

INSCRIPTIONS

The Newsletter of the Friends of the Egypt Centre, Swansea

Issue 1

August 1999

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What have we been up to?

It is hard to believe the Egypt Centre is approaching its first anniversary, as it has been officially open nearly a year. However we were very busy long before this!

Did you know?

Volunteers started working here from November 1997! We have had over 80 volunteers working at the centre and we are extremely fortunate to have a core band of about 20 talented, loyal volunteers. Our youngest volunteers are still at school.

The first of many school visits began in February 1998, before we had any information boards and some of the cases were empty. Some schools have travelled from as far as Brecon, Cardiff, Newport and Ireland! (See *some choice photos on pages 2 and 3 - Ed.*) We are the only Egyptian Museum in Wales.

Build a coffin ...

In December 1998 we held a 'Build a coffin' competition, judged by **Professor Alan Lloyd**. This proved great fun for schools and was won by **Newton Primary**, Swansea.

On May 15th 1999 **Professor Lloyd** gave a very interesting talk entitled 'Joseph the Prince of Egypt' at the inaugural meeting of the Friends of the Egypt Centre.

Sybil Crouch, Chair of the Arts Council in Wales and Manager of the Taliesin Art Centre, had a very difficult task in choosing the winning entries of our 'Face of Egypt' art competition. The judging took place on 14th July 1 999 and you can still come and see the exhibition of entries. **St Joseph's RC Primary**, Swansea, won the group prize, **Richard Collins** of Gowerton Comprehensive won the children's section while **Jillian Morris** won the adult section.

For details of future happenings at the Centre, see page 3.

Wendy Goodridge



Did You Miss It All?

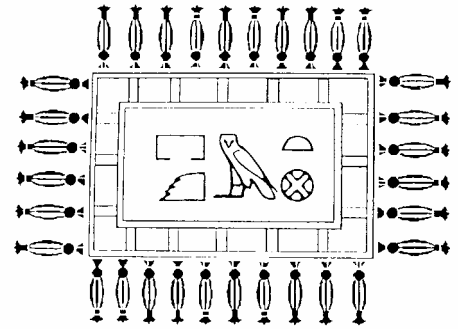
On Friday 16th July the Friends of the Egypt Centre had their first social event. It was billed as '**Beer and Bread**' but we had decided not to have Egyptian-style bread in case our teeth wore down! [Egyptian bread tended to have grits in from the quernstone.]

Instead a delicious selection of various breads, including some home-baked examples, were laid out with accompanying dips, cheese, paté, etc. Since the beer the Egyptians made would be foul by our standards we had various modern beers, some wines and soft drinks. **Zoë**, Vice Chairman of the Friends, gave a really interesting short talk on beer and bread-making methods and illustrated it with slides, including those of artefacts in the Egypt Centre.

We also had the opportunity of viewing the entries for the recent art competition and **Carolyn** took those interested on a short tour of the collection. We then all chatted the more freely after the beer and wine and **Jackie** won the raffle for a scarab. The idea was for people to get to know each other, and in spite of the disappointing turnout everyone who came agreed they had a really good time. So next time, come along and support your Friends Group.

See you there!

Sheila Nowell



School Visits

Above, Carolyn Graves-Brown, Curator of the Egypt Centre, showing a group of school children the House of Death

Left, Ruth Tachel, Volunteer and Fund Raising Officer of the Friends committee helping children to make clay "Offering Trays"





Editorial

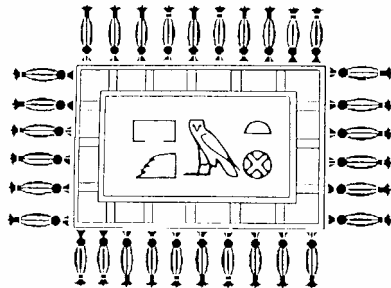
This is the first of what we hope will be many issues of the Newsletter of the Friends of the Egypt Centre, Swansea.

I should like to thank all those who contributed material and made suggestions for this issue. The success of the newsletter depends on the contributions from the Friends.

Please keep them coming, and if you have any ideas for the development of the newsletter please let us know. For example, should we have a Letters column? And does anybody have any suggestions for a better title?

All contributions, from interesting snippets to serious articles, are most welcome. Please send them to me at the Egypt Centre, marked F.A.O. Mike Mac Donagh.

Mike Mac Donagh



School Visits (continued)

David Thomas, Volunteer at the Egypt Centre, admires art work produced by pupils of Pontardulais Primary School

Future happenings!

- Work is under way to produce an exciting web page for the Egypt Centre. We will keep you posted!
- On July 21st 1998 a 26th Dynasty wooden coffin was taken to Cardiff for conservation. Work has started on the coffin and it promises to be quite spectacular. We will keep you informed of its progress.
- A memorial plaque will be presented in honour of Dr Kate Bosse-Griffiths.
- On Thursday 23rd September, Stuart and friends will give a talk about their experiences during their recent visit to Egypt, time and venue to be announced. Don't miss it!





Wot, no mummies!

We have noticed that some visitors to the Egypt Centre are disappointed by the lack of mummies on display. In fact, there is one mummy on show, downstairs in the House of Death, in the case with the cartonnage (a covering of decorated plaster and linen). There lies the remains of a small baby wrapped in a cartonnage covering, someone's loved son or daughter. We had at first believed this to be a fake as the hieroglyphs are nonsensical. However, an X-ray at Singleton hospital outlined the traces of a skull. It is quite common for funerary inscriptions on bodies of this date to be nonsensical. Presumably the person decorating the covering was not literate.

We do have a number of other mummified remains in the Egypt Centre which are kept in store and not put on display. The reasons for this are partly the personal decisions of the museum staff. We felt we would not be happy for the remains of our friends and relatives to be put on display for visitors to enjoy a gruesome sight, even if it boosted the Egypt Centre visitor figures.

However, some museum curators would disagree with this viewpoint, arguing that people should not be protected from the reality of death and that human remains are suitable for display, especially if treated sensitively.

We took the decision that the mummified baby, as it was covered, would not be offensive. We wonder if any of our readers have points of view on this issue, and would like to hear from you.

Carolyn Brown

A visit to the Petrie Museum

The museum curator recently paid a visit to the Petrie Museum in London. Like our own Egypt Centre, the Petrie Museum depends heavily on volunteers and is also a University-managed establishment, part of University College, London.

The purpose of the visit was partly curiosity to see another university-owned Egyptology museum, partly to date some of our as yet undated pottery (the Petrie Museum has a fine collection of excavated and therefore dated pottery) and partly to uncover any documentation concerning the objects in the Egypt Centre which derive from the Wellcome collection.

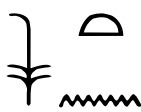


Sally MacDonald, the museum manager, and **Stephen Quirke**, one of the curators, kindly allowed access to their documentation. They have a number of photographs of items now held by the Egypt Centre, some on glass plate negatives, and showing the objects in a far better state of preservation than their present condition. In addition, some of the photographs are associated with Wellcome numbers, which over the years have become detached from our objects.

The Wellcome numbers are a vital link in establishing where Henry Wellcome acquired the objects (most of our objects were collected by Sir Henry Wellcome around the turn of the century). They are the key to his catalogue. There was so much information that there was not time to have a good look at the pottery. A return visit will be necessary!

Carolyn Brown

Bits and Bobs

Here, just for interest, are some components of the royal titulary in hieroglyphs and Roman script together with the translations:

	Nesu	King of Upper Egypt
	Bity	King of Lower Egypt
	Sa Ra	Son of Ra

Ed.





PREDYNASTIC OBJECTS IN THE EGYPT CENTRE 1

All the objects discussed here can be seen in the Upper Gallery, "The House Of Life" at the Egypt Centre, Swansea.

by Zoë Jackson

PAINTED POTTERY VESSEL, CATALOGUE NUMBER W5308

This vessel, 10 cm high and decorated with boats, dates from the Naqada II period of Egyptian history, between 3500 - 3300 BC. The Naqada period is so called after a predynastic site first excavated in 1895 by William Flinders Petrie and James Quibell. It is also called the Gerzean period, after another excavated site, el-Gerza. It was also Petrie who classified predynastic pottery, giving each grouping of similar pots a letter of the alphabet. This type of painted vessel he classified as D-ware.

D-ware of this type was made from marl clay washed out of the hills on the edge of the Nile valley. The vessel was made by coiling and smoothing, and the decoration, of red ochre, was applied before it was fired. As it does not have a flat base, it was probably made to be suspended from its handles or propped up in the sand. The type of clay used to make this vessel needed to be fired at a higher temperature than other clays and in much more controlled conditions, so therefore the use of this clay represents a technological advance.

During the later part of this period, pottery such as this seems to have spread gradually northwards. This may be due to a general cultural expansion in this direction, but could be because of other, more simple, factors, such as the superiority of Upper Egyptian pottery over that of Lower Egypt making it more attractive to the northerners; the availability of the marl clay, which was found only in the south, which meant that the inhabitants of the north could not make their own; the eagerness of Upper Egyptian potters to find a new market for their goods in Lower Egypt; or it could just have been for the contents of the pots, the actual pot itself being irrelevant.

Pottery of this type is painted with a large range of patterns. This vessel is typical in that it seems to depict a boat with a cabin bearing a standard or banner. Some Egyptologists, however, prefer to see watered land with a chief's residence, or a temple platform on stilts. The standards on poles are thought

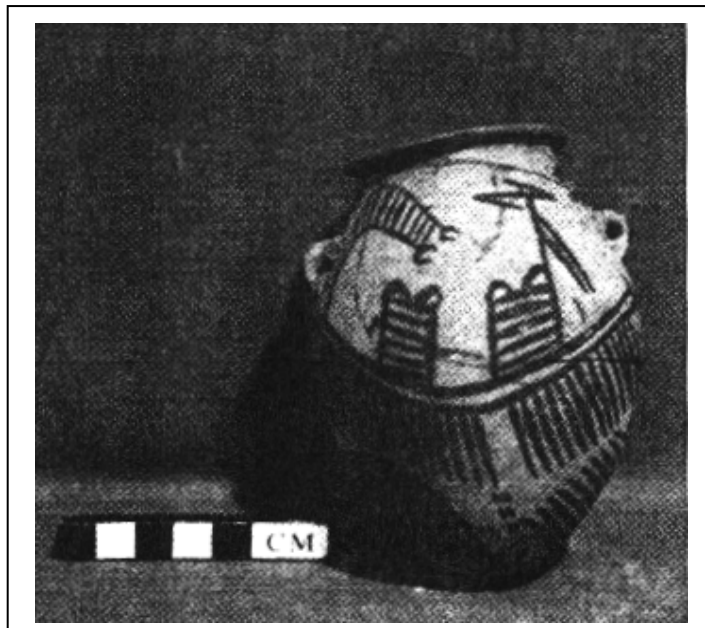
to represent divine emblems or could be the emblems of the regions [known as *nomes*] that Egypt was divided into from prehistoric times. Some signs on other pots are virtually identical with the emblems of certain gods from historic times. The scattered SSSS signs appearing on this pot have been called numbers, libations of water, or notations of weight. Other pots also show shields, birds, animals such as the gazelle, plants and trees, which have been variously identified. Some depictions of trees have been interpreted as being sycamore trees, sacred to the goddess Hathor.

Spirals can occur, as can blocked-in triangles, universally identified as hills. Sometimes there are more complex scenes, including figures in distinctive postures, such as what appears to be a dancing woman with her arms curved gracefully above her head. After this type of pottery fell into disuse, Egyptians did not paint their pottery again until the Seventeenth Dynasty, about 1600 BC, when pots with lines painted upon them make their appearance.

A great deal of scholarly thought has been spent on interpreting the significance of these patterns, and it seems that little has been agreed on,

save that they *are* significant, especially as this painted D-ware is not the only place where these designs appear. At Hierakonpolis, a predynastic site of great importance since it is thought that the very first kings of a united Egypt originated there, a tomb was discovered (and then lost) which has similar depictions of figures, boats, animals etc. painted on its walls. They also appear on a painted cloth found in a grave at Gebelein, which might have belonged to a local ruler. It is quite clear from all the evidence that these motifs had profound significance, perhaps magical or spiritual, to people living in Egypt five and a half thousand years ago.

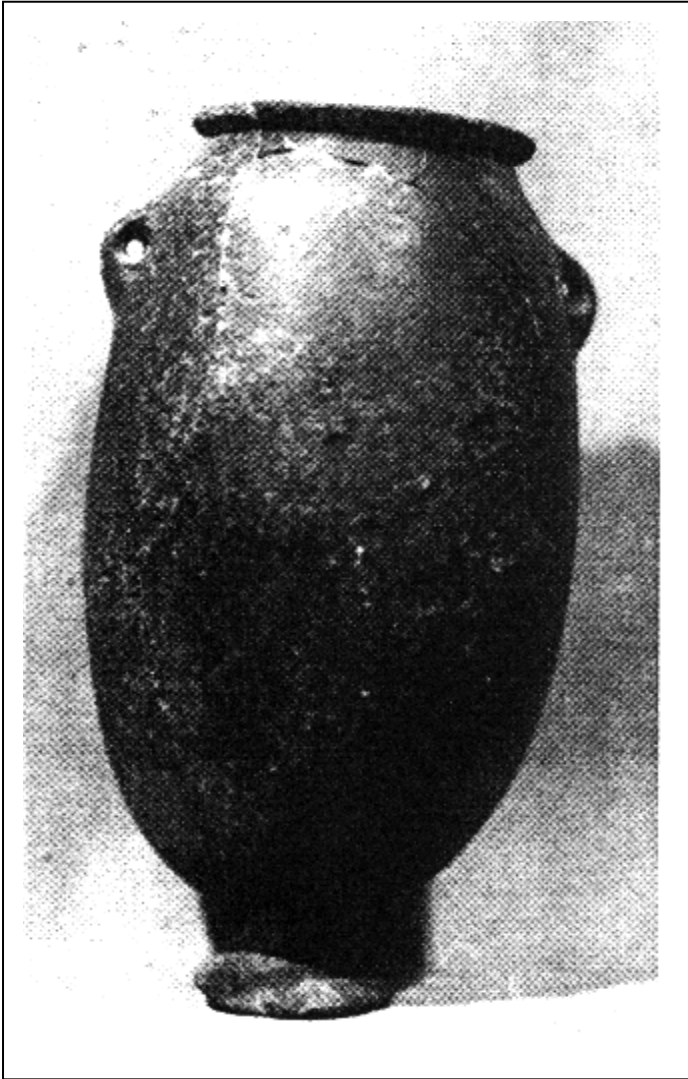
Other painted pottery from this period can also be seen at the rear of the gallery.





STONE VESSEL, CATALOGUE NUMBER: W151

This vessel is from the Naqada I-II period, between 4000 - 3300 BC, and was a popular shape at this time. It is 23 cm high, made of basalt, with a small circular foot. It has handles beneath the rim which could have had strings inserted through them from which it could be suspended. It is possible that this type of vase originated in Mesopotamia, where vases of a similar shape have been found.



The Egyptians made a great variety of vessels from many different types of stone, from tall vases to shallow, round bowls, to boxes with compartments. The quality of the stone vases declined towards the end of the Naqada II period, 3500 - 3300 BC but improved again in the Early Dynastic Period, 3100 - 2613 BC. They were probably mainly used as temple ritual vessels, or for royal funerary purposes, with pottery being the main material for everyday use.

From scenes in Old Kingdom tombs, it is possible to reconstruct how these vessels were made. First, the outside was roughly shaped, then a pair of swinging weights provided the power source for the drilling of the inside of the vessel, using a flint drill for soft stone, or drills made from a much harder stone together with quartz sand as an abrasive to hollow out hard stone vessels. Later, drills were made more often of metal.

Despite the obvious skill of the craftsmen in making these vessels, it is not easy to explain how they were able to cut under the shoulders of a narrow-mouthed vessel, or how they were able to work difficult stone with inclusions which, although they made the finished vessel beautiful, were liable to come loose during crafting. It is also amazing to note that there is no deviation from a perfect circle, and there is no variation in the thinness of the vessels.

It is rare to find a badly made stone vessel, although vast numbers were made. Literally thousands were found in the underground chambers of the Step Pyramid of Djoser of the Third Dynasty, 2686 - 2613 BC, many of which were predynastic in date and had therefore been in use for several centuries.

Stone vessels were made throughout the Dynastic Period and into the Ptolemaic Period, although calcite became more common than hard stone vessels and vessels also became smaller in size, while at the same time new styles and shapes were being introduced.

Other stone vessels can also be seen at the rear of the gallery.

THE IMPORTANCE OF BREAD & BEER IN THE DIET OF THE ANCIENT EGYPTIANS

by Zoë Jackson

Bread and beer were the two fundamental items in the diet of the Ancient Egyptians, throughout their history. The making of bread and beer had a great deal in common, as both began with dough. Much is known about their production from wooden models and tomb paintings of the Middle Kingdom. Barley alone was used to make beer, while both barley and a type of wheat called emmer was used to make bread. The type

of bread most commonly found in tombs is wheat bread, which is of a finer quality and was probably considered more suitable for funerary offerings, but barley bread would have been more usual in poorer households.

Flour was milled daily in Egyptian households. The grain was first ground on a sloping stone know as a saddle quern by means of a rubbing stone. Once the grain was ground, it was





forced through rushwork sieves, which were not very efficient. Apart from containing some whole or partially crushed grain, the flour cooked also contained sand or small amounts of stone from the quern. Wear that has been found on the teeth of mummies is usually blamed on impurities like these being present in bread. The mummy of Amenhotep III, who was possibly the grandfather of Tutankhamun, is apparently a particularly good example of this. He suffered from horrible abscesses and had lost several teeth some time before he died, and he was probably in so much pain that he may have been sedated with either wine or a new drug, opium, which came into Egypt from Cyprus.

The most common type of bread was a flat loaf much like a pitta bread. Unleavened dough was shaped by hand and either cooked on a flat stone over the fire, on the floor of a clay oven, or slapped on the side of its pottery wall. Leavening was usually done in one of two ways. The first was by using a sour dough starter made from dough left over from the previous day's bread making. The other method was by using the froth from the top of the beer, which was known as the barm. Yeast was also available in pure form as a fungus.

The Egyptians made an enormous variety of bread. A common shape was semicircular, from which comes the hieroglyph for *t*, the word for bread being *ta*. The loaves could also be formed into triangles, ovals or indented squares. Some have depressions into which a garnish could be placed, such as beans or an egg. Bread could be modelled into the form of animals, human figures or fancy shapes for festivals. Bread was also made in conical moulds that had to be broken to release the bread, or in moulds with raised designs on the inner surface to give a pattern to the loaf. Bread could be sweetened with honey or fruit, seasoned with spices or covered in cumin seeds. As a result, it is not surprising that New Kingdom documents refer to forty or fifty different types of bread and although it is hard to tell which names apply to which varieties, many probably refer to biscuits, cakes and pastries as well as bread.

Greek writers maintained that the Egyptians invented beer. Perhaps it was discovered accidentally when someone drank the liquid from grain left to ferment for making bread and found that he enjoyed the intoxicating effect.

Beer was made from lightly cooked barley bread and was quite different from the beer we drink today. It was a thick liquid, looking almost like porridge, not usually very strong, but as nutritious as food. In a painting in the tomb of Intef-iker, a vizier of the Twelfth Dynasty, a child is shown in a brewery carrying a bowl with the accompanying inscription: "Give me some ale, for I am hungry," showing that beer was valued more as a food than as a drink. Beer was the drink of the masses, while the rich drank wine. It was made in quantity in all households by the women.

Beer in Ancient Egypt was made in much the same way as a Sudanese drink called *bouza* is made today. After the barley bread was lightly baked, it was crumbled, mixed with water and allowed to ferment. After fermentation, the liquid was strained through a sieve or a cloth into a large vat from where it was decanted into smaller jars. Finally, the beer could be seasoned with spices, mandrake, safflower or most commonly with dates. Dates would not only give flavour to the beer, but speed fermentation by increasing the sugar content.

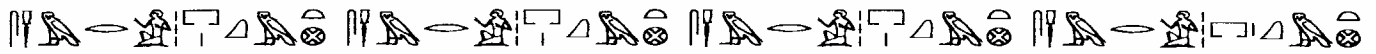
Beer was a common ingredient in remedies for illness and medical papyri list seventeen kinds of beer, but, like bread, they are not easily identifiable. It also had religious connotations. In one myth, Hathor, in her incarnation as Sekhmet, the powerful one, was sent to destroy mankind by Ra. He then changed his mind, and gave her beer dyed red to drink, which she took to be blood. She became drunk and went to sleep, and so mankind was saved. Because of this myth, at the annual festival of Hathor at Dendera, a vast amount of beer was handed out to pilgrims.

As well as being made each day inside the house for the family by the women, bread and beer could also be earned by the men. Coinage was unknown in Egypt until relatively late in its history, and so workers were paid in kind in the form of rations. According to the Middle Kingdom story of the Eloquent Peasant, the minimum daily ration intended to feed a man and his family was ten loaves of bread and two jugs of beer. Those with more prestigious jobs received far more, and a senior bureaucrat's ration could be hundreds of loaves per day, which were then divided amongst his household and estate workers. The most generous rations of all were offered to the gods, with up to a thousand loaves not being unusual. Since these were then redistributed to the priests and temple workers, they became some of the best fed people in the land.

Bread and beer were just as important in death as in life. The Egyptians believed that after death they would need to be maintained in a similar fashion as in life, and sometimes actual meals were included for the deceased in the tomb, such as a meal discovered in the tomb of a noblewoman of the Second Dynasty, which included triangular loaves of bread and jugs which had probably held beer or perhaps wine. Food, including bread and beer, was also found in the tomb of Tutankhamun. They also believed that to paint something or put it into writing made it real, and so paintings of offerings or requests for them were often included on the tomb wall or on stelae accompanying the deceased. Stelae including these requests for offerings, plus clay offering trays with food modelled upon them for the deceased, can be seen in the House of Death in the Egypt Centre. When water from long vases, called *hes* vases (also included in the display), was poured over the offering trays, it was meant to "activate" the model food and change it into food that the deceased could actually eat in the afterlife. Bread and beer was such an important part of the ancient Egyptian diet that offerings for the dead would not be complete unless they were included.

Zoë Jackson





Puzzle Page!

Translate the hieroglyphs in the obelisk using the Hieroglyphic chart at the bottom of the page.

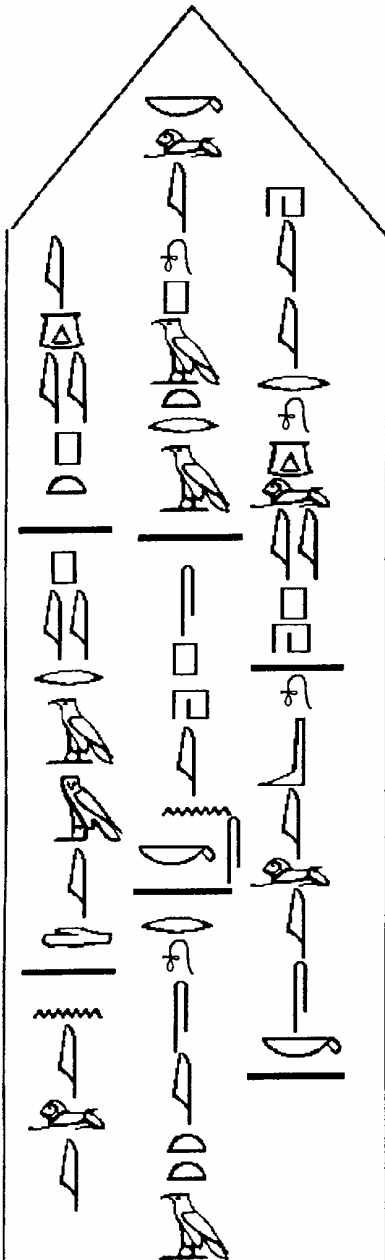
Then, find the translated words in the Word Search.

THE PUZZLE MAKERS



Top row:
Sioned,
Hannah,
Emmanuelle
and Sarah

Bottom row:
Charles,
Alice and
Rhianwen



P	Y	R	A	M	I	D	R	T	Y	U	N	S	P	H	I	N	X	W	I
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