



INSCRIPTIONS

The Newsletter of the Friends of the Egypt Centre, Swansea

Issue 8

August 2001

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Friends AGM – IMPORTANT!!



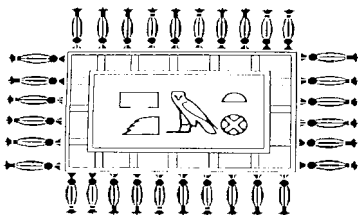
Don't forget that our Annual General Meeting will to take place on Wednesday 26 September at 7.30 p.m. in the Esso Theatre. Nominations for the posts of Chairman and Membership Secretary are needed. Written nominations, which must be seconded, should be addressed to the Egypt Centre and marked F.A.O. Vivienne Saunders, Secretary.

A morning excursion to Abu Simbel

At the end of a wonderful week cruising the Nile, we reached our final destination at Aswan and had a chance of an optional excursion to Abu Simbel and its famous temples. We were going by road, an option which, as I write, is no longer available. Our coachload of intrepid travellers set out at 4 a.m., yes *A.M.!*, complete with packed breakfast, purloined pillows and a military escort.

We crossed the Aswan dam to the West Bank and set out through the desert. We stopped at about 6 a.m. to eat and to admire the wonderful sunrise. Shortly afterwards we came across a camel train camped for the night, the camel were all hobbled, i.e. one front leg tied up to the knee, to prevent them from roaming very far. Soon after we stopped to look at a mirage, a perfect reflection of an oasis, probably many miles away, the date palms looked as if we could just walk across and sit in the shade.

We reached our destination on the shores of Lake Nasser at about 7.30 a.m. It was still relatively cool. Our escorts settled down for a few hours' sleep in the shade whilst we marvelled at the massive temples looming ahead of us. I'm not going to give you a complete history or architectural description - you can find that in any book - just my impressions and what stood out most in my mind.





The larger temple of Ramesses II, built in the 19th Dynasty, is the greatest of the seven rock cut temples constructed in Nubia. The four colossal seated statues of Ramesses flanking the entrance are about 70 ft high. There are smaller statues of his family – he is reputed to have had 92 sons – but these statues rise only to his knee.

We entered into the cool interior through a massive door. Inside we encountered a series of chambers, decreasing in size and height the deeper we went. Right at the rear, some 200 ft in, at the heart of the temple lies the sanctuary containing the statues from left to right of the gods Ptah, Amun, deified Ramesses and Re. Twice yearly the rising sun penetrates through to this sanctuary and illuminates these statues, but Ptah, one of the gods of creation, remains in partial darkness. The relocations of the temples was carefully orientated so that this phenomenon still occurs.

The smaller, but still impressive temple was built in honour of his Great Royal Wife Nefertari and of the mother goddess Hathor. There are six colossal standing figures, each about 33 ft high at the entrance, four of the king and two of his queen, along with smaller statues of the royal family. A much smaller interior contains just one large hall with a few small antechambers. Much of the decoration - pillars, statues and paintings - is in honour of Hathor.

When we emerged once more into the now hot sunshine, we were taken to a small, almost hidden doorway between the temples. This took us into a vast cavern with metalled staircases and walkways. It was an air-conditioned dome built over both

temples during the massive international rescue bid of the 1960s when these and other temples were moved to safer sites from the encroaching waters of Lake Nasser, formed by the building of the Aswan dam (a life-saver for Egypt but death for many temples now under the water – a sobering thought).



Abu Simbel – Ramesses II Temple

Our visit over, we returned to the coach, roused our escort and returned to our boat for a delicious lunch, followed by a relaxing afternoon on deck being served delicious cool drinks by handsome young men, and reflected on our excursion. Was the early rise worthwhile? Yes. Would I go again? Yes. Yes!!! Perhaps next time I'll cruise Lake Nasser and moor under the temple cliffs with a champagne, candle-lit dinner – now there's a thought!!!

Merlys Gavin



Abu Simbel - Nefertari's Temple





Editorial

Welcome to the eighth issue of our Newsletter. Once again, our thanks to those who have contributed the excellent articles in this issue. Let's have some more! Now that our younger readers are coming to the end of their long summer holidays, we hope to receive some games and puzzles for next time. So get puzzling!

Friends will note from the notice of AGM on the front page that our Chairman, Stuart Williams, and Membership Secretary, Wendy Goodridge, are standing down and that we need to elect two new officers. We wish to express our appreciation for the hard work and enthusiasm shown by Stuart and Wendy and wish them well in their well-earned "retirement" from committee officership! Please do your best to attend the AGM and the lecture to be given by Stuart and Wendy afterwards, which is sure to be very interesting.

Contributions to the next issue of *Inscriptions* will be gratefully received and should be sent to the Egypt Centre, marked for the attention of Mike MacDonagh.

A gentle reminder about copyright!

Please note that contributions should be either your own work or something that is in the public domain, such as material published on the internet or drawn from books that are more than 50 years old. We are not able to reproduce any extracts from other published material unless you first obtain the publisher's permission.

Mike Mac Donagh

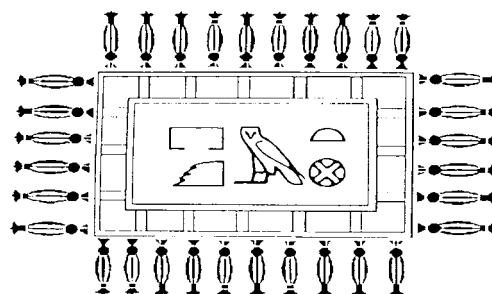
Rē^c-wer's Accident and a Royal Apology

The King of Upper and Lower Egypt Neferirkarē^c was apparent in glory as King of Lower Egypt on the day of taking the prow-rope of the god's boat. Lo! the *sm*-priest Rē^c-wer was at His Majesty's feet, in his dignity (office) of *sm*-priest and keeper of equipment, a royal staff, which was in His Majesty's hand, contended against the foot of the *sm*-priest Rē^c-wer. His Majesty said to him : 'Be sound !' – so did His Majesty say. Lo! His Majesty said 'My Majesty desires that that he be very sound, without a blow for him', because he was more precious to His Majesty than any man, His Majesty commanded that it be put in writing on his tomb which is in the necropolis. His Majesty caused a document to be made of it, (which was) written (inscribed) beside the king himself, at the stoneworks of Pharaoh, in order that it should be written in accordance with what was said, in his tomb that is in the necropolis.

Translation by M.P. Mac Donagh

The story is very simple in that it describes an incident in the course of a royal ritual. It seems that the king's staff tripped the *sm*-priest and he may have dropped whatever ritual implements he may have been holding. In any event, the disruption to the exact observation of the ritual (especially one involving the king) would have been seen as introducing an element of the forces of chaos to the event. The Egyptians would have regarded the event as very dangerous for both king and gods and as a result for themselves. The priest might have expected punishment both in life and after death. The king's action was designed to protect the priest in both life and the afterlife. The inscription is an excellent example of the royal duty, to be just towards and to protect the Egyptians, in action. The king as a god in his own right did not have to apologise so publicly to anybody but what we have here is an illustration of the principles of maat in action.

Mike Mac Donagh





Recipes from Egypt

A whole lot of interesting recipes can be found at <http://members.home.net/ahmedheissa/recipes.html>. Here is a small selection:

1. Sambusak- Turnovers with meat/cheese filling

Ingredients

Pastry

- 1 kg best quality flour
- ½ cup butter or oil
- 2 tablespoons baking powder
- Cooking oil

Filling

- Savory minced beef (see Lahma mu'assaga - Savory minced beef (1), and Lahma Mutassaga - minced beef (2)) recipes below)
- 2 hardboiled eggs
- Hard, salted cheese, grated
- Chopped parsley

Method

1. Sift flour, baking powder and salt and cut in the butter or mix with oil.
2. Add enough water to make pastry stiff
3. Knead thoroughly and allow to rise in a warm place for 1 hour.
4. Roll out thinly and cut into rounds about 10 cms in diameter.
5. Place filling on half of circle and fold other half on top, pressing down firmly with fingers.
6. Fry in oil. Alternatively, brush top of each turnover with melted butter and place on greased baking tin. Bake in preheated hot oven until crisp and golden.

2. Sambusak- Turnovers with spinach filling

Ingredients

Pastry

- 1 kg best-quality flour
- 1 tablespoon active dried yeast
- ½ Cup oil

Filling

- 1 kg spinach
- 2 onions
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- 2½ cups oil
- Salt

Method

1. Cream yeast in warm water and leave to bubble in a warm place.
2. Sift flour with salt, add yeast, ½ cup oil and enough water to give the dough a stiff consistency
3. Knead thoroughly and allow to rise in warm place for 1 hour
4. Rinse spinach leaves and drain thoroughly in colander, then chop finely.
5. Sprinkle with salt and rub, squeezing out the juice. Rinse and pat dry
6. Chop onion very fine, sprinkle with salt, rinse then add to spinach.
7. Stir in lemon juice and 2 cups oil and mix thoroughly
8. Roll out dough thinly and cut out in round shapes about 10 cm in diameter
9. Place a spoonful of spinach in the centre of each round, wet the edges with water and lift the pastry on three sides and press together to form a pyramid
10. Lightly brush with oil and bake in preheated moderate oven for 15 - 20 minutes, until crisp and golden.

3. Lahma mu'assaga - Savory minced beef (1)

Ingredients

- 1 kg beef - the best cuts for minced beef to use for kofta or stuffed vegetables are those marbled with fat. If unavailable, add fat to meat while mincing. The fat prevents the kofta from becoming dry and imparts a better flavour to the vegetables
- 2 onions, finely chopped
- Cooking oil
- Salt and pepper

Method

1. Mince the beef coarsely.
2. Brown the onions to a pale golden colour, then add beef and seasoning and cook until the juice is absorbed.

4. Lahma mu'assaga - Savory minced beef (2)

Ingredients

- 1 kg beef – (see left)
- 2 onions, finely chopped
- ½ teaspoon mixed spices
- ½ cup tomato juice
- Cooking oil
- Salt and pepper

Method

1. Mince the beef coarsely.
2. Cook meat, onion, mixed spices, and seasoning over a low flame, stirring often.
3. When the juice has been reabsorbed, add tomato juice and cook until the juices are completely reduced.
4. Add cooking oil and fry for 3-5 minutes.

Mike Mac Donagh





The Water of Life

Like most early peoples, the ancient Egyptians regarded all manifestations of nature with awe. But nothing could match the inundation of the Nile Valley each summer, when the swollen river spread fertile silt over the land. And in the autumn, the re-emergence of the land as the floodwaters subsided was nothing short of miraculous. For Egypt was then reborn and refreshed by the Nile's fertilizing waters.

Egypt, as the Greek historian Herodotus observed, was "the gift of the Nile," and inevitably the Egyptians regarded the river as an object of wonder and worship. The actual inundation, honoured by the name of Hapi, was worshipped as a god. In sculpture, Hapi was usually depicted as a bearded man, wearing the narrow belt of Nile boatmen and fishermen, and holding the riches provided by the fertilizing waters. But his pendulous female breasts and bulging stomach suggested that, above all, he was a fertility deity. His strength, the driving force of the flood, was thought to come from underground sources, namely a primordial ocean, called Nun. Hapi was worshipped in mid-June as the level of the Nile started to rise, but he was not part of any theological system.

However, he later became so intimately associated with Osiris, the Corn God, that he was called "the soul of Osiris". The Egyptians believed that Osiris died in early spring, when drought prevailed and harvesting started, only to be reborn in the autumn, when the flood subsided and planting began anew. Osiris represented the fertile properties of the Nile. He also personified the ruler of the world of the dead. As such he was one of the most important of all Egyptian deities, because he gave his devotees hope of eternal life.

The Foundation of Egypt

The world's longest river, the Nile, has two major sources, the White Nile and the Blue Nile. The White Nile flows from Lake Victoria, south of the equator in Uganda, northward for more than 4,000 miles (6,437 kilometers) to the Mediterranean Sea. Halfway along its journey, at Khartoum in Sudan, it is joined by the Blue Nile, which rises in Lake Tana, in Ethiopia, about 6,000 feet (1,830 meters) above sea level. The Blue Nile erodes and carries away vast amounts of sediment which have been deposited along the Nile Valley and in the Nile delta for thousands of years. This silt suspended in the water gives the Blue Nile its name. When it meets the White Nile, the river becomes milky-green, which is said to be the origin of the colour Nile Green. Summer rains in Ethiopia swell the Blue Nile, making it the chief source of floodwater in Sudan and Egypt. At the height of the flood in late August and early September, it provides three-quarters of the river's total volume. In May, when the drought is most severe, it accounts for less than one-fifth.

The behaviour of the Nile divided the Egyptian year into three seasons and so gave rise to the first practicable calendar. New Year began when the star Sirius first appeared at dawn on the eastern horizon. This occurrence coincided approximately with the beginning of the flood in mid-June. By the end of July, muddy silt started to arrive in lower Egypt. The water was green at first, but it later took on a reddish tinge, associated with the blood of the dying god Osiris, from whom new life would spring. As the waters continued to rise, the dikes were breached and water spread over the Nile Valley to a depth of three to six feet (0.9 to 1.8 meters).

By mid-September, the Nile Valley was a broad shallow river flowing through the desert. Villages located on the higher ground stood out like islands. By early October, the river level had fallen, but water was trapped in large man-made basins. By late November to early December, the silt dried out but was moist enough for ploughing and planting. As time passed, grains germinated and soon the valley was verdant, while the river continued to dwindle.

By mid-February, the drought was absolute. In March or April, the peasants began to harvest the crops. By the end of May, the Nile had shrunk to a narrow river composed largely of water from the White Nile. The valley turned brown and the Egyptians awaited signs of the next flood, so that the cycle could start again.

Mick Bardell

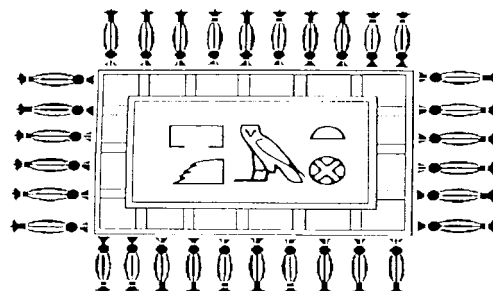
Bibliography

Ancient Egypt by Barbara Watterson

Lives of The Pharaohs by Pierre Montet

Exploring the World of the Pharaohs by Christine Hobson

The Blue Nile and the White Nile by A Moorehead





The Centre's Programme for School Visits: A Personal View

From the moment that primary school groups arrive for a visit to the Egypt Centre excitement is bubbling. It is immediately apparent that there is an abundance of interest and enthusiasm for what lies ahead in the activities of the day, matched, at times, with a measure of trepidation when the children glimpse the darkened galleries! But overall they cannot wait to get in there and discover their contents.

The experience that follows for them is a reflection of a major goal of the Centre's official mission to the public - to awaken children's interest in the wonder of ancient Egypt and contribute to their education in the subject.

From its very beginnings the Egypt Centre welcomed children's visits to the galleries and has always regarded the educational dimension of its work a vital element of its *raison d'etre*. Links were early established with schools across a wide area of South Wales and a fruitful, enjoyable relationship has been maintained ever since. The provision for schools has evolved steadily marked by a 'trial and error' approach to develop a package of activities designed to appeal to children and feed their curiosity and enthusiasm for exploring the world of ancient Egypt. The result is that now the Centre has its hands full in catering for the demand!

Sessions are carefully structured to offer schools a wide choice of topics from which to select, the menu designed so that permutations of topics are available to cater for a range of interest. A balance of approach is built in, which ensures that every child has experience of both the House of Life and the House of Death. Thus we have combinations of such topics as Clothes, Mathematics and Measuring, Writing, Exploring Egypt, Senet game, and Egyptian materials partnered by a selection from Mummification, Animals and Gods, Weighing of the Heart, Ba-bird, Food and Drink Offerings and Servants in Heaven.

Programmes are decided in consultation with schools which are provided with samples of pupil work-sheets in advance. Teachers can therefore opt for those topics which will fit in with and support their own schemes of work. Usually, when groups arrive for their visit, a measure of preparatory study has taken place; children's experience is then consolidated and extended.

The face-to-face teaching of the programme is directed by an activity leader, a Volunteer, who is

supported by a small team of other Volunteer colleagues. The tone of the sessions is relaxed with everyone dedicated to ensuring that all the pupils are comfortable in carrying out the variety of tasks in the particular programme and that individuals are given help as necessary. Emphasis throughout is on child involvement finding things, experiencing at first hand, and feeling free to ask questions. The learning atmosphere is suffused with the attitude that learning is fun and invariably it is the case that children readily enter into the spirit of the activities and engage with interest and pleasure. As has been noted, often the children bring a fair knowledge of topics with them and they are keen to deepen and extend this knowledge by acquaintance with the range of artefacts and visual/aural information around them.

The feedback which the Centre receives from these visits can be very rewarding: as well as letters of thanks, examples of projects come in from the schools which show the high standard of study that is carried out into a wide range of aspects of ancient Egyptian life. Models of mummies and statues arrive, not to mention stunning life-size paintings and collage scenes of hunting expeditions on the Nile and a host of other topics. These, of course, are mounted for display and decorate the corridors surrounding the upper gallery.

These sessions at the Centre bring home to me what a splendid medium the study of ancient Egypt is as a contributor to broad educational goals at primary level. It holds natural fascination for children and provides a framework which is virtually fail-proof in the development of important conceptual insights across such fundamental curriculum areas as history, geography, religious education and creative art for example - not to mention basic literacy and numeracy skills. The breadth of content embraces a spread of topics which can be taken up and enjoyed as interesting in their own right but also, when drawn together into a natural whole, provide a coherent model of a living society that speaks directly to us today and helps us become more aware of the strands of human activity that make up our own culture and life-stance.

To take the viewpoint of history in the curriculum as an illustration: an important objective in teaching this subject in schools is the promotion of a meaningful sense of "times past". Children are encouraged to seek to empathise with the 'real' lives of others living in distant ages. The world of ancient Egypt readily 'comes alive' to children and this transportation back in time appears to happen effortlessly.

For example, acquaintance with the life of an Egyptian school-boy learning to write hieroglyphs - perhaps with the aim of becoming a scribe - immediately catches our interest today. Discovering facts about how papyrus was made, how reed pens and





inks were produced - especially when accompanied by hands-on experience using replica pens and other such implements - brings to life the ordinary, real-life comings and goings of the past. Perhaps the appeal of studying Egypt lies in the simple fact that enormous scope exists for exploring such 'every day' events. So much evidence lies to hand in the material from tomb and wall paintings, for instance, that we feel we can truly visit the lives of children, women in the home, workers in the field, craftsmen, traders, artists, soldiers and many others.

It is these unremarkable 'basics' of another age that we can identify with and which, in turn, bring home glimpses of the essential nature of the human condition that we share with those who lived thousands of years before us.

Juxtaposed with all of this, of course, is the wonder engendered by the magnificence of the pharaohs - the grandeur of the pyramids and great temples for example - which conveys the awe-inspiring impression of ancient Egypt which is universally recognised.

A characteristic feature of Egyptian belief and culture which children always find absorbing is the view about life after death. Mummification is top of the pupils' interest list when they visit the galleries and the hands-on experience of preparing the dummy for this - especially the removal of the entrails! - is immensely popular. The ritual which accompanies the mummification and burial process, the weighing of the heart and the preparation of the tomb with decoration and objects for the after-life fascinate young children. In educational terms, exploration of the Egyptian after-life, seen as a natural condition inextricably associated with this life, is a valuable way in to the broader consideration of the important concept of death. This is particularly relevant since this whole topic generally is shied away from in contemporary society and never formally appears in any curriculum content. Without having to enter the complex realms of Egyptian theology and world-view, children's conceptual awareness can respond to the essence of Egyptian thought. To appreciate just something of their belief about the relationship of this life, the after-life and the nature of the world is an important imaginative experience which will surely feed the developing insights of children into this significant dimension of the human condition.

I hope this brief survey of the potential which the study of ancient Egypt holds for children has said enough to demonstrate its intrinsic value as an educational tool. However, perhaps the greatest and most lasting attraction of the subject - and the element which the centre itself regards as the heart of its educational outreach - is sharing with children the sheer fascination which Egyptian civilization commands in

all of us. The awe and wonder evoked by the subject is totally compelling and affects young and old alike. If we can infect children with the bug at an early stage, they will joyfully carry the condition with them all through their lives.

David Burch
(Volunteer)

What's On at the Egypt Centre

2001

26 th September Esso Theatre 7.30	<i>AGM and Lecture: Egypt III Pharaoh's Revenge</i> Stuart Williams, Wendy Goodridge
17 th October Esso Theatre 7.30	<i>The Art of Dying in Roman Egypt</i> Christina Riggs
14 th November Esso Theatre 7.30	<i>Ancient Egyptian Tomb Models</i> Martin Davies
5 th December Esso Theatre 7.30	<i>Art in the Ramesside Period</i> Peter Reason

2002

9 th January Esso Theatre 7.30	<i>Sir Gardiner Wilkinson, First Egyptologist</i> Ian Shaw
27 th February Esso Theatre 7.30	<i>An (Un)natural History: the Seth Animal in Ancient Egypt</i> Angela MacDonald
17 th March	Trip to Liverpool Museum
20 th March Esso Theatre 7.30	<i>Horus Behedeti and His Holy Spears</i> Susanne Woodhouse
17 th April Callaghan Theatre 7.30	<i>The God's Wives of Amun</i> Robert Morkot
15 th May Esso Theatre 7.30	<i>Howard Carter and the Tomb of Tutankhamun</i> Harry James
12 th June Callaghan Theatre	<i>Dreams and Nightmares</i> Kasia Szapakowska Social evening





A 'Wallow' in the Realms of the Blue Hippopotamus¹

Transport yourself, if you will, to Kipling's land of 'the great grey-green, greasy Limpopo River'. Do you recall how the Elephant's Child received a spanking from his broad red-eyed aunt, the hippopotamus, as he set out on his long journey to the river bank, to satisfy his "satiabile curiosity"?² The elephant's child was extremely fortunate to escape from his aunt with no more than a few bruises: humans have not always come off so lightly in their hippo-encounters. Both Livingstone and Stanley had hippopotamus-induced 'boating mishaps'.³ Only last year, 'herds of hippopotami' were 'rampaging' and 'spreading terror' among farmers and fishermen along the Niger.⁴ We may actually feel inclined to excuse the hippos' aggression, if-like Eliot - we believe that these four ton animals are 'susceptible to nervous shock'⁵

In antiquity, people worshipped that which inspired 'fear', and although the ancient Egyptians revered the hippopotamus, they continued to hunt it for its valuable tusks, meat and hide.⁶ Numerous hippo models have survived from prehistoric Egypt, which suggests that the animal was prevalent in large numbers. Kipling's hippopotamus boasted red eyes - but the Ashmolean Museum owns an early, Pre-dynastic pottery model hippo that is red all over, for it is made of coarse red ware. This hippo was found in grave 134 at Hiw. It dates from c.3500-3000 BC, and was given by the Egypt Exploration Society. This small-headed, open-mouthed hippopotamus seems to the modern eye, to have a disproportionately large body.

By the time of the Twelfth and Thirteenth Dynasties (c.1991-1633 BC), at a time roughly contemporary with the foundation of the earliest palace at Knossos on Crete, we find not only that there were modelled hippos in Egypt with much more 'normal' statistics in terms of head-to-body ratio, but also that some hippos at least were blue! Of all these remaining Middle Kingdom ones, the hippopotamus affectionately referred to as 'William' in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York is surely the most famous. During this period, the economic climate, arising out of a stable administration, resulted in exceptionally rich private burials. 'William', made of Egyptian faience, had adorned tomb B.3 belonging to the Steward Senbi II at Meir. His 'duty' was to protect the dead steward from evil forces. However, since it was believed that fierce animals roamed the waterways leading to the afterlife, three of the four legs had been broken to ensure that this hippopotamus was incapable of attack. These have now been restored.

'William' was the gift of Edward S. Harkness in 1917. The hippopotamus received his nick-name as a result of an article that was published in 'Punch' in 1931, by an Englishman, Captain H.M. Raleigh, who owned a colour print of the modelled hippo.⁷ Apparently, the Raleigh family began to feel that the pachyderm in the print changed its expression according to whether or not it approved of the current family plans! The faience 'William' is one of the largest Middle

Kingdom hippos of his kind: he is marked with the four thousand year old fingerprints of his maker.

Egyptian faience is not in fact a clay, but rather 'a ceramic, consisting almost entirely of quartz' from which glass is made.⁸ The word 'faience' is taken from Faenza in northern Italy, where a tin-glazed earthenware was produced from late Medieval times.⁹ The first known pieces of 'Egyptian faience', however, date from c.3500 BC. The glaze on items like 'William' is a kind of turquoise colour, which results from a mixture of ground quartz and a little copper. Water and lime would have been added, to complete the fast-drying faience paste. Blue signified the colour of water - both in the Nile and in the world of the gods. Green stood for the rich plant-life of papyrus and lotus leaves, which took root along the river, and symbolised regeneration.

'William' is one of several remaining Middle Kingdom faience hippos: he is, in fact, one of a pair found in the shaft linked to the tomb chapel at Meir. Closer to home, a near contemporary hippo can be viewed in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge. It is decorated with blue lotus flowers along the hippo's contours, and curling lotus stems around the nostrils. Further examples of faience hippos in varying shades of blue and green, can be found in the British Museum, the Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts at UEA, the Louvre (E5886), the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna (AOS inv. no.4211), the Cairo Museum and the Brooklyn Museum of Art.



Nose to tail: Caroline and David Gill 'promoting' the blue hippo in the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna.

The Brooklyn Museum has recently played host to the 'Guennol Collection', which comprises an aesthetic exhibition of diverse objects, amassed over the last fifty years by the well-known former museum board chairman and American collector, Alastair Bradley Martin.¹⁰ The collection owes its name to the Welsh word that can be aligned with 'swallow' or 'martin': 'gwennol' - and was chosen to commemorate Alastair's honeymoon in Wales. 'An enchanting fairy-tale mood' is said to emanate from the juxtaposition of Martin's animal objects: 'Gertrude', a tall mid-nineteenth century giraffe from a carousel, graces the way that leads to a powerful Sumerian stone bull and his unlikely companion, our friend, a lotus-covered blue faience hippopotamus! Exhibitions like this can be 'fun' - but warning bells soon begin to sound in the archaeologist's ear, when the 'tyranny of chronology-cum-geography' is totally cast to the winds.





In our brief survey of modelled Egyptian hippos, we began with one from the Predynastic period, before moving forward in time to the blue hippos of the Middle Kingdom. According to B.V. Bothmer, only one crude hippo statuette - in pottery - has been reported from the New Kingdom period, and again, only one - this time of limestone and in Avignon - is known from the Late Period.¹¹ Back in the early Predynastic era, during the Naqada I period, the hippopotamus appears to have been the most frequently represented animal. We have already noted the respectful relationship that the Egyptians fostered with the dangerous hippo, and it is now time to consider the creature's place in the scheme of Egyptian religion.

The hippopotamus was sometimes linked to the god, Seth whose power to cause storms of chaos and destruction is well documented.¹² Depictions of Seth show an animal's head with a long nose and small hippo-like ears. The Egyptologist, Sir A.E. Wallis Budge was of the opinion, however, that the real animal represented by Seth, had been so dangerous that the early inhabitants of the Nile Valley had hunted it to the point of extinction. One mythical account claims that the violent Seth murdered Osiris, the king-deity, in order to usurp the throne. Needless to say, Horus - the god shown in the form of a falcon - intervened and claimed the crown. A carving on the walls of the temple dedicated to Horus in Edfu appears to illustrate the outcome of this episode.¹³

The minor goddess, Taweret, was goddess of childbirth - and was depicted as a pregnant hippopotamus, with the hind legs of a lioness and the tail of a crocodile. Several faience amulets of her in this form can be seen in the Egypt Centre, Swansea. She was usually shown in a standing position, leaning on a rolled papyrus plait with protective properties. The cities of Thebes and Deir el-Bahari both boasted temples in her honour.

As we prepare to withdraw from 'river-horse territory', we can begin to appreciate the ambivalent nature of the place occupied by the hippopotamus in the ancient Egyptian world. The hippo had, in its various manifestations, attributes that were both cruel and kind. In real life, smell and taste are the supreme senses for the hippopotamus when it comes to 'social interaction'.¹⁴ In ancient Egypt, physical features could bear symbolic significance, and by the Twenty-Sixth dynasty, Seth was depicted with red eyes - the Egyptians' colour for evil. Sight was a highly valued sense, and Horus for instance, had as his eyes, the sun and the moon.

Modern science has taught us much about the nature of the solar system, and during the first total solar eclipse of our own century, astronomer Paul Murdin spent time observing a flotilla of hippos on the Zambeze.¹⁵ The docile-looking, nocturnal hippos appeared confused by the sudden demise of their perceived onset of night-time. The headline ran: 'Why did hippos miss breakfast?' Despite the supposed benevolence of Taweret, I doubt many ancient Egyptians would have waited long enough to find out!

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Endnotes

1. After the 'The Hippopotamus Song', recorded by Flanders & Swan on 'At the Drop of a Hat' (Parlophone 1960).
2. R. Kipling, 'Just So Stories' (Macmillan 1952), 60.
3. G.W. Frame, & L. Herbison Frame, 'The Dangerous Hippo', *Science Digest* 76 (Nov 1974), 80-86.
4. 'Hippos on rampage down Niger', *The Namibian* (17 Oct 2000).
5. T.S. Eliot, 'Hippopotamus'
6. B.V. Bothmer, 'A Predynastic Egyptian Hippopotamus', *Bulletin of the Museum of Fine Arts* 46, no. 263, (Oct 1948), 64-69 & O. Krzyszkowska, *Ivory & Related Materials (Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies, suppl. 59; 1990), 20-22 & 38-47.*
7. Accessed from 'Sculpture in the Online Met Store': <http://www.metmuseum.org/collections/view1.asp?dep=10&full=0&item=17%2E9%2E1>
8. Florence Dunn Friedman, 'Egyptian Faience', *Antiques* (Sept 1998).
9. Paul T. Nicholson, *Egyptian Faience & Glass* (Shire Egyptology 1993).
10. Souren Melikian, 'For the Sake of Beauty - Collector's Passion: A Harmony Within', *International Herald Tribune* (2000), at <http://www.iht.com/IHT/ART/00/sm040800.html>.
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12. Egyptian Book of the Dead, Chapter 39.
13. <http://members.aol.com/HippoPage/hppegypt.htm>
14. Martha Holmes, 'The Whole Hippo', *BBC Wildlife Magazine* 14 (4 Apr 1996), 26-30.
15. P. Murdin, 'Why did Hippos miss Breakfast?', *THES* no. 1496 (20 July 2001), 22.

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