentioned in two places in the Tomb Robbery Papyri (including the robbery that the YouTube video was based on) and they seem to have robbed mostly private tombs. This gang were mostly stonemasons, craftsmen and labourers - the urban working class, in other words. The second gang he referred to as the Deir el Medina gang, and it consisted of members of two families - the Amenwa and the Pentawaret. They are mentioned in three places in the documents, and probably robbed in the Valley of the Queens. All of them worked in the Valley of the Kings tombs - they are of higher social status than Amenpanefer's gang. The last gang were Penwenheb's gang, who are only mentioned once in the papyri. They were mostly low ranking priests (probably working in the Ramasseum) plus a couple of coppersmiths. They didn't rob tombs, instead they robbed the temples - the reliefs, doors and statues in an Egyptian temple would be covered with precious metals, and this is what they were stripping off to sell.

So what were these people stealing? Some evidence comes from comparing lightly robbed tombs to intact burials (such as comparing Tutankhamun's tomb to Kha's tomb). The lightly robbed tombs have fewer precious metal vessels - the sort of thing you can grab quickly and hide. They also have significantly less linen - I noticed when we visited the Met Museum in NY that they have a lot of linen displayed from Senenmut's parents' tomb, and Strudwick was saying that this is much more than survives in robbed tombs. Again this is a relatively reusable resource. Another part of the funerary assemblage that gets frequently reused is the coffin - current analysis of 21st Dynasty coffins in museums suggests that 2/3 of them are reused from earlier burials. Some intact, and some are bits from different sources patched together into new coffins. The Abbot Papyrus mentions that "all the tombs on the West Bank had been robbed and the owners left on the desert" which might be textual evidence for this widespread coffin reuse.

There were also a lot of precious metals stolen from tombs. The various Tomb Papyri list different amounts for different robberies, some quite large but a private burial might yield 20g or so of gold and a larger amount of copper. Three of the papyri discuss what happened to these precious metals, and the authorities seem quite keen to retrieve it where possible. Some was found on the robbers, and some on persons in the community who had been given it. One of the papyri gives details about the disposal of goods from a robbery carried out by the Deir el Medina gang. Most of the gold and silver was found in the possession of the robbers themselves, and was fairly evenly divided between them. So they were passing on the lower value goods first. The gold that was handed over seems to have gone to people who are officials - bribery, in other words. The copper mostly ended up with people who sell things - probably straightforward payment. Altogether the goods end up with a wide variety of the normal people of Thebes, and Strudwick said that the evidence is that tomb robbery was a "normal" part of the local economy of this period.

Strudwick concluded by talking a bit about what this all shows about Ancient Egyptian attitudes to the dead and to death. It's an example of their society maintaining two incompatible beliefs at once. On the one hand, they strongly believed that all these grave goods were essential for the deceased to have a good afterlife. Yet on the other hand they knew that tomb robbery always happened, so the deceased wouldn't get to keep his or her essentials for very long.

Margaret Patterson

"Historical Egypt in Photographs" Marcel Maessen

For the May meeting Marcel Maessen, one of the founders of the t3.wy Foundation (http://www.t3wy.nl/), came to talk to us about the history of photography as it relates to Egypt and Egyptology. The t3.wy Foundation is an organisation that is researching the history of Egyptology. They are particularly keen to open up the various Egyptological archives and make the contents available to a wider audience of both academic researchers and other interested people. These archives include things like original documents from excavations, correspondence between Egyptologists, and photographs. Maessen said they meet with quite a lot of resistance to this idea from both Egypt and from academia in general - in part because the members of the t3.wy Foundation are mostly not professional Egyptologists so are seen as "outsiders". Maessen's talk fell into two parts (with a convenient break for coffee and cake!). Firstly he talked to us about the history of photography in general (briefly) and in Egypt in particular, and why old photographs are more than mere curiosities. Then after the break he showed us a lot of examples of old photos of Egypt.

Photography was developed during the late 18th and early 19th Centuries CE. By the late 1700s the idea existed, and in 1802 the word "photography" was first used in relation to this idea. In the 1830s Daguerre invented a method of exposing a treated glass plate to light in order to record an image - the daguerreotype was the first type of photographic process. It was publicly announced in 1839, and almost immediately photographers began to record the

ancient Egyptian monuments. As photographic techniques evolved over time, they have always been used in Egypt right down to the modern day where both tourists and researchers photograph whatever ancient Egyptian sites they visit.

So why are old photographs so important? Obviously if they're your own personal photos, or your family's photos, then they are important for the memories they carry. But old photographs are also important for the Egyptological researcher, and for the researcher of Egyptological history. If you compare present day photographs with older ones you can see what has changed: what has been restored? what has been demolished? when did damage occur? and so on. One example he talked about was using photographs to investigate when damage to a temple relief occurred - a line drawing from the mid-19th Century of a particular relief showing Ramesses II's sons depicts them all with intact faces. But if you look at the relief today all the faces have been chiselled off. So were they damaged after the original drawing was made? Maessen has found a photograph from as close to contemporary with the line drawing as possible which shows the same damaged faces that we see on the relief today: clearly the artist used his imagination to fill in the missing details.

Another example was of a photo of a dig house, taken in 1914. The t3.wy Foundation started off researching dig houses, and this is why Maessen originally wanted this particular image in a high resolution. The photo was taken from a distance, so Maessen looked to see what else he could find in the landscape around the dig house. He showed us that the photo also shows another half a dozen or so interesting buildings (including one place that Howard Carter lived). As well as this there was an interesting wall - built to stop tombs from flooding if there were flash floods - and the information in this photo showing exactly where this wall was and what state it was in in 1914 helps to interpret the conditions the tombs were in when excavated.

Between 1839 and around 1910 there were about 150 photographers who worked in Egypt. Most of their photos still exist, but they are often in inaccessible archives. Maessen listed several names, the vast majority of which I didn't recognise - the list did include Francis Frith, and Harry Burton (of course). Burton's work is one of the collections that hasn't survived in bulk, due to a house fire that destroyed most of it. The early photographers in Egypt weren't interested in ancient Egypt per se, they were interested in selling photographs to people (mostly tourists, or would-be tourists). This is why so many photographs survive from this time, although often the glass negatives were destroyed when the photo was no longer commercially relevant. The biggest archives of old photos of Egypt are still in Egypt, but they're neither catalogued nor accessible to anybody and Maessen was pretty scathing about the conditions that the negatives and prints are stored in. For instance in the archive in the Cairo Museum no-one opens any of the boxes, because if anything is found to be missing or broken then the opener of the box will be held responsible and no-one wants to be that person.

What did the early photographers in Egypt photograph? There are several broad categories of photographic subjects. Some photos were to document the monuments and the landscape of the country, and some photographed similar subjects but with a more romantic intent to capture picturesque scenes. Photographers also illustrated the "bizarre" "oriental" people, via staged photographs of daily life in Egypt. There was also photography of excavations. Nowadays each excavation has its own photographer, and is thoroughly documented, but in the past this was not the case. The Egypt Exploration Society was the first to take along their own photographers to digs, so they have a large archive of this sort of photograph. Before that excavation photography was a matter of chance, almost - was there a photographer available in the area who could be hired for the purpose? In a similar vein is photography of the results of excavations - the Cairo Museum has photographs in its archives of every object that has come into the museum.

Then as now photography was also an essential part of tourism. Of course in the early days of photography tourists didn't have their own cameras, so they bought photographs from the tour photographer or from other photographers based in Egypt. To continue his theme from earlier of things you can discover from old photographs that the photographer didn't realise they were telling you Maessen pointed out that most of the early tourist photos are of the Sphinx and the Pyramids. So the early tourists seem to have stayed near Cairo and not many

ventured further south into Middle Egypt or Upper Egypt. As well as photographs of people at tourist sites all the early photographers in Egypt also took studio photos of the tourists. And this was so popular that studio photographers from other parts of the world opened branches in Cairo to get a share of the market. He showed us several examples of these, most of which were the sort of formal photo that one expects from the era. But there were also some more fun and quirky ones - for instance with the subject's head superimposed on the top of a coffin!

Maessen finished up the first half of his talk by discussing saving these (and subsequent) photographs for the future. This is one of the goals of the t3.wy Foundation, but Maessen admits that the first question is "are we going to be able to save them?" He'd like to think so - but it's such a large project that it's difficult to know where to begin. One angle of attack that he's pursuing is to bring together a company who still have the skills to develop the old glass negatives in the traditional way with the Egyptian government to begin working on the archives in Egypt. But this hasn't been proceeding particularly smoothly, sadly. However there are places where the archive owners are starting to do a good job with cataloguing, preserving and even sharing their archives on the internet - he name checked the EES here, amongst several other institutions. He also talked about the photos that modern visitors to Egypt take - one day those will be the "old photos", and might be just as interesting and important to future researchers as the 19th Century ones are to us. And he discussed how we all delete so much, or trust in a single copy uploaded to "the cloud" somewhere, and so all this potentially valuable information is just as fragile as the old glass negatives and paper prints.

After our coffee break the second half of Maessen's talk was devoted to showing us lots of these old photographs. I'm not going to write this half up in depth because it's pretty impossible without the visual aids! He has somewhere around 7000 unique photos and so he had to pick a selection of them to show us. Many scenes were photographed by every photographer who worked in Egypt, in the same way that every modern tourist who visits the Giza Pyramids goes to the panorama viewpoint and takes a photo of the three pyramids. So Maessen said he tried to pick either rarely seen photos from well-known photographers, or photos from less well known photographers. The photos were fascinating, he pointed out things like being able to track the clearing and refilling of the area of sand around the Sphinx. Or how many people's houses have been removed from inside monuments. And of course the amount of sand that had to be cleared in excavating many of the monuments. He grouped the photos by photographer, and I think also chronological order. The set that most caught my eye were those of the Von Hallwyl family, rich tourists who visited Egypt in 1901. The photos felt very much like one's own holiday snaps ... only in 1901 styles, and that somehow made them a great showcase for what's changed over the years.

This was a really interesting talk and Maessen is clearly very passionate about his dream of preserving and sharing the thousands of photographs of Egypt that are archived around the world.

Margaret Patterson

In Our Time: Akhenaten

(2009, available from the BBC archives http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00mwsly**)**

The experts on the programme were Richard Parkinson (British Museum), Elizabeth Frood (University of Oxford) and Kate Spence (University of Cambridge). (As it's so old affiliations of the experts have probably changed.)

They started with a little bit of scene setting and overview of Akhenaten's reign; placing him in context. He was one of the Pharaohs of the 18th Dynasty in the New Kingdom period. This was a particularly prosperous time in Egypt's history, Akhenaten's father Amenhotep III in particular can be considered as ruling over a Golden Age. When Akhenaten came to the throne he seemed much like a conventional Pharaoh. He initially used the more traditional name Amenhotep IV, and built and decorated traditional-seeming temple architecture. But the

experts pointed out that one initial sign of the differences that were to come is that his temple decoration only has scenes of himself offering to solar deities rather than to the full suite of the Egyptian pantheon. After only a few years his reign becomes more unconventional - first he starts to transition from the old state religion to a new one that only worships the Aten (the sun disc) via himself and his wife. Then he moves the capital from Thebes to a brand new city he orders built at the site we now call Amarna. The old religion is abolished, and the name of Amun (the previous chief deity) is removed from all inscriptions. When Akhenaten died in Year 17 of his reign (c.1335 BCE) there was a period of chaos which ended with the restoration of the old religion, and an attempt to remove Akhenaten's name from history.

As you can tell from that précis Akhenaten made sweeping changes to Egyptian life and culture. The way they discussed it on the programme made me think of Pol Pot in Cambodia, or Mao's Cultural Revolution in China: a top down concerted effort to erase and reset the cultural history of a nation. Most of the rest of the programme was spent discussing these changes and the impact they had on Egyptians of the time. They broke down the changes into four major areas: changes to the religion, changes to the art, changes to the language, and the movement of the political centre of the country.

Religious change had happened in Egypt before, but generally as a slow process involving different gods becoming more or less prominent over a long period of time (for instance Amun wasn't always the main state god and didn't really move into that position until the New Kingdom). Akhenaten's changes were abrupt and went far beyond just which god was most important. The large pantheon was replaced with the single god, the Aten. Gone were anthropomorphic representations of deities - the Aten was only to be shown as a sun disc with rays reaching to give life to the Pharaoh and his wife. And gone was all the accumulated mythology associated with the old gods. Even the architectural style of the temples was different - the old temples were dark enclosed places, the new ones were larger, exposed to the sunlight and more airy in feel. The changes were all designed to honour the sun as the source of everything needed for life. One of the experts (Frood, I think?) suggested that Akhenaten's new belief system might even have been more of a natural philosophy than a religion - that he was something more akin to an atheist than we generally think. There was also a general consensus amongst the experts that there was a megalomaniac flavour to his new religion - the Pharaoh was now centred in both the religion and the art. Instead of symbolic scenes of hunting or fishing on the walls of nobles' tombs from this era there are scenes of the Pharaoh giving gifts to the noble in question. The cult is as much about Akhenaten as it is about the Aten.

The art of Akhenaten's reign is also a great departure from previous Egyptian art styles. Once he changes the state religion depictions of the Pharaoh become really quite weird to our eyes. He is depicted with pendulous breasts, wide hips and a strangely elongated face. At one time scholars thought that this meant Akhenaten was deformed, but nowadays the consensus is that it was just an art style not a direct representation of how he really looked. Backing this up, is that Nefertiti is also depicted that way in some places. But in other ways the new art feels less alien to us than the standard Egyptian style. Akhenaten and Nefertiti are frequently depicted with their children, sharing tender family moments, rather than just in formal unrealistic poses. The linguistic changes in the Akhenaten era also follow this increased informality - even texts such as the Hymn to the Aten, which is very much in a formal context, are written with an informal style. The experts suggested that this might reflect the actual speech patterns of the time.

On the boundary stelae for the new city at Amarna Akhenaten justifies the move of his capital by referring things having been "bad" at Thebes – although he doesn't explain what he means by bad. He also says that the site was picked because the Aten told him to build his city there. It's notable that from the river at that point there is a stretch of the cliff face that looks like a horizon hieroglyph, which may be one of the ways that the Aten indicated the right site. More pragmatically, it's in a central location between Upper Egypt and Lower Egypt, which is politically useful. The site hadn't been used for settlement before, and wasn't afterwards until much closer to the modern day. One of the experts said that that's because it's a stupid place to put a city! It's poor in resources, and mostly desert, so didn't long outlast Akhenaten himself.

This is rather good for modern archaeologists, as it gives a snapshot of Egypt at a particular brief time period and it's not been significantly disturbed or built on since.

The impact of all these changes on the elite of society was significant, and probably rather traumatic. The Egyptian culture was very conservative. Their concept of Ma'at, or order, made a religious necessity out of doing things the way they had been done before. So normally a Pharaoh would make a big deal out of how he was doing things as his father and his father's father etc had done before him. Even if what he was doing wasn't actually the same as what his father had done ... But Akhenaten was overtly bringing in something new and saying it was better than what had gone before. Not everyone would have been upset, of course, and some may well have welcomed the changes - there are definitely high ranking individuals who change their names to reflect the new beliefs, although we can't tell if this was for pragmatic reasons or religious belief. But the old certainties were gone, the festivals that measured out the year weren't happening, the familiar symbolism wasn't used any more, and the comforting idea of an afterlife forever with the gods wasn't there anymore. They did talk about the lower levels of society a bit - but didn't really talk about how the loss of the festivals would affect them, which I was a bit surprised by. I would have thought that would've been one of the areas that would have a lot of impact on your average peasant - measuring out the year by when you see the priests' process with the god's shrine. They did talk about the shrines to the old gods that have been found in private houses in Akhenaten's new city - signs that the change from old to new religion wasn't complete. But they didn't talk about the idea that the household and state religions were separate things - so I'm not sure if they disagreed with this or if there just wasn't time to discuss it.

One thing they did discuss is how we know just enough about this period and it's just familiar enough in feel that people project their own desires onto the evidence we do have. For instance, Akhenaten has often been held up as the "world's first monotheist" and then turned into Moses or inspiration for Moses or something that lets the theoriser believe that "obviously" he's prefiguring Judaism or even Christianity with his new religion. The experts then danced delicately round the point that Akhenaten being an atheist or natural philosopher is also one of these situations - it's the one that appeals most to modern archaeologists rather than early 20th Century ones.

Margaret Patterson

BEYOND BEAUTY - Spring Exhibition at Two Temple Place

An exhibition about Ancient Egypt not at the British Museum? I was intrigued as I had never heard of its venue: Two Temple Place or its organiser: The Bulldog Trust.

So first, the house. Temple Place is just behind the Victoria Embankment close to Middle Temple Gardens. Built for William Waldorf Astor to use as his London residence in 1895 it feels like a miniature Elizabethan mansion crossed with a French chateau. The interior is opulent and the toilets were some of the most luxurious I've come across – all marble and mahogany with a view of Middle Temple Hall through the windows. The rooms are loaded with carved wood and stained glass and in places I was torn between looking at the exhibition or the interior decoration.

The house was used as offices for most of the twentieth century but was taken over by the Bulldog Trust and opened to the public as a gallery in 2011 with the specific aim of showcasing art from public UK regional collections. Since the Bulldog Trust's website is inaccessible as I write this they remain rather mysterious but they seem to be involved in a range of charitable work. They aim to have one exhibition a year but the building is also accessible during the Open House weekend in September and would certainly be worth visiting.

The exhibition was subtitled 'Transforming the Body in Ancient Egypt'. It was compact and well arranged with clear explanations of the different aspects of its theme. There were sections on appearance in this life involving make-up and tattooing, clothing, hair and jewellery with

perceptive comments on how Egyptian art represented the human body. The exhibition then focussed on how appearance was perfected after death through coffins and tomb art with the associated idea of representing humans as becoming divine. It was here that I found the object which moved me the most: a cartonnage Roman period mummy mask from Harwara with beautiful 'false eyelashes' made out of carefully clipped sheet metal. In a neighbouring case a mirror had been thoughtfully placed beneath the feet of a mummy wrapping so that the carefully painted soles of its imaginary sandals could be seen.

Extensive explanations on display boards and in the very readable guide emphasised the role that nineteenth century British collectors had played in acquiring objects which were then displayed in their newly established local museums either because they had been directly collected for that purpose or because they were bequeathed upon the collector's death. The fact that many of these museums were in the north perhaps indicated such collecting was particularly popular amongst earnest Victorian industrialists eager to support civic pride. The nearest museum mentioned nearest to Essex was in Ipswich where Guy Maynard was appointed curator in 1920. He was determined to expand its Egyptian collection and negotiated with Flinders Petrie to acquire some of the wooden models which Petrie had discovered at Sedment.

Since I've reviewed the toilets I might as well mention the shop which was excellent: someone had clearly worked hard to gather a wide selection of items ranging from what you could barter for in the souk at Luxor through to classier pieces found in interior decoration shops in Knightsbridge. And there was a café….

All in all, a really good day out.

Alison Woollard

Thanks this month to Alison Woollard and Margaret Patterson

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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