



ESSEX EGYPTOLOGY GROUP

Newsletter 121

August/September 2019

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

4 th August	Ancient Egyptian Thought in the Old Testament – Lorna Oakes Annual General Meeting
1 st September	Pharaonic Purification Scenes in the Greco-Roman Period – Konstantin Ivanov
6 th October	Graffiti at el Kab – Dr Luigi Prada
12 th October	Autumn Study Day “Mummification in the ancient Egyptian World” – Prof Joann Fletcher and Dr Stephen Buckley
3 rd November	Scarab and seal amulet workshops in ancient Egypt – Stephanie Boonstra
1 st December	Perceptions of Seth – Dr Ian Taylor

CONTENTS

1	Notice of Annual General Meeting
2	Essex Egyptology Group Autumn Study Day
3	New Year Lunch
4	Chairman’s Corner – Great Exhibitions
5	Tales from the Two Lands
6	Study Days – Friends of the Petrie/Egypt Exploration Society
7	Contact us

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE ESSEX EGYPTOLOGY GROUP

The AGM of the Group will take place at 3.00pm on Sunday 4th August. Agendas, accounts and notes of the previous meeting (2018) have been circulated by email. Members are encouraged to attend. Visitors are welcome but may not vote.

The AGM will be followed by Lorna Oakes who is a past lecturer at Birkbeck College and the British Museum. She has published a number of books, including *Ancient Egypt: an Illustrated*

History and Mysteries of Ancient Egypt, she will be talking to us about Ancient Egyptian Thought in the Old Testament.

In September we welcome Konstantin Ivanov who was awarded an MA in Egyptology from the University in Copenhagen. The lecture will discuss the purification of the pharaoh in temple decoration. Examples of such scenes are often found in a sequence. This sequence usually features the exit from the palace, the purification, the coronation and the introduction of the pharaoh to the patron of the temple but variations and additions to this configuration are not uncommon. Evidence suggests that in the Graeco-Roman period most examples of the purification sequence adhere to a common format which was established no later than the Canopus Synod of 238 BCE.

EEG AUTUMN STUDY DAY – 12TH OCTOBER 2019

This study day will examine the various forms of mummification practiced throughout the ancient Egyptian world. Focussing on their own research over the last 30 years, Prof Joann Fletcher and Dr Stephen Buckley will discuss the true beginnings of mummification and the techniques and materials employed.

Further information: info@essexegyptology.co.uk

Tickets now on sale: £30 members and £35 non-members.

NEW YEAR LUNCH

A New Year lunch will be organised for members and guests on Sunday 12th January 2020 at Crofter's Restaurant in Witham. Bookings and deposits will be taken from the September meeting by Rosemary Ackland/Janet Brewer.



Predynastic palette on display in the *Before Egypt* exhibition. (Hannah Pethen 2019)

Chairman's Corner: Great exhibitions

I've recently visited two archaeological exhibitions; the Garstang Museum's *Before Egypt* at the University of Liverpool (for my review see <https://hannahpethen.com/2019/06/22/a-review-of-the-garstang-museums-before-egypt-art-culture-and-power-exhibition-at-the-victoria-gallery-and-museum-at-the-university-of-liverpool/>) and the *Prittlewell Princely Burial* at Southend Museum (<https://museumcrush.org/the-prittlewell-princely-burial-treasures-going-on-show-at-southend-museum>). Both these exhibitions were thoroughly enjoyable and reviewing them has had me thinking about what makes a great one!

Telling a new and engaging story

It's relatively rare to find an exhibition that doesn't try to tell a story and it's generally understood that the narrative arc of the exhibition is as important as the exhibits, but to be a great exhibition that narrative also needs to be fresh. It should be something we haven't heard before, even if the theme is a very familiar one. This struck me rather forcefully when reviewing *Before Egypt*. It can be hard to say something new about ancient Egyptian material, especially

from the predynastic and early Dynastic periods. *Before Egypt* certainly begins with the usual suspects (sequence dating, palettes, pots and stone vessels), but having set the scene it then focuses on less famous material; A-group Nubia, the Hierakonpolis Fort Cemetery and the Naqada Royal Tomb. This gave the exhibition a fresh feel and told a slightly different version of the predynastic story to the one we usually hear.

Context, context, context

It is archaeological context that sets excavated apart. Without archaeological context, artefacts objects, subject to the gaze of the outsider and their own story. But when the archaeological known a much richer picture emerges. The acquires a second life and agency, as it reveals role in an ancient society. Wherever possible always be presented to the museum visitor; to importance of carefully excavated material, to exhibition with all the available data, to counter artefacts are passive art objects. The value of context appeared very clearly in the *Prittlewell* exhibition, which is framed around the story of excavation and analysis of the site. In writing the context so clearly into the story of the exhibition, understands how the process of excavation and directly produced the evidence presented to carefully preserved artefacts, to information origins and owner. *Before Egypt* exemplified context when a good proportion of the exhibits it. The unprovenanced artefacts were used to explain sequence dating, characterise the material culture of the predynastic and generally complement the excavated material.



Eastern Mediterranean flagon from the *Prittlewell Princely Burial* (Hannah Pethen 2019).

artefacts are stunted unable to tell context is artefact its complex context should emphasise the enrich the the myth that archaeological *Princely Burial* the discovery, archaeological the visitor analysis them, from the about their how to present are devoid of set the scene,

Good complementary materials (Object numbers, catalogues, online information etc.)

Both the exhibitions provided great complementary materials, expanding the information available in the exhibition itself. In addition to the information boards and videos in the exhibition, at the *Prittlewell Princely Burial* visitors could buy both the full excavation report, a hefty tome with a £35 price tag, and a £15 exhibition catalogue (Hirst and Scull 2019) which contained much of the most interesting information.

Although it wouldn't do for the professional archaeologist, the latter contained all the information most visitors would need and made an excellent complement to the exhibition. While a *Before Egypt* book is in preparation (thanks to @tetisher13 for this information), the Garstang Museum blog (<https://garstangmuseum.wordpress.com/>) and 3d models on their sketchfab page (<https://sketchfab.com/garstang>) provided valuable additional information on John Garstang's excavations and the artefacts in the exhibition. Crucially, the object information panels also provided the object numbers, making it possible for the visitor to research specific artefacts further and ensuring that those posting images to Egyptology Facebook groups will not incur the wrath of the moderators.

Of course, there are many other elements that can make exhibitions effective and enjoyable. What matters to you will depend on your interests, preferences and needs. The presence of new or rarely seen artefacts is often a draw, as is an exhibition based around highly publicised discoveries or famous individuals, but I regard a fresh narrative, context and good complementary materials as fundamental to a great exhibition. At best, an exhibition without them can still be enjoyable, but you are unlikely to remember it for years to come. At worst, their absence is an indicator of a dull presentation of disjointed objects.

References

Hirst, Sue and Scull, Christopher. 2019 *The Anglo-Saxon Princely Burial at Prittlewell, Southend-on-sea*. Museum of London Archaeology: London.

Blackmore, Lyn. Blair, Ian. Hirst, Sue and Scull, Christopher. 2019. *The Prittlewell princely burial: excavations at Priory Crescent, Southend-on-Sea, Essex, 2003*. MOLA Monograph Series 73. Museum of London Archaeology: London.

Hannah Pethen

TALES FROM THE TWO LANDS

As well as writing up the talks given to the EEG each month I have now started up a new blog: <http://talesfromthetwolands.org/>

Tales from the Two Lands grew out of a desire to share the cool things I learn about Ancient Egypt with other people.

The site is aimed squarely at the interested amateur, after all that is what I am myself. My hope is that each article should be understandable to someone who's reading about that subject for the first time, whilst still being interesting even if you've read it all a million times before.

I am rather self-consciously steering away from the "standard" topics of Ancient Egyptian history for at least the first couple of dozen articles. I've picked kings who are not Tutankhamun or Akhenaten to talk about, gods who are not Osiris, animals that are not the falcon or the cat. Obviously I'm not solely going for obscure topics, I've begun with the Step Pyramid at Saqqara after all! But even so – there is so much interesting and quirky and cool stuff to talk about so I wanted to explore more of that, and less of the stuff that seems to turn up in every documentary you've ever watched about Ancient Egypt.

If you like my writing, both Tales from the Two Lands and my meeting writeups, I would be very grateful if you would consider supporting it via a Patreon subscription: <https://www.patreon.com/talesfromthetwolands>

This support will let me buy more books, visit more museums, attend more study days, and visit Egypt more often - meaning that articles I publish will get better & better! As a thank you to those who subscribe I will be publishing articles on Patreon that will be exclusive to my subscribers, the first of which is already available.

Margaret Patterson

FRIENDS OF THE PETRIE MUSEUM STUDY DAY

Saturday 26th October 2019, 10.00am-5.30pm
Cruciform Building UCL, Gower Street

“Everywhere the glint of gold: understanding objects in Tutankhamun’s tomb”

This study day precedes the opening of the London exhibition Tutankhamun: Treasures of the Golden Pharaoh. It will provide in depth analysis of some of the objects in the tomb, how they were made and the materials used, and the myth and meaning behind them. It will enhance your visit to the exhibition, and even if you don't plan to visit it will enhance your understanding of the enigma of the reign of Tutankhamun. The two speakers are leaders in their field and have lectured and published on material in the tomb.

Speakers: Lise Manniche and Olaf Kaper

Information and booking:

<https://www.ucl.ac.uk/FriendsofPetrie/pdfs/PMF-Tutankhamun-Study-Day-26102019.pdf>

EGYPT EXPLORATION SOCIETY STUDY DAY

Saturday 16th November 2019, 9.30am-3pm
Brunei Lecture Theatre, SOAS, University of London, WC1H 0XG

“Exchange: Egypt and Beyond”

Egypt is often presented in isolation, as a stable and almost stagnant cultural and geographic region. This study day considers Egypt in its wider context, as an interrelated and integral part of the Late Bronze Age Mediterranean world. Through investigating Egypt’s economy, foreign relations, and trade, our four experts will present Egypt in a different light and show that things are far more interesting when you consider the bigger picture.

Speakers: Stephanie Boonstra (EES), Prof Mahmoud Ezzamel (Cardiff University), Dr Valentina Gasperini (BM), Dr Carol Bell (British school at Athens/UCL)

Information and booking: <https://www.ees.ac.uk/Event/exchange-egypt-and-beyond>

The Essex Egyptology Group Committee

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

(chair@essexegyptology.co.uk)

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

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

Programme: Tilly Burton (programme@essexegyptology.co.uk)

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 newsletter@essexegyptology.co.uk

You can visit our web site at www.essexegyptology.co.uk

or join us on  Essex Egyptology Group uk