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# Volunteer Newsletter

Issue 27  
Apr-Jun 2024

## Museum of Egyptian Antiquities



### Here Comes The Sun

The solar symbolism of the humble baboon.



### Austerlitz

Pyramids go Dutch.



### Never Budged

Practical cats at the British Museum.

[egypt.swan.ac.uk](http://egypt.swan.ac.uk)



# Welcome



**Syd  
Howells**

Editor in  
Chief



**Dulcie Engel**  
Associate Editor

A former French and linguistics lecturer, I have volunteered at the Egypt Centre since April 2014. I am a gallery supervisor in both galleries, and author of the Egyptian Writing Trails. Apart from language, I am particularly interested in the history of collecting. I won the 2016 Volunteer of the Year award.

Hello,

Welcome to the April-June 2024 edition of the Egypt Centre Volunteer Newsletter. It has been great to see this issue that the contributions have flown in. As ever a diverse range of articles and features from gardens to the colour blue to **Ankhsenamun** (and a cat-related article: Approved!) as well as the opportunity to meet some of our latest volunteers (and our new Learning & Engagement Co-ordinator!)

Thank you to all those who contributed this issue, thank you to the Newsletter Team, and thank you to all the wonderful volunteers who continue to sail on the unique celestial solar barque that is the Egypt Centre.

**SYD**



**Rob Stradling**  
Technical Editor

A volunteer since 2012, currently serving my time off-site by producing this eagerly-awaited periodical.

Someone would have to do it even if it was a dirty job, which thankfully it isn't. Well, maybe a few stray biscuit crumbs...



If you would like to contribute to the newsletter or submit articles for consideration please contact:  
**[dulcie.engel@icloud.com](mailto:dulcie.engel@icloud.com)**

The Newsletter will be published every three months - Next issue due **Sept 2024.**







We now have results from the **Wellbeing Umbrellas Survey**, highlighted in the last issue. 54 visitors completed the survey. There was an even increase in all wellbeing areas, with the largest improvement in 'inspired', at 39%. As a collective average, visitors' wellbeing improved by 32%. Furthermore, the project is being expanded to volunteers, with the umbrella toolkit being used with new volunteers.



Terracotta figurines in Votive Offerings case (photo: Dulcie Engel)

If you have been on campus recently, you will have spotted the **new mural** outside the main library, featuring two nods to the EC: **Nefertiti**, and an ancestor stela from the collection, **AB129** (on show in the Domestic Piety case, HoD). The murals were painted by Swansea mural artist **Hassan Kamil**.



Mural by Hassan Kamil (photo: Dulcie Engel)

An audit of our new play provision (for details see last issue's Office News) has led to a new system of labelling as illustrated...

And the stairs have had a great revamp by Luke, based on hieroglyphs.



(photo: Dulcie Engel)



(photo: Dulcie Engel)



Totally Chaotic history trail (photo: Dulcie Engel)

In conjunction with **Kids in Museums**, from Saturday 24th March to Saturday 14th April, we participated in the *Totally Chaotic History Museum Trail*. Materials included the trails (in Welsh and English), stickers, posters and an accompanying book.

The Easter holidays were busy, with two **children's workshops**: Ancient Egyptian Combat and Egyptian Market Day.



Phil & Donna at the market (photo: Lloyd Griffiths)

On May 17<sup>th</sup>, a special exhibition was launched in the HoL, curated by MA students taking module CL-M77 *'Reaching the Public: Museums and Object Handling'*. Six students presented their chosen themes with a display in the special exhibitions case: *Fertility, Humanity, Divinity; Beauty and Grooming Equipment; The Cultural Importance of Copper in Ancient Egypt as Represented by Religious Copper Amulets; Changes in Predynastic Pottery; Scribes and Scribal Works; The Significance of Felines in Ancient Egyptian Society; From the Domestic to the Divine*. The display will remain on show over the summer. It includes various items from the Harrogate Loan, and other items usually in storage.

A limestone ostrakon, **HARGM10823**, is the first object from the **Harrogate Loan** (currently in the EC) to be published. It is written by **Rob Demaree** of *Leiden University*, and entitled *'Fresh goose fat to cure a nightmare?'* (BSEG 34 (2024), pp. 5-14).

Other Harrogate loans have been added to the Votive Offerings case in the HoL: terracotta figurines of gods and goddesses, including **Harpocrates** (a god of the Ptolemaic era based on **Horus**) and **Isis-Thermouthis** (a composite goddess of the Late Period, combining Isis and the cobra goddess **Renenetet**).



Reaching The Public display (photo: Dulcie Engel)





# Historical Sayings



Donna, Your Honour  
(photo: Dulcie Engel)

Congratulations to Education Leader **Donna**, who has just started her year as consort to the Mayor of Pembrey and Burry Port. She brought in her regalia to show us.

We now have a splendid new donations box in the gift shop, which takes contactless card donations as well as cash.



New donations box  
(photo: Dulcie Engel)

I shall be taking a break from my story for this issue of the Volunteer Newsletter in order to research a bit more on the 'Goth' scene. Instead, I shall share a selection of anecdotes and sayings from history which I like and enjoy.

Let us kick off with 19<sup>th</sup> Century Prime Minister, **Benjamin Disraeli**\* (1804-1881) who said: *"There are three types of lies. Lies, damned lies and statistics."*



*"It's not that I'm afraid to die. I just don't want to be there when it happens"*

– Woody Allen (1935-?)

*"A robin red breast in a cage. Puts all heaven in a rage"*

– William Blake (1757-1827)

*"In the country of the blind the one-eyed man is king"*

– Desiderius Erasmus (1466-1536)

*"It is necessary only for the good man to do nothing, for evil to triumph"*

– Edmund Burke\*\* (1729-1797)

*"To err is human, but to really foul things up requires a computer"*

– Farmers Almanac, 1978.

The **Sudan Archaeology Research Society** annual W. Y. Adams colloquium, entitled *'Sudan: Past and Present'*, was held in the EC (in person and via **Zoom**) on May 25th. It included a handling session of some of the museum's Sudanese collection.

The May half-term workshop was on the theme of 'Explorers of Ancient Egypt'.



(photo: Dulcie Engel)

Written by: Frank Norton

\*This quote is variously attributed to several people, including Disraeli, Mark Twain etc (ed.)

\*\*This quote as it reads is erroneously attributed to Edmund Burke. Variations on the theme have been attributed to Burke, John Stuart Mill etc. but not the actual quote (ed.)



# Gardens

## in ancient Egypt

In a recent edition of this newsletter (April-June 2023), I wrote about the botanical reliefs commissioned by **Thutmose III at Karnak**:

*'Thutmose decorated the walls of the Akhmenu (festival hall), in the eastern part of the Temple of Amun-Re in Karnak, with depictions of the plants and animals he acquired on his expeditions. Indeed, part of the sanctuary is known as the Botanical Garden of Thutmose III'* (Engel 2023)

But there is much more:

At **Amarna**, in the North Palace, the colonnaded north-east court contained a central garden watered by a duct from a central pool. It could be viewed from a platform in the state apartments. The courtyard is very well-preserved, including the wall paintings. They depict a variety of plants, and a water bank scene filled with wild fowl (see Weatherhead 2007:146-196). Indeed, the Amarna palaces and pavements were highly decorated with botanic themes.

The Egyptian garden always included three vital elements: a surrounding wall or hedge, plants and water, the source of life (Chivers 2023: 329).

In one corner of the fragment, the fruits of the sycamore fig are being collected by **Nut**, the sycamore goddess. She is offering them to Nebamun and his wife, welcoming them into the garden for eternity (Parkinson 2008: 136). This fragment is in the British Museum (A, museum no. EA 37983).



Also in the British Museum, the Book of the Dead of the royal scribe **Nakht** (18th dynasty) features a garden (museum no. EA10471, 21). In this scene (frame 21), Nakht and his wife are adoring **Osiris** and **Maat** in their garden outside their house. It is to be noted that the illustration has a symbolic value: the water in the pool represents rebirth and resurrection (British Museum B; see also Thomas-Melling 2023: 56).

Plants also had symbolic value:

*'the date palm was associated with the sun god Re, and the dom palm was associated with the moon god Thoth. Both stood for rebirth and nourishment. The lotus flower was linked to the myth of creation: the sun god Re emerged from a lotus flower in the primeval waters, thus the lotus was a symbol of rebirth and fertility'* (Servat-Fredericq).



The fragment of the tomb painting of the garden of **Nebamun** at **Thebes** (1350 BCE) shows a rectangular pool filled with fish, fowl and lotus flowers, and surrounded by papyrus, mandrakes, flowers such as poppies, mayweed and cornflowers, date palms, dom palms, and sycamore figs\* (Parkinson 2008: 132-137; Thomas-Melling 2016: 58). Parkinson also notes (2008: 134-5):

*'...no two trees of the same sort are placed side by side, and the artist has created a sense of rich variety in this symmetrical composition.'*





In Southern **Asasif**, Thebes, inside the tomb of **Meketre** (c. 1981-75 BCE), royal chief steward in the 11th and 12th dynasties, a model garden was found in 1920 by American archaeologist **Herbert Winlock**. It was in a hidden chamber containing 24 models. There were in fact two models of the garden, or residence (as referred to by Winlock), one of which is in **Cairo**, the other in the *Met* (see Tooley 1995: 57-58; Winlock 1950:17-19). The model garden is enclosed by walls, has a colonnaded porch, a pool lined with copper, and sycamore fig trees complete with red fruit (Chivers 2023: 29). The roof of the porch is supported by columns made of palm trees split into halves, with capitals representing papyrus stalks on the rear columns, and lotus bundles on the front columns (Metropolitan Museum).

Like the representations in tomb paintings and papyrus vignettes, the model garden served an important religious function:

*'a place of spiritual significance, as a 'microcosm of the universe', that also grows produce and provisions for the enjoyment of the deceased and allows the practice of religious rituals. The placement of these gardens in a tomb provides the deceased with these resources for eternity'*(Davies 2020: Abstract)

Of course, there were also real gardens with a more practical purpose.

As pointed out by Servat-Fredericq, despite the expense in building and maintaining a garden, they were popular not just in wealthy households, but also in the grounds of palaces, temples and tombs. Trees, vegetables, fruiting plants and flowers would feature (there is an extensive list on [Gardenvisit.com](http://Gardenvisit.com), and in Brewer et al 1994, Davies 2020, Hepper 1990).

Trees were essential to provide shade and coolness in the hot climate, as well as their fruit. Fruits and seeds were often left in tombs as funerary offerings (see Hepper 1990). We have examples in the HoD offerings case. Fruits, seeds and flowers were represented artistically, as amulets, jewellery, wall decorations, tiles and bowls (see Egypt Centre). In the HoL the jewellery, plants, pottery, faience and Amarna cases have many examples:



Plants in HoL  
(photos: Dulcie Engel)

*Centre:* Faience daisy wall inlays **W500**. *Clockwise from centre left:* Wooden lotus flower **EC711**; Detail of Amarna beaded collar with poppy head amulets & rosette beads **W9**; Faience model column capital with leaf design **EC271**; Amarna wall plaster fragments **W797** & **798**; Faience lotus pendant **WK39**; Faience lotus bowl **W424**.

*sandals, candle wicks and writing materials'* (Servat-Fredericq).

Romantic poetry also evoked gardens (see [Gardenvisit.com](http://Gardenvisit.com), Servat-Fredericq):

*"The little sycamore that she herself planted opens its mouth to speak.  
The words coming forth from its mouth overflow with honey.  
It is perfect, its branches beautiful, blooming and strong,  
Laden with ripe and unripe figs that are redder than jasper.  
Its leaves like turquoise, with the gleam of glass."*

(Papyrus Turin 1996, Museo Egizio, Turin. Quoted in Allon & Patch 2015-16)

*"Oh! fair are the flowers, my beloved, and fairest of any I wait.  
A garden art thou, all fragrant and dear, thy heart, o mine own, is the gate.  
The canal of my love I have fashioned, and through thee,  
my garden, it flows.  
Dip in its waters refreshing and sweet, when cool from the  
north the wind blows."*

(*'The Garden of Love'*: Quoted in Mackenzie 1907)

Written by: Dulcie Engel

\*The alternative spelling *sycomore* is often used when referring to this member of the fig tree family (ficus sycomorus), commonly depicted in Ancient Egyptian art, in order to distinguish it from the sycamore tree (acer pseudoplatanus), a member of the maple tree family found widely in Europe.

Many thanks to fellow volunteer **Nick Mascall** for alerting me to Winlock's original report, and to the wealth of Amarna material.

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Plants grown in gardens also provided material for:

*'...ornamental bouquets, garlands, collars, cosmetics, perfumes, medicinal remedies, building materials, and various everyday objects such as baskets, ropes, mats,*



# Meet the Volunteer



**Egypt Centre Volunteer**  
*Anita Kumari*

**I come from:** Delhi, India.

**I started volunteering:** Feb 2024.

**I chose to volunteer because:** I have a passion for education and a deep interest in Egyptian history & culture.

**My Favourite artefact is:** The ancient Egyptian necklace, due to its historical significance and intricate craftsmanship.

**How volunteering at the Egypt Centre helps me:** It has helped me develop strong communication skills, gain a deeper understanding of educational practices, and enhance my ability to engage and educate diverse groups of students.



**Young Volunteer**  
*Matilda*

**I come from:** Swansea.

**I started volunteering:** March 2024.

**I chose to volunteer because:** I have an interest in history and wanted to learn more about the ancient Egyptians.

**My Favourite artefact is:** The faience shabtis.

**How volunteering at the Egypt Centre helps me:** I learn about how the ancient Egyptians lived, and the artefacts they used.







## **Egypt Centre Volunteer** *Cameron Westwood*

**I come from:** Birmingham originally - Swansea is my home now.

**I started volunteering:** Feb 2024.

**I chose to volunteer because:** It was part of my course, but I love it here and I want to carry on. In 3 months, I went from not knowing too much about ancient Egypt, to becoming obsessed with its history.

**My Favourite artefact is:** I would love to say "everything". Every item here is equally awesome!

**How volunteering at the Egypt Centre helps me:** To build confidence, boost my knowledge, help others. It has helped me to do my dream job; being around history has always been my dream.



## **Young Volunteer** *Sam*

**I come from:** Swansea.

**I started volunteering:** April 2024.

**I chose to volunteer because:** ...of how much I loved it when I came here with my school.

**My Favourite artefact is:** The piercing tool (**W723** in the writing case).

**How volunteering at the Egypt Centre helps me:** It has increased my confidence and helped me to make more friends.



# The Egyptologist



# & The British Museum Cat

I recently came across the story of the cats which lived in the *British Museum* in the early 20th century, and helped control rodents (Debczak 2024). In particular, one cat had a close link to the well-known Egyptologist and (from 1894 to 1924) Keeper of Egyptian Antiquities at the British Museum, **E.A. Wallis Budge** (1857-1934).

One day in 1908, an established museum cat, **Black Jack**, deposited a kitten at Budge's feet. This kitten was named **Mike**, who lived for about 20 years at the main gate. Following his demise in 1929, Budge wrote a tribute to Mike in the form of a pamphlet. It is a charming piece, in which Budge describes himself as the 'Keeper of the Egyptian cat mummies' and 'The Keeper of the mummied cats.' Mike divided his time between Budge's residence and the main gate of the BM. He stalked pigeons, chased away dogs and avoided being stroked. In a letter to the *Evening Standard* in January 1929, reproduced in the pamphlet, Budge says that Mike:

*'attached himself to the Keeper of Egyptian Antiquities because of the care which that official bestowed on the mummies of Egyptian cats.'*

A fellow museum worker, **F.C.W. Hiley**, wrote a poem in his memory (also in the pamphlet), which contains some wonderful lines, such as:

*'No Sphinx or Sekhmet looked more stately'*

And

*'Old Mike! Farewell! We all regret you,  
Although you would not let us pet you:  
Of cats the wisest, oldest, best cat,  
This be your motto-Requiescat!'*



W529 Cartonnage cat mask (Abaset)

Written by: Dulcie Engel

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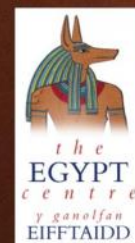


# Wanted: Gift Shop Volunteers

To help run  
the Egypt Centre  
shop

Help out  
at Wales's  
only  
Egyptological  
Museum

For further details  
contact Syd Howells  
Museum Volunteer Manager  
[l.s.j.howells@swansea.ac.uk](mailto:l.s.j.howells@swansea.ac.uk)









restored to the deceased in the afterlife, and therefore be reborn. The lungs, liver, intestines, and stomach were preserved during mummification and in the New Kingdom, these were placed into four canopic jars with the heads of the Four Sons of **Horus** (baboon, human, falcon and jackal). As time went on, the mummified organs would be placed back inside the body. Sometimes 'dummy jars' formed part of the burial equipment instead, so that the deceased could still receive the protection of the Four Sons of Horus.

During the New Kingdom (c. 1550-1069 BC), monkeys were generally imported from south of Egypt (from **Nubia** and **Punt**), to be used in temples. They probably experienced a limited life expectancy due to their poor living conditions in the harsh desert environment, including insufficient food intake and a lack of movement and light. In later periods, sacred temple baboons were kept for ritual functions, mummified by the thousands, and buried in coffins.

The Baboon Catacomb at North **Saqqara** occupies two levels, the Upper Galleries (+400-200 BC) with 200 and the Lower Gallery (+200-30 BC) with 237 niches. Fewer baboons are buried in the lower Gallery compared with the Upper Gallery. Baboons were mummified in a squatting position and were placed inside rectangular wooden shrines. Into these shrines, gypsum plaster was poured and the mummy was encased in a block, and sealed with limestone slabs, inscribed with a short biography of the animal including the name, place of birth, date of death and prayers.

Regards from the Baboons of Ancient Egypt !

Written by: Donna Thomas

# The Pyramid of Austerlitz



The Pyramid of Austerlitz in December 2008, shortly before the end of its restoration (Wikimedia Commons)

While reading a novel set in the First World War recently, I heard for the first time about the [pyramid](#) of **Austerlitz** (which is visited by characters in the novel). You may have heard of the Battle of Austerlitz in 1805, in which **Napoleon** defeated the Russians and Austrians. Or you may know of the **Paris** metro/railway station named after it.

Austerlitz is situated near **Utrecht** in the **Netherlands**, and during the Napoleonic Wars, it was the site of a French army camp. In 1804, **General Marmont** got his soldiers to build the pyramid. It is a 36-metre-high mound of earth and turf, and was topped by a 13-metre wooden obelisk. It took 27 days to build. Marmont was inspired by the Great Pyramid of **Giza**, which he had seen in 1798 during Napoleon's Egyptian campaign (see Engel 2018).

The wooden obelisk rotted and was replaced by stone in 1894. The pyramid was restored in the early 2000s, but has required further stabilisation since.

The Utrecht tourism website '[Discover Utrecht](#)' describes it as 'the only pyramid on European soil'... I guess the 12 BCE pyramid of **Cestius** in **Rome**, the 1989 *Louvre* pyramid in Paris, and *Plantasia* in **Swansea** (1990), do not count as they are built on concrete?

Written by: Dulcie Engel

Full references for these articles can be found on the [EC Website](#).







# Meet Our Learning & Engagement Co-Ordinator

## Phil Hobbs



***Hello Phil, as a relative newcomer to the EC, perhaps you could outline your career & relevant studies so far?***

My original degree was a BA Honours in English Literature and Studies in Modern Society (which contained elements of Economics, Sociology, Psychology and 20<sup>th</sup> Century History).

Post-degree I worked as a volunteer in a school for children with profound and multiple learning difficulties which led to me eventually being employed there as a teaching assistant. This taught me the value of volunteering as a means of learning new skills, meeting new people and building confidence in the workplace.

I qualified as a primary school teacher in 2001 and specialised in early years teaching which led to me becoming a teacher of pupils with additional learning needs.

I taught in a primary school in the east of Swansea for 18 years, working with children with moderate to severe learning difficulties, and many who had neuro-diversities.

I have always had a passion for history and whilst a classroom teacher I always relished teaching through the medium of themes such as Ancient Egypt, the Ancient Greeks, the Vikings and the Romans.

***What does your current post encompass?***

The most important aspect of my role is liaising with schools who are interested in visiting the museum. Being the first port of call enables me to establish a connection with teachers that continues from an early enquiry, to a firm booking, the visit itself, followed by post-visit teacher feedback. My own teaching background has already proved invaluable at creating these connections.

I work closely with the Education Team and volunteers to ensure that the school visits run smoothly and enable the children to have the best possible experience whilst at the museum.

My role involves working closely with **Wendy** and the education team looking at the educational activities on offer and how we deliver these.

Going forwards I will be working more closely with **Ken** as we update and re-organise some of the learning programme activities for schools.

I have also been busy working closely with Ken, **Meg** and the Education Team at devising the new 3D virtual classroom activity which we have been piloting recently alongside the 3D models and loan boxes that support this.

Effective communication is therefore pivotal to my role, as well as supporting all volunteers who enable the museum to function so effectively.

***What are your stand-out memories so far?***

Ultimately after only a couple of months in the role I feel on reflection I have felt very much part of the team in the museum. Everybody has been very welcoming and supportive of me and have helped me develop my own knowledge of ancient Egypt. There has been a lot of humour which has been lovely, as well as opportunities for me to develop ideas collaboratively with others.

***Do you have a favourite object (or objects)?***

I would say the limestone ostracon written by **Nakhtamun** (**HARGM10823**. See *Office News - Ed.*) as I love the story surrounding the artefact as it reveals how issues we have today are no different to the issues faced by everyday people in ancient Egypt. I love how the written message is therefore so relatable.

***What are your hopes for the EC going forward?***

For the Centre to continue developing its provision for schools so that children can keep having the most enjoyable visits possible. I love seeing the pupils' wide-eyed fascination as they engage with the activities we have on offer, and want this to continue in line with what schools are doing curriculum-wise.

Going forwards for the museum, I am particularly excited by the potential development of the House of Death next year as this could herald a new era for the museum with increased engagement with visitors and with schools. To be able to showcase some of our collection in a brand new purpose-built gallery is an exciting prospect for all of us at the museum.

***Do you have any special message for the volunteers?***

One of the most eye-opening aspects for me to witness since starting at the Museum is just how hard the volunteers work to ensure the museum functions on a day-to-day basis. Many of the volunteers have incredible knowledge of the collection and are brilliant at welcoming visitors and engaging with them. Several volunteers play a pivotal role when presenting during school visits and are always so good at ensuring pupils have a brilliant time when here. I'd like to say a massive thank you to all the volunteers as their knowledge, humour and general commitment is incredible and enables the museum to be the place it is. Diolch.

***Thank you Phil!***







## Desperate Times

Tutankhamun died at just 18, leaving Ankhesenamun a widow at 21. If a pharaoh died without a male heir or naming a regent, whoever married the princess would become Pharaoh. It would appear that what happened next was that Tutankhamun's advisor, Ay, placed pressure on Ankhesenamun to marry him, giving him legitimacy of the throne. This was clearly not what she wanted. Letters sent to the Hittite Empire from an Egyptian woman of royalty have been discovered and their contents would certainly tally with the situation Ankhesenamun was in, making it likely they were written and sent by her. She wrote to **Suppiluliuma I**, King of the **Hittite** Empire, Egypt's enemy:

*"My husband has died, and I have no son. They say about you that you have many sons. You might give me one of your sons to become my husband. I would not wish to take one of my subjects as a husband... I am afraid."*

The King had understandable scepticism and sent an envoy to investigate. Ankhesenamun replied:

*"Why did you say 'they deceive me' in that way? Had I a son, would I have written about my country's shame to a foreign land? You did not believe me, and you even spoke thus to me! He who was my husband is dead. I have no son! Never shall I take a servant of mine and make him my husband! I have written to no other country."*

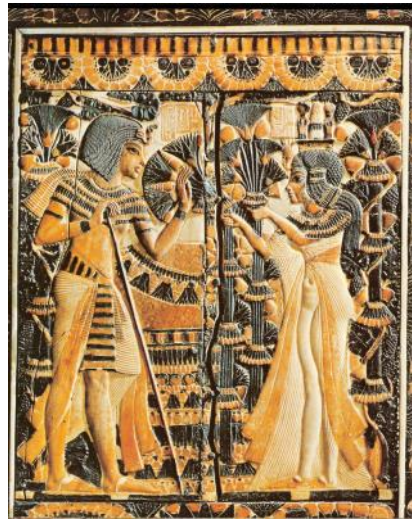
The King then sent his son, Prince **Zannanza**, but the party never made it to Egypt. They were instead killed at the border with the likely suspects being Egypt under Ay or **Horemheb** the leader of the military at Ay's behest. Sadly, the King's wariness cost him the throne and a son.

Ankhesenamun, it seems was forced to marry Ay, and then mysteriously disappeared. We know from a cartouche found on a ring that they married, but it is Ay's wife **Tey** who appears on his tomb, not Ankhesenamun.

## Have we found her?

However, there is a small possibility that our lost princess has been found. In 1817 a tomb was discovered by **Giovanni Belzoni** that contained two female mummies. However, the mummies had been heavily vandalised in previous centuries and were in a poor state. DNA testing has been conducted on the mummies, named **KV21a** & **KV21b**, and KV21a has been identified as the mother of the two children found in the tomb of Tutankhamun. As Ankhesenamun was the only wife that we are aware that Tutankhamun had, it certainly seems a possibility it is her. Sadly, as the mummy was in such a poor state, even if we could say it was Ankhesenamun, there is little left to tell us how she died or when, therefore the mystery surrounding her fate remains.

Written by: Lolita Dragonsmith



Tutankhamun receives flowers from Ankhesenamun (Wikimedia commons)

### References

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# Friends of the Egypt Centre



The Friends of the Egypt Centre welcomed **Marisol Solchaga** from *Manchester University* for the May lecture. She gave an overview of her research of offering trays and soul houses, the subject of her PhD.



EA36374, Squared soul House, First Intermediate Period to Middle Kingdom.  
©Trustees of the British Museum

Her research focused on analysing around 500 pottery soul houses and offering trays from a physical perspective in order to better understand these objects in the funerary ritual context. Her main goal was to answer the question of to what extent can these objects help us understand the funerary rituals during the Middle Kingdom and First Intermediate period?

She began by discussing general information about offering trays and soul

houses. They are dated to the Middle Kingdom and First Intermediate Period and mainly found in cemeteries and settlements such as **Lahun** and **Abydos** (among others). Their geographical distribution centre is around Upper Egypt and the Nubian Fortresses; all of the objects from her study come from these areas. There is a lack of representation of these objects in Lower Egypt and the Delta. This could be due to the fact Middle Kingdom and First Intermediate Period cemeteries in the north have not been as thoroughly excavated as the ones in the south. It is also possible that due to the fact that these objects are typically placed on the surface of burials in the open air, they were more exposed to weather conditions and looting.

Her research took her to archaeological reports from turn of the century excavations, namely **W. Flinders Petrie's** excavations of Lahun (in 1890 and 1891), **Naqada** and **Deir el Ballas** (1895), and **Dendera** (1898) and **Quibell's El Kab** excavation (in 1898). Unfortunately, these reports rarely mention offering trays and soul houses as only selective finds were thoroughly documented, and objects such as pottery

(continues...)

## Upcoming...

19th June 2024

Online lecture - via ZOOM only.

## Lost Women: Rediscovering Ramesside Queens

Paulína Šútorová

*Egyptian queens have fascinated modern people for years. However, it was not until the later 20th century, with the rise of feminism, that more Egyptologists started properly paying attention to them. Their research has, however, focused mainly on the well-known queens, who possessed exceptional political status and competencies such as Hatshepsut (c. 1479–1458 BCE), Nefertiti (c. 1351–1334 BCE), and Cleopatra VII (c. 51–30 BCE). In contrast, the Ramesside queens of the 19th and 20th Dynasties (c. 1550–1077 BCE) have not received the same academic attention or passionate media coverage. Let us examine some of the Ramesside queens together, what roles they played, and what myths about them prevail until today.*



Check the Friends' [website](#) for further information, and more dates:

[egypt.swan.ac.uk/about/friends-of-the-egypt-centre/](http://egypt.swan.ac.uk/about/friends-of-the-egypt-centre/)



For further information or to become a member please contact:  
**Membership Secretary Wendy Goodridge:**  
01792 295960 [w.r.goodridge@swansea.ac.uk](mailto:w.r.goodridge@swansea.ac.uk)





were considered a minor object. It wasn't until Petrie's **Rifeh** excavation report in 1907 that these objects were more closely examined. Petrie documented around 150 examples of offering trays found in the cemetery of Rifeh on the surface of pit graves.

The physical difference between an offering tray and a soul house is that a soul house has an additional building that is constructed on top of the basin of the offering tray. They can appear as an actual two-storey building with columns, or a smaller vaulted building. Petrie coined the term 'soul house' to describe these offering trays with vaulted building as a means of setting them apart. The fact that there are two different names for these artefacts implies that they are different objects. This led Marisol to analyze the function of these artefacts in the funerary ritual context. She started by identifying the physical features of these objects and their common elements. Both offering trays and soul houses are made of pottery (either Nile C or Marl clay), have similar morphology (a rounded form mostly found in southern nomes 1-6 **Harwa** to Dendera and square form with a spout found in northern nomes such as Lahun), and are liquid containers intended for libations (basins, channels and spouts allowed liquid to flow out and off the trays).



Her next step was identifying similarities in the archaeological context. These objects appear together in the same site (for example, both offering trays and soul houses were found in Dendera and in Rifeh) and they have a similar chronology – both objects were used at the same time. Something else she noticed was that soul houses had different types of building according to regional variations; vaulted building are found in southern sites like Dendera and rectangular buildings with columns are found in northern sites like Rifeh. These findings led Marisol to conclude that offering trays and soul houses are the same artefact and that using two different terms to refer to them can be misleading when understanding their function in the funerary context. She has suggested a new term for these objects:

**Ritual Trays:** funerary objects intended for funerary ritual related to libation.

Offering tray and/or soul house does not define the function but rather the type/style of ritual tray that they are, as both serve the same purpose but have different styles that can vary regionally in terms of physical features and archaeological context. Marisol also studied the models that appear on the trays by comparing them with other contemporary elements intended for the

ritual and cult of the deceased. These include stelae, wooden models, stone offering tables, iconography, and written sources. The themes of models she focused on include food and animals, architecture, furniture and human figurines. The ancient Egyptians were aware that acts such as words, gestures, libations, etc. were perishable, thus represented them on ritual trays to solidify their everlasting and/or continued use. The architectural features and furniture found on ritual trays (such as porticos, chambers, chairs, columns, silos, etc.) show the ritual significance of the trays in that these models represent the place where the deceased would be located to attend those funerary rituals. Her findings suggest that ritual trays are 3D representations of funerary rituals similar to those depicted on stelae and tomb chapels

Marisol is waiting for the publication of her PhD, hopefully during the summer. If you are interested in this topic be sure to keep an eye out for her new publication! Special thanks to Marisol for sharing her new research with us for this lecture! Make sure to check out the ritual trays on display in the House of Death and the online collection on Abaset!

Written by: Mollie Beck



Glass artwork by Amber Hiscott at TEC. (photo: Dulcie Engel)







inspired by the artwork of ancient Greece and Egypt. Ron was also known to take his life-size papier-mâché model of **Cleopatra** out for a walk.

### Australian museum removes mummified human remains from display

This follows ethical and community concerns around the *University of Sydney's Chau Chak Wing Museum* collection, Australia's largest permanent collection of ancient Egyptian antiquities.

### Diseases in Ancient Egypt: a new study

*University of Cambridge* biological anthropologist **P.D. Mitchell** has analysed data from 31 studies of mummified human remains from Egypt and Nubia and concluded that the Nile played a significant role in the type of illnesses found, for example those spread by mosquitoes and sand flies.

### Goddess Nut and the Milky Way...

Using planetarium software programs showing how the Milky Way would have looked from various locations in ancient Egypt, astrophysicist **Or Grauer** suggests a strong link between the depiction of **Nut** and the Milky Way. This is reinforced by the orientation of the goddess in the 3000-year-old *Book of Nut*.

### Looting cases uncovered...

A Spanish antiques dealer has been arrested over a looted Egyptian bust dating from 1450 BCE. The dealer acquired the piece in 2015 in **Thailand**, knowing it had been stolen. A Swiss gallery, believing the accompanying documents were legitimate, was tipped off when placing it for sale at a European art fair in **Maastricht** (Netherlands).

In other news, the 3400-year-old head of a **Ramses II** statue looted from **Abydos** more than 30 years ago has now been returned from **Switzerland**.

And a child's clay coffin dating from 1295-1186 BCE, excavated in 1920 by **Flinders Petrie**, has been returned to *the Gustavianum (Uppsala University Museum)*, **Sweden** from the *Museum of Fine Arts in Boston*. The American museum had been given false information about the origins, but recently discovered documents indicating that Petrie had sent it to **Uppsala**. It had been missing since 1970.

### Secret of curse of Tutankhamun finally explained?

New research by scientist **Ross Fellowes** suggests that toxic levels of radiation emanating from uranium and poisonous waste sealed in Egyptian tombs could explain the series of deaths of Egyptologists following the opening of Tutankhamun's tomb in 1922.

### The pharaoh's hotel?

Archaeologists have discovered a 3400-year-old ruined house at the **Tel Habwa** site on the **Sinai** Peninsula. Based on the layout (two central pillared halls with several rooms attached) and artefacts found, it is believed to have been a rest house built for **Thutmose III**.

The pyramids and sphinx were recently closed to the public for a tech billionaire's wedding. The couple paid to have the sites closed so their guests could have a private tour. They also hosted a party at the nearby *Grand Egyptian Museum*. The wedding ceremony took place at sunset between two of the pyramids. Meanwhile, in the Western Cemetery area, Japanese and Egyptian archaeologists have identified a previously unknown L-shaped structure which may have served as a tomb entrance.

### Update on Australian school mummified head

We first reported this in our July-September 2023 issue. Following a debate about what to do with the head, it has undergone scientific analysis and reconstruction based on a 3D printout of the skull. It is the head of a woman aged between 50 and 60 at death, dating from the Greco-Roman period. The reconstructed head, finished in bronze resin by sculptor **Jennifer Mann**, will now go on display.

### Nubian rock art discovery

Archaeologists have discovered 5000-year-old carvings of boats and cattle in the **Atbai** desert east of **Wadi Halfa**. This suggests ancient Nubians and Egyptians went far into the desert, which must have had a much wetter climate at the time.

### Remembering Barry Kemp (1940-2024)

The distinguished Egyptologist died this May, aged 84. He is best known for directing excavations at **Amarna** between 1977 and 2008. Of all his publications, *Ancient Egypt: Anatomy of a Civilisation* (first published in 1989) is a core text.

### Buried branch of Nile found alongside 31 pyramids

According to lead researchers **Eman Ghoneim** (*University of North Carolina Wilmington*) and **Suzanne Onstine** (*University of Memphis*), the 64-kilometer-long river could have transported the stone blocks used to build the pyramids along its route. Its course was revealed by radar satellite imagery.

Compiled & Summarized by: Dulcie Engel

## And | Quote...

"As scientists, we keep an open mind, but we have to base our ideas about the past on archaeological evidence."

- Zahi Hawass.

*Magic of the Pyramids: My adventures in Archaeology* (2015) p.28.



# Ancient Egypt beginning with H

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| 4. Heiroglyph    | 5. Hypostyle | 6. Hatshepsut  |
| 7. Harrogate     | 8. Harpoon   | 9. Handaxe     |
| 10. Hes          | 11. Hapi     | 12. Hapy       |
| 13. Hippopotamus | 14. Heart    | 15. House      |
| 16. Handling     |              |                |



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