



ESSEX EGYPTOLOGY GROUP

Newsletter 118 February/March 2019

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

3rd February	Ancient Egyptian & Nubian Leather Technology – Lucy Skinner
3rd March	Egyptian Texts in the Age of the Pyramids – Dr Nigel Strudwick
7th April	Tomb Security in Ancient Egypt – Reg Clarke
27th April	Study Day – Royal Ladies of the New Kingdom – Dylan Bickerstaffe – entry by ticket only, see below
12th May	Shalfak: A Middle Kingdom Fortress in Lake Nubia – Dr Claudia Näser
2nd June	Missed and underrated criteria for authenticating Egyptian artefacts – Marcel Maree

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This month Lucy-Anne Skinner, archaeological conservator and organic materials specialist, will be speaking about leather technology. She is currently carrying out a PhD on the topic of ancient Egyptian and Nubian skin-processing at the British Museum and the Institute of Creative Leather Technology, University of Northampton. Lucy has worked for over ten years as a conservator of archaeological and historic leather and other organic materials, in Egypt, Sudan, Norway, Antarctica and in the UK and is interested in improving the understanding of leather and skin processing methods and deterioration mechanisms and how these may be related to each other. In 2018 Lucy was featured in the National Geographic and Channel 5 documentary, 'Secrets of Tutankhamun's treasures' talking about the young pharaoh's leather armour.

In March, Dr. Nigel Strudwick will look at the people of the Old Kingdom through the written word. It was at this time that continuous texts first appeared. Kings left decrees of exemptions for temples and officials created elaborate tombs with inscriptions. Some early papyri show ordinary people at work and give clues to the temple rituals.

Nigel Strudwick is an Egyptologist whose interests lie in the Old Kingdom and in the archaeology and history of Thebes. He has worked in universities and museums, and has excavated on the West Bank of Thebes since 1984. He has published many books and articles on these topics, including publications of Theban tombs as well as more popular works such as *Thebes in Egypt* with Helen Strudwick.

ESSEX EGYPTOLOGY GROUP STUDY DAY

Saturday 27th April, 10.30am-4.30pm

To be held on Saturday 27th April our first study day of 2019 will feature Dylan Bickerstaffe, “Royal Ladies of the New Kingdom”; tickets on sale now.

Tickets: £36/£40

Further information: info@essexegyptology.co.uk

BLOOMSBURY SUMMER SCHOOL STUDY DAY

Saturday 8th June, 10am-5.30pm

Cruciform Theatre, UCL, Gower Street, London WC1E 6BT

“Of caravans and crossroads: cultures of central Asia and the Silk Road in antiquity”. Dr Paul Wordsworth and Dr Gai Jorayev will delve into the origins of the famous Silk Roads and explore the ways in which commerce and travel shaped the cultural connections of a continent.

Tickets: £40

Further information: www.egyptology-uk.com/bloomsbury

CHAIRMAN’S CORNER: Tombs, temples and mummies **The nature of ancient Egypt and how we think about it**



Face of a gilded anthropoid coffin in the Cairo Museum.

Preparing my presentation for the children from Notley Green forced me to think about why we, and the general public, think about certain things as intrinsically associated with ancient Egypt. Why do we associate mummies, tombs, temples and inscriptions with ancient Egypt, when they probably weren't the most prevalent aspects of ancient Egyptian life? Of course, the public image of ancient Egypt – the focus on death and mummies in films, the interest in golden discoveries in the media – has a lot to do with it, but is it more than just easy pop-cultural stereotyping?

Well partly! The media does a lot to reinforce the stereotypes of course, but these stereotypes are driven by the nature of the evidence that has been coming out of Egypt since the earliest excavations. Decorated tomb chapels, vast stores of animal mummies, stately obelisks, temple pylons carved with hieroglyphs, gilded anthropoid coffins with their desiccated occupants, it is hardly surprising that people have always been fascinated by the more esoteric aspects of Egyptian civilisation. Even the Romans, who had the luxury of talking to living ancient Egyptians, were obsessed by the exotic elements rather than the mundane.

This isn't just down to European Orientalism (although that can drive the focus on exoticism in some media), because we really do have a whole lot more evidence about tombs, temples and mummies, than about settlements and daily life. For several centuries the Egyptian desert has readily given up its archaeological secrets, while the Nile valley has remained contrastingly tight-lipped. As a result, those archaeological remains that are concentrated in the desert, such as tombs, mummies, burial assemblages, temples (especially mortuary temples) and pyramids, dominate the evidence. As settlement archaeologists have often commented, those archaeological remains of everyday life that are concentrated in the Nile valley (villages, towns, agricultural remains) are in the minority. Rare sites like Lahun and Deir el Medina give tantalising glimpses of the reality of ancient Egyptian life and recent excavations are increasingly filling voids in our understanding of Egyptian urban and village society. But they struggle to compete with centuries of golden mummies in the public imagination. Thanks to a quirk of the landscape, ancient Egypt appears as a glittering, exotic, civilisation obsessed by death; instead of a vibrant society engaged with the business of living.



Deir el Medina: One of the few ancient Egyptian settlements with a long history of excavation

Hannah Pethen

BLOOMSBURY SUMMER SCHOOLS

The 2019 Bloomsbury summer schools have just been announced:

24-28 June – Coptic for beginners – Dr Bill Manley

1-5 July – Reading coptic – Dr Bill Manley

1-5 July – Ancient Egypt Rediscovered: new methods and techniques in Egyptology – Dr Lidija McKnight and Dr Iwona Kozieradzka-Ogunmakin

8-12 July – Hieroglyphs: the next step – Dr Bill Manley and Dr Jose R Perez-Accino

8-12 July – Reading hieroglyphs: praise and betrayal – Dr Bill Manley and Dr Jose R Perez-Accino

15-19 July – Ancient Egypt in 100 people – Dr Campbell Price

15-19 July – War, strife and conquistadors: Mesoamerica in the postclassic period – Dr Elizabeth Baquedano

22-26 July – Ancient Assyria: power and ideology – Prof Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones

22-26 July – Ancient Egyptian literature: a voyage through history, culture and religion – Dr Luigi Prada

Further information: www.egyptology-uk.com/bloomsbury

BLOOMSBURY SUMMER SCHOOL IN EGYPT

28th October-4th November 2019

“Ancient Egyptian Astronomy”. Dr Bernadette Brady will teach this course in Luxor, with daily lectures and related visits to fascinating ancient sites, including 3 “special openings” of sites usually closed to visitors.

The tour co-ordinator is Galal Alsenusy and course co-ordinator is Lucia Gahlin

Further information: www.egyptology-uk.com/bloomsbury

OBITUARY

Vanessa Cowell RIP

29th August 1959-22nd December 2018



We regret to announce that Vanessa Cowell passed away just before Christmas after a brave fight with cancer. She will be sorely missed at our meetings. She leaves behind two beloved daughters, Geri and Liz.

The Essex Egyptology Group Committee

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

Treasurer: Rosemary Ackland (treasurer@essexegyptology.co.uk)

Secretary/Membership: Janet Brewer BEM (secretary@essexegyptology.co.uk)

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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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