



# ESSEX EGYPTOLOGY GROUP

Newsletter 104

October/November 2016

## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

- 2<sup>nd</sup> October            Textile technology (with practical session): Rosalind Janssen
- 6<sup>th</sup> November        Inside the Step Pyramid: Vincent Oeters
- 4<sup>th</sup> December        From here to eternity – walking from Deir el-Medina to the Valley of the Kings: Stephen Cross
- 8<sup>th</sup> January            Christmas Lunch: see below
- 5<sup>th</sup> February          Tutankhamun's Jewellery: Carol Andrews

## Chairman's Corner: Clichés in Liverpool

Welcome to 'Chairman's Corner' my take on the current Egyptological news, events and activities across the UK (and anywhere else I can think of). For my first column I'm going to be looking at a recent conference I attended at the University of Liverpool, which looked at the relationships between Egypt and other places and cultures on its periphery and across the ancient world. This conference and a subsequent visit to the Garstang Museum of Archaeology has got me thinking about clichés, ancient and modern.

The 'Undercurrents' conference, sponsored by Marie Curie Actions (An EU research funding body), took place on the 12th September 2016 and covered a wide range of cultures, sites and disciplines from satellite imagery, to Tutankhamun's gold appliques, to the iconography of the gods of Pi-Ramesse. Every paper contributed to the overall theme, looking at the complex interaction between the Nile Valley and its neighbours, near and far. While pottery played a significant role in several papers, the importance of various kinds of scientific analysis was evident across the full range of papers and disciplines presented.

I came away from the conference with a new appreciation of exactly how clichéd the Egyptians' presentation of their own 'foreign relations' really are. Through our repeated exposure to, and interest in, ancient Egyptian written sources we tend to absorb this elite Egyptian worldview. But the archaeological and scientific evidence reveals an ancient world as removed from elite and monumental textual cliché, as ours is from the over-used tropes of Hollywood. In contrast to the Egyptian cliché of the desert as a dangerous and frightening 'other', satellite imagery reveals



Pair of Cyprriot 'base ring juglets' from the Petrie Museum (UC13419).

© The Petrie Museum, London. This work by The Petrie Museum, London is licensed under a CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 International license. Additional permissions may be available at [petriemuseum.ac.uk](http://www.petriemuseum.ac.uk)

ancient

them so busy trading across it that their robust interconnecting trails are still visible today. Instead of fearing and fighting the Libyan nomads of the Mediterranean coast, the Egyptian frontier fort of Zawiyet Umm el-Rakham relied upon Libyan knowledge of the rain-fed wadi farming techniques used by the local population to supply its inhabitants with wheat and barley for food (and beer). Other examples abounded throughout the conference, from the import of oasis wine and foreign gods to the Nile Valley, to the fashionable use of foreign motifs in Tutankhamun's tomb and the inter-mixing of Egyptian and Nubian customs and populations at Amara West in Sudan. Archaeology and scientific analysis is revealing that the Egyptians' relations with their neighbours were much more nuanced and complex than they present them in monuments and texts.



Garstang takes a 'shadow selfie' showing his pith helmet, while recording his workmen emptying spoil. Photo JG-M-A-12 in the Garstang Museum.

At the end of the conference, we were treated to a viewing of the Garstang Museum of Archaeology and its many objects from Egyptian sites, and elsewhere. If you happen to be in Liverpool, it's open from 10am till 4pm on Wednesdays and is well worth a visit ([www.liverpool.ac.uk/archaeology-classics-and-egyptology/garstang-museum](http://www.liverpool.ac.uk/archaeology-classics-and-egyptology/garstang-museum)).

I particularly enjoyed seeing the Garstang Museum's Meröe exhibition, which presented many of the original photos taken by John Garstang during his excavations in Meröe during the first two decades of the 20th century. Garstang was one of the pioneers of photography in archaeology and his photographs give a sense of what life on an early 20th century dig was like. They also reminded me that sometimes clichés exist for

a reason. While modern archaeologists work in a small trench no more than a few metres square, the cliché of early 20th century Egyptology, with enormous open excavations, multiple mudbrick walls and tens of scurrying workmen, was the norm rather than the exception. So was the pith helmet, now something of a cliché of Empire, but then a practical and ubiquitous item of clothing that is visible on Garstang's head in a 'shadow selfie' (above left), taken as he photographed his workmen emptying a mining car of spoil. Perhaps if we beware of thinking in ancient clichés, we should also remember that they exist for a reason. Personally I find hunting down the nuances hiding within them is one of the great pleasures of archaeology and I thoroughly enjoyed learning more about the complexity of Egyptian foreign relations during the conference.

Hannah Pethen

## JANUARY LUNCH

Our popular January lunch is being arranged by Alison Woollard (email [alisonwoollard2@gmail.com](mailto:alisonwoollard2@gmail.com)) for Sunday 8th January 2017 at Crofters Wine Bar and Dining Rooms, Maldon Road, Witham CM8 2AA. 12.30pm. The cost is £22 per person (plus drinks) and Alison is taking a £5 per person deposit at the October meeting. Please email Alison if you can't attend the October meeting and want to join us.

## PROCEEDS FROM THE AUGUST MEETING

Our August meeting was devoted to fund-raising for the South Abydos Excavation Project (guest fees/teas/book auction). We raised £380, a record for the Group. Yaser Mahmoud

Hussein, the Excavation Director from the Ministry of Antiquities who spoke at the meeting and described the site, said:

“That's great to hear, thank you so much really. We enjoyed our time there; you are so kind, and really the group's money will help a lot for the coming season. So thank you so much again.

Sincerely  
Yaser”

## **"The Recently Discovered Naqada III Settlement at South Abydos" Yaser Mahmoud Hussein**

At the beginning of August, Yaser Mahmoud Hussein visited us to talk about his work on very early sites at Abydos. He is an Antiquities Inspector and archaeologist, and has been Field Director of the excavations at the Early Dynastic Cemetery at Abydos since 2008.

The site is to the south of the New Kingdom temples at Abydos - the ones of Seti I and Ramesses II that are what you go to see if you visit Abydos as a tourist. It's very close to the modern village, and so the first purpose of Hussein's team's excavations was to find out if there was anything interesting there before it was built over. Even now that it's known to be an archaeologically interesting site it's still not safe from destruction as when the archaeologists are not actually working there the villagers walk across it the way they always have done. There are two parts to the site - in 2008 they discovered the cemetery with tombs dating to the Naqada II-Naqada III periods (the end of Naqada III is when Narmer unifies Egypt, so this period is also often called Dynasty 0). They have been excavating there since, and more recently they have discovered adjacent to the cemetery evidence of a settlement dating to the same era.

In the cemetery there are around 40 tombs dating to this early period of Egyptian civilisation. Hussein showed us pictures of several of them that they have excavated and talked us through some of the features. Most of the tombs have been disturbed over the millennia since they were originally used, and so there aren't many with grave goods or bodies. However one tomb still had the remains of a coffin containing the remains of a child of around 6-13 years of age, and there were also pots and pieces of jewellery in that tomb! Despite their age and the amount of disturbance a surprising amount of the structure of the tombs has survived. Some still have roofs, and he showed us a photo of one that still has the remains of wooden timbers that would have held up the mud and reed ceiling. Some of the tombs were quite large and complex - for instance one was 8m x 8m and had many side chambers inside, which is very unusual during this period. The mud superstructure remains on the outside of some of the tombs, and on one of those there are distinct finger marks in the corners. They look intentional, rather than being an artefact of the building process, and so Hussein thinks that they must mean something. However, he doesn't yet know what that might be. Also interesting is that there are very early mastaba tombs at the site, and he thinks that they are older than those found at Saqqara. Perhaps the concept of the mastaba tomb was invented here, and later spread to Saqqara.

They are only just starting to work on the neighbouring settlement. He said they started by doing a walking survey of the area, looking for pottery and other artefacts on the surface to see if there was anything of potential interest. And they found a lot of pottery dating to the same era as the cemetery, and so were pretty sure that this was where the settlement was. They have also found stone tools, and he's currently trying to find an expert to join the team to properly analyse these. This initial survey also told them about the topography of the site - one interesting feature is a big depression in the site which is clearly not natural, but they don't yet know what it is. More recently they have started to excavate some test squares, and Hussein showed us several photos of this process. They have found parts of the reed walls which were used as fences - not just mud with impressions of the reeds but also actual pieces of reed! They have also found post holes outside this reed wall, and a feature inside (but they don't know

what that is yet). As well as structures they have found artefacts including pieces of pottery bowls, flint tools, and a weaving tool.

All the evidence, which Hussein and his team have uncovered, points to this being a settlement (with associated cemetery) for those working on royal projects. Hussein believes the larger tombs in the cemetery are those of low level elite officials - not the sort of high officials buried at Saqqara. Although Hussein didn't explicitly make the comparison, I'm imagining it was something like the later town for the pyramid builders at Giza or the even later town at Deir el Medina.

Hussein finished his talk by showing us pictures of his team and telling us a bit about his goals for the team. In terms of archaeologists he's hoping to recruit a broader range of specialists, so that they can cover all of the necessary work. And he's also involving the local villagers in the project - providing immediate jobs for them, and also training them in archaeological skills which will let them get further work with other projects. As well as helping the local economy and improving people's lives it also helps them to respect the worth of the site more.

This talk was an interesting snapshot of the very early stages of investigation of a site which demonstrates how there always seems to be something new to learn about any place in Egypt - even one as well-known as Abydos.

Margaret Patterson

## **Egyptian Judicial System - Robust Pillar of Empire**

It was imperative to control a vast empire with an iron fist. Therefore, right from the hoary Narmer Palette down the millennia, we see pharaohs depicted in the classic pose, ready to bash the brains of their terrified enemies. It was, after all, the king's duty to eliminate the dangerous sources of chaos (isfet) and maintain justice and order (maat). And so, violence, or the threat of violence, towards accused and witnesses alike was an integral part of the ancient Egyptian judicial system.

Eyebrows weren't raised when someone mentioned corporal punishment; for this too was a way of life one was accustomed to from childhood. Scribe Amenemope certainly followed it in letter and spirit when dealing with his young charges, for he states matter-of-factly: "A boy's ears are upon his back. He only listens when he is being beaten." Mutilation, drowning, decapitation, and being burned alive—were some of the more gory ways in which one could breathe his or her last.

The New Kingdom had a council of elders called Kenbet. They were responsible for court cases involving small claims and minor disputes. The elders were from regional governments and priests whose official rank in the temples entitled them to be judges. The ancient Egyptian judicial system also had a Great Kenbet which the vizier or pharaoh chaired and the members were high-ranking officials. Both men and women could seek justice. There was no forum of appeal to a higher court in Egyptian law, because the highest court was consulted in the first place.

The Abbott Papyrus which sheds light on the spate of tomb robberies that occurred during the Twentieth Dynasty during the reign of Ramesses IX records the plunder and vandalism of the tomb of pharaoh Sobekemsaf and his queen, Nubkhas. In conjunction, the Amherst Papyrus on the other hand provides a blow-by-blow, graphic account of the fate of the eight culprits who had dared to defile the great god's resting place.

Though often mentioned as enemies of Egypt, by the New Kingdom period, the fearsome Medjay who hailed from Nubia performed the role of scouts and protectors of the pharaoh's territories in the military. This elite outfit that also served as local policemen, was only too willing to help in meting out justice—often by the display of brute force. As for the tomb robbers: "Their examination was held, by beating with a double rod, smiting their feet and their

hands." But such an examination did not produce the desired results, for, the record goes on to say that the thieves: "... told the same story." Unperturbed, they ultimately beat the whole truth out of the hapless band of criminals.

Being listed on the "to be exiled" list was a living death, for, the unfortunate person could end up working endless years in gold and turquoise mines under the harshest conditions possible. Based on the severity of the crime, an offender could be let off with a fine and a warning, or worse, have his ears and nose chopped off. But, the terribly ill-fated fellows faced the ghastly prospect of being impaled on a sharpened spike, in the outskirts of the city. This excruciating and vicious form of state-sponsored execution meant the unfortunate deceased had no chance of being mummified and being placed in a tomb according to religious diktats—and horror of horrors, had not a smidgen of hope of an Afterlife as there was no one to speak his name. At times, punishment could also encompass the offender's family.

Beginning in the New Kingdom, oracles played a major role in the legal system, dispensing justice in both civil and criminal cases. The procedure was to ask the god a "yes" or "no" question concerning the right or wrong of an issue. The god, carried by a number of priests, rendered judgment by choosing one or the other, moving forward or backward, or pointing to one of the answers written on a piece of papyrus or an ostrakon.

It seems by the twilight years of Egyptian hegemony, matters got a tad strange. Diodorus Siculus, the renowned Greek historian, left us a rather incredible account of the state-of-affairs in his tome, *Bibliotheca historica*: "The Egyptian law dealing with thieves was also a very peculiar one. For it bade any who chose to follow this occupation to enter their names with the Chief of the Thieves and by agreement to bring to him immediately the stolen articles, while any who had been robbed filed with him in like manner a list of all the missing articles, stating the place, the day, and the hour of the loss. And since by this method all lost articles were readily found, the owner who had lost anything had only to pay one-fourth of its value in order to recover just what belonged to him. For as it was impossible to keep all mankind from stealing, the lawgiver devised a scheme whereby every article lost would be recovered upon payment of a small ransom."

Anand Balaji is an independent researcher from Bangalore, India. He holds degrees in World History and Journalism; and is especially interested in Egypt's Amarna era.

## A Checklist of books on the Ancient Egyptian Pyramids.

|    |   |
|----|---|
| *  | Arnold, Dieter. <i>Building in Egypt: Phaaonic Stone Masonry</i><br>1991. Oxford U.P. 0-19-506350-3     |
| ** | Brier, Bob & Houdin, Jean-Pierre. <i>The Secret of the Great Pyramic</i><br>2008. Smithsonian, Collins. |
| *  | Clarke, S. & Engelbach, R. <i>Ancient Egyptian Masonry: The Building Cra</i><br>1930. Oxford U.P.       |
| *  | Cormack Maribelle. <i>Imhotep Builder in Stone</i><br>1965. Franklin Watts, N. York. Congress: 65-11754 |
|    | Cottrell Leonard. <i>The Mountains of Pharaoh.</i> (1956).<br>1975. Book Club Associates.               |
|    | David, Rosalie. <i>The Pyramid Builders of Ancient Egyp</i> (On the workforce).<br>1986. Guild.         |
|    | Davidson D. & Aldersmith, H. <i>The Great Pyramid: Its Divine Messagē</i> 7 <sup>th</sup> ed<br>1937.   |
|    | Edgar, Morton. <i>The Great Pyramid: Its Symbolism, Science and Prophe</i><br>1924.                     |
|    | Edgar, Morton, <i>The Great Pyramid: Its Scientific Feature</i> (- Part I). 1924.                       |
|    | Edgar, Morton. <i>The Great Pyramid: Its Time Feature</i> (1914 A.D. Part II). 1924.                    |
| 1  | Edgar, Morton. <i>The Great Pyramid: its Spiritual Symbolis</i><br>1924. Bone & Hulley, Glasgow.        |

|    |   |
|----|---|
| *  | Edwards, I.E.S. <i>The Pyramids of Egypt</i><br>Revised ed. 1972. Viking. 0-670-80153-4                                 |
| *  | Fakhry, Ahmed. <i>The Pyramids</i> .<br>1974. Univ.of Chicago Press. 0-226-23473-8                                      |
|    | Gillings, Richard J. <i>Mathematics in the time of the Pharaoh</i> (1972).<br>1982. Dover. 0-486-24315-X                |
| 2  | Grinsell L. V. <i>Barrow, Pyramid and Tomb</i><br>1975. Thames & Hudson. 0-500-78004-8.                                 |
| *  | Hawass, Zahi, A. <i>The Pyramids of Egypt</i> 1<br>1990. Carnegie Museum Nat. Hist. 0-911239-21-9.                      |
|    | Hawass, Z. (Ed.) <i>The Treasures of the Pyramid</i><br>2003. White Star. 88-8095-233-1.                                |
| ** | Hitchins, Derek K. <i>The Secret Diaries of Hemiun</i> Architect of the G.P.<br>2008. 978-1-4457-4824-5.                |
| *  | Hitchins, Derek K. <i>The Pyramid Builder's Handbook</i> .<br>2010. 978-1-4457-5165-8.                                  |
| *  | Hodges, Peter. <i>How the Pyramids were Built</i><br>1993. Reprint, 1989. 0-85668-600-X                                 |
| ** | Houdin, Jean-Pierre. <i>Khufu's Pyramid Revealed</i> .<br>2010. Abydos Publications, Giza, Egypt.                       |
|    | Hurry, Jamieson B. <i>Imhotep. The Vizier and Physician of King Zoser</i><br>1926. Oxford U.P.                          |
| ** | Isler, Martin. <i>Sticks, Stones, &amp; Shadows: Building the Egyptian Pyramids</i><br>2001. 0-8061-3342-2              |
|    | Jackson, Kevin & Stamp, J. <i>Building the Great Pyramid</i><br>2003. Firefly Books. 1-55297-719-6.                     |
| *  | Lehner, Mark. <i>The Complete Pyramids</i><br>1998. Thames & Hudson. 0-500-05084-8.                                     |
|    | Lemesurier, Peter. <i>The Great Pyramid Decoded</i> .<br>1996. Element. 1-85230-861-3                                   |
|    | Lucas, A. <i>Ancient Egyptian Materials and Industries</i> 4 <sup>th</sup> ed.<br>1989. Histories of Man. 1-85417-046-5 |
|    | Mahdy, C. El. <i>The Pyramid Builder: Cheops, The Man behind the G. Pyramid</i><br>2003. Headline.                      |
|    | Malek, J. <i>In the Shadow of the Pyramid</i><br>1986. Little Brown & Co. 0-31690445-7.                                 |
| *  | Massey, Chris. <i>The Pyramids of Egypt. How were they Really Built?</i><br>2012. Book Guild.                           |
|    | Mendelssohn, Kurt. <i>The Riddle of the Pyramid</i> .<br>1974. Thames & Hudson. 0-500-05015-5                           |
|    | Nicholson Paul T. & Shaw, I. <i>Ancient Egyptian Materials &amp; Technology</i><br>2009. 978-0-521-12098-2.             |
| ** | Parry, Dick. <i>Engineering the Pyramid</i> .<br>2004, Sutton. 0-7509-3414-X  |
|    | Petrie, W.M. Flinders. <i>The Pyramids and Temples of Gizeh</i><br>[1883], 2010 Kessinger Legacy Reprint.               |
|    | Reisner, G.A. <i>The Development of the Egyptian Tomb Down to the<br/>Accession of Cheops</i> 1936                      |
| *  | Romer, J. <i>The Great Pyramid</i> .<br>2007. Cambridge University Press. 978-0-521-87166-2.                            |
|    | Siliotti Alberto. <i>Guide to the Pyramids of Egypt</i><br>1997. White Star. 88-8095-272-2.                             |
| *  | Smith, Craig, B. <i>How the Great Pyramid was Built</i><br>2004. 1-58834-200-X  |
|    | Smyth, P. <i>The Great Pyramid. Its Secrets &amp; Mysteries Revealed</i> .<br>(1880). 1978. Gramercy, N.York.           |

|   |  |
|---|--|
| * | <b>Tyldesley J. <i>Pyramids: The Real Story behind Egypt's Most Ancient Monuments</i> 2003. Viking.</b>  |
|   | <b>Verne, Miroslav. <i>The Pyramids: Their Archaeology and History</i> 2002. Atlantic. 1-903809-45-2</b> |

This has been produced on request from members of the Essex Egyptology Group and is merely a list of those in my library and is not intended as being definitive. The lack of a \* or \*\* simply means that I have not had time to read them fully yet. ISBNs have been shown as far as possible.

- \* Used in preparing my talk to the Essex Egyptology Group on 04.09.2016.
- \*\* Highly recommended for recent theories or of particular interest.
- 1 Collected edition of the preceding three works.
- 2 An example of one of many books with just a chapter on the Pyramids.

Stuart A Baldwin

## Staatliche Sammlung für Ägyptische Kunst, Munich

A trip to Bavaria in August included a day in Munich. Unlike others in our group who had to seek out a beer garden for entertainment, I was able to visit the State Museum of Egyptian Art. In June 2013, the museum moved to a new subterranean building. Despite checking it out on Google street view and way marking it on the sat map, it was still a surprise when we found it. It is the absence of a building that gives the exact location away.



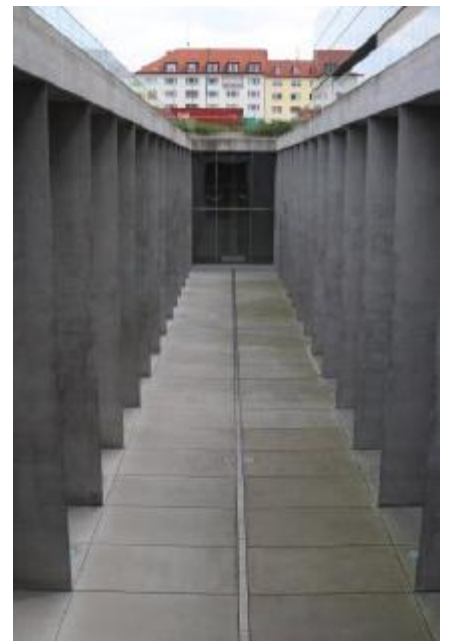
After steps down from street level to the entry, the actual exhibits are deeper still after descending a long ramp. In the photo, you can see the ramp on the right and the light well on the left. In the absence of a floor plan, the rest of the museum is a similarly lit space on the other side of the well and then the same area again but now totally artificially lit.

I was several minutes into taking photos (under instruction naturally) when I realised what a wonderful place it was. The light well meant there was no outside reflected in. All the lights were up at roof level. You could wander around the exhibits and take photos without the sun shining in on them or the spotlights in the next display case obliterating

the detail.

For what was on display, you would have to ask someone who knew about Egyptology, but I did enjoy a display near the end of the various kinds of stone used in the statues. Far more educational than a beer.

Dan Brewer



## **DISTANCE LEARNING COURSES IN EGYPTOLOGY**

The University of Exeter offer distance learning Egyptology courses on the culture, society, religion and art of ancient Egypt and Nubia. The courses are non-accredited, which means that you study with guidance from an experienced tutor without the pressure of exams or essays.

**Starting 3rd October 2016**

- . Ancient Egypt: state formation and the Old Kingdom
- . Introduction to the world of ancient Egypt
- . Religion and art of ancient Egypt
- . Ancient Egypt: the Middle Kingdom
- . Ancient Egypt: the New Kingdom, dynasty 18

**Starting January 2017**

- . Ancient Egypt: the New Kingdom, dynasties 19 and 20
- . Introduction to the world of ancient Egypt
- . Ancient Nubia: an introduction

**Starting April 2017**

- . Ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs for beginners

For more information see [http://education.exeter.ac.uk/dll/list\\_courses.php?code=dle](http://education.exeter.ac.uk/dll/list_courses.php?code=dle)

Thanks this month to Hannah Pethen, Anand Balaji, Stuart A Baldwin, Dan Brewer 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

Please e-mail to [eeg\\_newsletter@btinternet.com](mailto:eeg_newsletter@btinternet.com)

You can visit our web site at [www.essexegyptology.co.uk](http://www.essexegyptology.co.uk)

or join us on  Essex Egyptology Group uk