



INSCRIPTIONS

The Newsletter of the Friends of the Egypt Centre, Swansea

Issue 13

March 2003

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Volunteers' Christmas Party!

Saturday, December 21st saw the 'Nubies' enjoy their Christmas party after a year of extremely hard work. For the second year, we decided to bring in Mr. and Mrs. Noah, and their vast ark of animals; some cute and cuddly, others not quite so nice-looking. After some trepidation, mostly from the older volunteers, and adults present, the animals were being stroked, carried, fed, and shown off to much amusement.



As before, Tristan the Macaw visited us, as well as his rabbit and Chinchilla friends. This year, Mr. Noah brought along a giant rabbit, which at only three months old seemed already as big as our youngest volunteers!

Next came my favourite part of the activity when the lizards came out of their cages to meet the audience. I remember these well from last year when I annoyed my mum all Christmas because she would not buy me one. The best thing about them is when you put them on your shoulder and they just sit there, watching everything. So well behaved, it's great. Some of our newer volunteers, completely unaware of what to expect, took a while to warm to the reptiles, unlike the old hands, like Alex and Owen, who got one straight away. But soon most of them were walking around quite happily with a lizard on their shoulder.



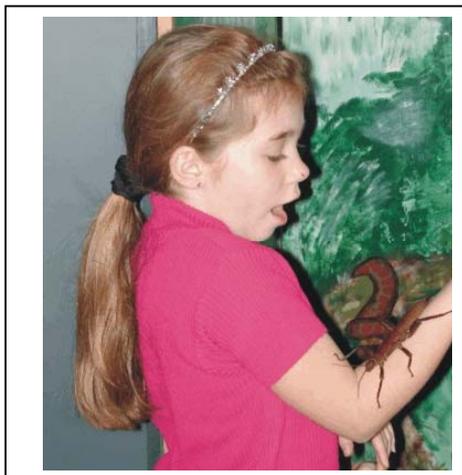
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Christmas Party ... continued

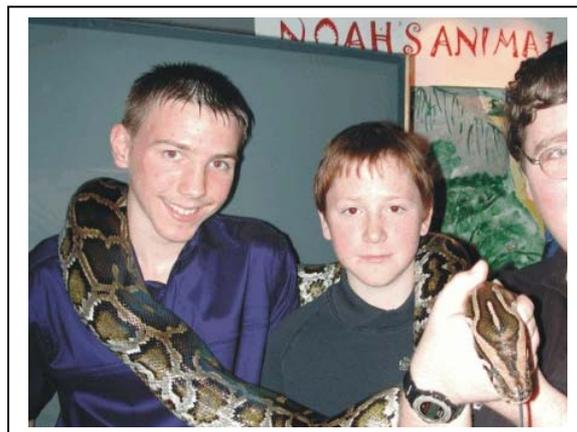
The animals became more extreme when the snakes came out, and the reactions of some of the volunteers were quite funny! The older volunteers actually refused to go anywhere near them, some even left to hang around the galleries and shop (where we cannot normally get them to go). But the snakes were the most popular animals there, and soon the 'Nubies' were all lining up to have the big python draped around their shoulders.



Amongst the new animals brought this time were some stick insects. Now, the stick insects that you have all seen before are very small and harmless.

These were more like branch insects and had little hooks at the end of their legs so that they could cling to whatever they were walking on, which caused a problem when some of the volunteers tried to pull them from their clothing.

The afternoon saw the 'Nubies' tuck into a buffet lunch, kindly provided by Debbie Williams, which went down very well indeed. The volunteers enjoyed their day immensely, which was a big thank you for all of the hard work and effort they have put in over the last year.



by Rebecca Shields

Trip to Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery

This year's Friends trip will be to the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery on the 27th April. The museum has a good collection of Egyptian antiquities and, as the name suggests, many great paintings on display. This is an ideal opportunity to travel and see another museum at work, in a great area. When we go, there will be a special exhibition there showing a collection of Sikh banners, and another featuring the work of mother and daughter Louisa Starr Canzani and Estella Canzani who travelled extensively through Italy and France and painted much of what they saw.

Close to the museum are Soho House and Aston House, with exhibitions that are also open to the public.

There will also be ample opportunity for easy shopping as the museum is just

around the corner from the city centre, which boasts some of the most popular shops around (including one of the biggest branches of HMV I've seen in a long while, and a very nice Pizza Hut!)

If this has tempted you to come along with us, please come into the Egypt Centre and see me to put your name down for the trip. Prices are £10 for Friends Members, and £15 Non-Members (prices include a tip for the driver) which is a bargain! I will need a £5 deposit with your name to secure your seat as we are limited to 53 places.

Please come for a wonderful day out, and to support the Egypt Centre. Thank you.

by Rebecca Shields





Editorial

Welcome back to the thirteenth issue of *Inscriptions*, after a longer gap than usual this year. Please keep the contributions coming because we can't produce the newsletter without your input!

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. Don't forget that contributions should be either your own work or something in the public domain. You must obtain the copyright holder's permission before we can reproduce material from other published work.

by Mike Mac Donagh



Annual General Meeting

The AGM of the Friends of the Egypt Centre Swansea was held on the 25th September 2002. For those who were unable to attend, here is a brief outline of the Treasurer's report.

Our grateful thanks to those who help us "behind the scenes". To Bruce Rees our honorary auditor; to Les for making the pyramid donation box; to Mrs Payne and Debbie Williams who provide the ingredients and make the cakes respectively. Please continue to support them, and the raffle, as they help us to keep the price of membership down. Thanks also to Mike and Daphne Mac Donagh for editing *Inscriptions*. (Due to the amount of work involved, all of it voluntary, we might have to reduce the number of issues of *Inscriptions* to 3 per year.) All the above have had presentations made to them on

your behalf. Our thanks and best wishes also to our retiring chairman David Burch who did such an excellent job.

We have once again had an excellent programme of lectures and events so our thanks to Sandra Hawkins who arranges the speakers, the committee for their hard work and the staff of the Egypt Centre for their support. We also had donations from Sandra from her numerology charts and from Caroline Brown from a talk given by her.

Our trip to Bristol was not as well supported as it might have been so we just about broke even on that. We have also bought a much-needed tea urn - I'm sure you noticed the problems we experienced with the old one! We have also bought a cupboard for the Egypt Centre so all the Friends' bits and pieces can be kept together.

I hope you have all had chance to view the display cases (complete with bilingual plaques) donated by the Friends. The cases represent the Friends' donation from the previous two years, and for this last year I am pleased to hand over to the Egypt Centre a donation of £1,000. They propose to have a lion bed made, to be used for mummification demonstrations. We are also continuing to liaise with Wendy to see how we can support her with her work with the Out of Hours Learning Club.

Once again an excellent year as we go from strength to strength. We have some really top name speakers for the coming year and our trip in 2003 is to Birmingham museum. Congratulations (I think) to Daniel Ogden our new chairman and hope to see you all in the coming year.

by Sheila Nowell, Hon. Treasurer





Nile Cycle Challenge

Dear Friends

Staff of the Egypt Centre (Stuart and Wendy with their spouses!), Taliesin Art Centre (Sybil Crouch, Nia Mills, Andrew Knight and Erich Talbot) and Business services (Garry Astley), are taking part in the Nile Cycle Challenge, cycling 400km along the river Nile Egypt to raise funds for two charities.

The first charity is for the outreach programme the *Friends* support at the Egypt Centre for disadvantaged children living in Swansea. Fifteen children, each month, are offered a place on the 'young Egyptologist' two-day fun-packed course. Schools with a high number of children who are disadvantaged socially or economically are targeted. The museum provides transport and a packed lunch as well as a folder of completed work and art and craft materials. The culmination of the course is the award ceremony to which teachers, family and friends of the children are invited to see the children being presented with a certificate of their achievement. The course aims to motivate children to foster a love of learning, to increase self-esteem and confidence through a greater sense of achievement, as well as developing literacy and numeracy skills.

The second charity is the SunShine Project International based in Luxor, Egypt. The aim of the charity is to care for abandoned and needy children in Egypt and its promise is to leave no child in need behind. Once a child, usually a baby under a day old, has been admitted into SunShine they have a home for life. On average a new baby arrives every month and with numbers swelling it is imperative that a new residence for the children is built. SunShine is wholly reliant on the generosity and compassion of tourists, chiefly British ones. Our aim is to aid the charity build a new bigger and better home and to help towards running costs.

We are holding a charity conference in May (details are in your newsletter), as well as our annual Fun-day to raise funds for the challenge. Sybil Crouch, manager of the Taliesin, is showing special Sunday matinees and all proceeds will go into the challenge funds (call at the Taliesin for a current brochure or ring the box office on 01792 296883 for more details).

For Eternity

- a Translation

Behind I've left my trials and tribulations,
The call to arms, the pressures of the nations:
Political necessities and sacred duties too,
Are well forgot and now bequeathed to you.

My spirit now, rebound, can rise into the sky, Mortal remains,
well wrapped, I leave as well they lie
in earthbound splendour; fit for time's enduring,
With passage rites my eternal home securing.
My soul, feather-light, has gained its passage right,
The mute evidence is within my lingering sight.

So, fractured Sun reborn, I rise to join you,
And leave behind my mourners, well paid, who
record my powers for future generations,
For their due knowledge and thus their veneration.

Therefore will they see, and marvel at the tale,
What might and power I wielded, on what grand scale
my buildings were created; my people fed; my name
widely known. So here, in immortality and great fame,
Lies one who, in their time, was just and mighty, yet
a humble believer; wise and beloved

(here the inscription was obliterated)

by Susan Godding

© Susan Godding 22 January 2003

We are also registered to do a sponsored swim and we have included a sponsor form if you would like to sponsor our swimming team. If you would like to help in any way or have an idea for fund-raising please contact Wendy or Stuart at the Egypt Centre. If you know of any companies that may consider sponsoring the challenge please let us know. The company name will be appear on the advertising power-point presentation at the Taliesin Theatre, which will be seen by approximately 10,000 patrons every four months and entered on the Egypt Centre Web page as a thank-you. We will keep you posted as to how the Challenge is doing and of the events we are holding to raise funds.

by Wendy and Stuart





A trip to Brussels

We wanted to go to Brussels to see a special Egyptology exhibition. After considering several options we chose a Wallace Arnold coach tour - Popular Ostend. At £199 for five days half-board, we thought it good value so on December 16th, a cold, wet Monday morning, we left Bridgend. Everything was well organised.

The pleasant hours spent in Ostend itself, glittering with Christmas lights, the trips to Ghent, Bruges and across the ferry to Middelburg in Holland were a splendid bonus. But our main aim was Brussels. On Wednesday, we made our own way there. The hour-long train journey was comfortable and cost approximately £2 - senior citizens' concession! The metro took us close to the Museum we wanted - Musees Royaux d'Art et d'Histoire.

The exhibition was entitled *Les artistes de Pharaon*, about the life of the workers at Deir-el-Medina in the Valley of the Kings. There were introductory pictures of the village ruins and necropolis of the craftsmen community during the New Kingdom 1500 - 1050 BC. These workers, valued for their skills and imaginative artistry, were formerly called 'Servants in the Place of Truth'. However, as well as digging and decorating the tombs of the pharaohs, they erected elaborate funerary sites for themselves and their families. They must have traded skills and materials one with the other to achieve such marvellous results. A detailed history of the place, and over 360 items on display, made for a fascinating afternoon. The only pity - all the information was in Flemish or French - no English at all - not even a guide book. Nevertheless, everything was well displayed and of great interest. There were numerous ostraca - amazing to think these are the actual scribbles of notes and sketches done by the men at the time.

The stela from the tomb of Seti I, on loan from Florence, shows the peak of the workmen's skill. One of the highlights was a replica of the tomb of Sennedjem, an ordinary man, imagining his afterlife in the mythical fields of Ialu. He and his wife, Iyneferti, are shown reaping grain, ploughing with a team of dappled cattle, harvesting flax. The colours are beautiful.

The exhibition followed four themes:

LIFE - had household furniture, personal objects, a model of a typical home and inscriptions describing daily life.

CREATION - concerned the work of the Valley - tools, papyri, ostraca, accounts of team organisation, notes about strike action, conflicts, absence from work, sketches, corrections.

BELIEFS - all about piety - to do with the worship of ancestors and local gods.

DEATH - the grave chamber and various grave goods including toiletries, jewellery games, musical instruments and tools.

In the hallway were old photographs and materials used by the archaeologists during their excavations of Deir-el-Medina in the 1930s. We welcomed a sit-down for a 15 minute film of its discovery.

We were enthralled with everything and came away with a clearer idea of what life must have been like in that place, all those years ago. It took little imagination to feel we were breathing the very air of this unique area of Ancient Egypt..

A thoroughly worthwhile trip.

by Joyce James

Family move to Swansea

Way back in 1997 when I still lived and worked in Berkshire we often thought of retirement and where we would go when the opportunity came we used to come to South Wales often for holidays and especially to Swansea where my wife was born. There were still some family members living here and we always enjoyed ourselves and found everybody very friendly.

Looking in the local papers and on banners we saw advertisements placed announcing the imminent opening of the Egypt Centre. We checked to see where it was and on a subsequent visit paid a call and were very impressed with the whole display. At the same time we picked up some information on the Friends and Volunteers. Egyptology had always been a hobby of mine since the early 1960's when in the Navy I had been flown to Cairo to join a ship that "unfortunately" was late in arrival which gave me a long wait. This delay gave me a golden opportunity to look at the pyramids, Cairo Museum and Valley of the Kings which I have never forgotten and had me hooked on Egyptology.

Further enquiries gave me more encouragement and after not too much searching we found a suitable house and having been offered early retirement wrote to see if I could volunteer and when this was accepted we moved here in September 2001 and, as all the books say, lived happily ever after, due mainly to the friendly reception received here at the Egypt Centre and also in the city of Swansea.

by John Brumfitt

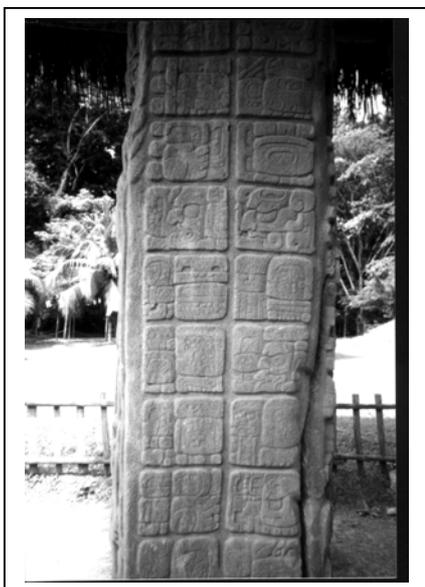




Travelling with the Egyptians

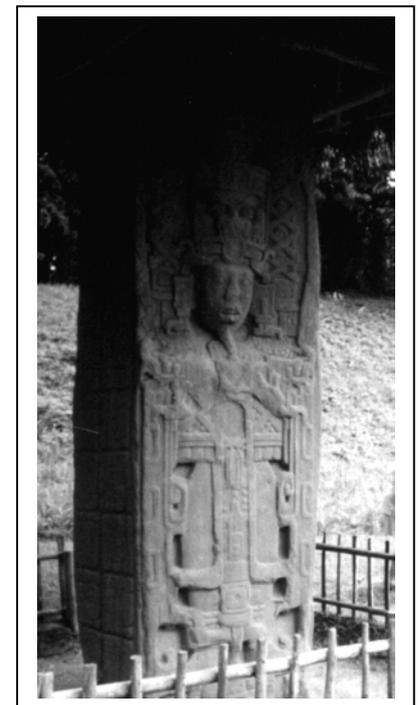
I came to the Egyptians late in life and, as Stuart had warned me, became fascinated by the world of Ancient Egypt. It was not surprising, therefore, on what was scheduled to be a lazy, relaxing cruise around the Yucatan Peninsula and the Caribbean, I found myself hurtling off on all the excursions on offer to Mayan temples, in search of any likeness to the Egyptian civilisation. I am not the first person to be amazed at the similarities between the Egyptian and Mayan civilisations, but no positive evidence exists as yet to prove any cross-fertilisation between them.

The settlement at Quiriga in Guatemala was the one which raised most questions in my mind. We began our journey from the port of Santo Tomas de Castillo, and leaving the small town behind, soon found ourselves travelling through the lush, green countryside which covered the valley floor. High mountains rose on either side and, ahead even higher ranges reached skywards. Our voluble and knowledgeable



guide told us our journey would take about two hours, and he gave us much information en route about the history of Guatemala and the Mayan civilisation in particular. I learnt that the vast Mayan empire stretched from Mexico, along the north-eastern side of South America as far as Honduras.

It had lasted from 2000* B.C. - 1521 A.D., until the Spanish conquest, (although the Classic period is generally regarded as from 300B.C. - 900 A.D.) During this time the Mayans constructed large cities, roads, villages and temples. This was a civilisation rich in gold and precious stones. Much jade was used in decoration and, as in the Chinese civilisations, was highly prized. Museums of Mayan artefacts house many objects carved from jade, which is the second hardest stone to carve, diamond being the hardest. Having watched Chinese craftsmen carving jade ornaments whilst using modern equipment, I marvelled at the ability of the Mayans to carve such



beautiful things, with the tools available to them.

Our guide told us about the Mayan defeat by the Spanish, and the destruction of their cities. Many Mayans were absorbed into Spanish society where; through intermarriage; they became known as Mesquites, and are now the dominant social and political group in Guatemala. As for the pure Mayans, they retreated to the mountains, and continue to make the most beautiful artefacts, which are sold to tourists. Our guide then finished his talk by informing us that we were driving along a fault where **three** tectonic

plates meet, and that Guatemala is subject to many earthquakes - not a very comforting thought!

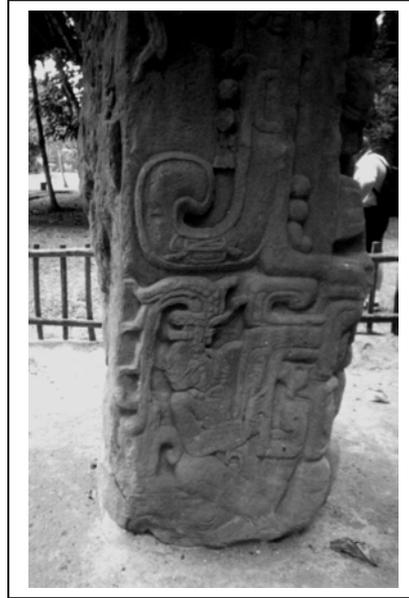
Now, at the site, situated deep in thick rain forest, the remains of what had obviously been huge buildings impressed me. The





pyramidal shapes, a bit like Djoser's stepped pyramid, rose 30 feet in the air, and had obviously been much higher. What was unique about Quiriga, however, were the stone 'stelae', as our guide called them, encrusted in 'hieroglyphics' - again a word he used, which commemorated the founder of the city, and related the details of the battle in which he had defeated his enemies. How like the Egyptian Pharaohs!

Stelae were also placed at the entrance to the city and other strategic points. All were covered with 'hieroglyphics'. Our guide pointed to symbols which represented numbers, (the Mayans were brilliant mathematicians and astronomers; produced an almanac, and could calculate zero.), and a pictorial representation of a man crouched amongst the roots of a ceber tree - the national tree of Guatemala. The Mayans believed that man had sprouted from the roots of a ceber tree, and these particular stelae showed how one of the city's rulers was descended from the first man. It is easy to make a connection between this



belief and trees in the Garden of Eden, but I am blessed with a particularly vivid imagination!

Finally, we stopped at a strange stone object which archaeologists believe is a tomb of some sort. Again heavily carved with 'hieroglyphics', it appeared to be half snake and half tortoise. Our guide pointed out the head of a man being swallowed by the snake, and another head being regurgitated by the tortoise. This was thought to symbolise the death of the old king

and the birth of the new leader. Thoughts of the Egyptian Devourer filled my mind.....

I spent some time wandering around the site; following well-paved stone paths; peering into undergrowth at still foliage-covered buildings; climbing the pyramid; and examining the ball court where the Mayans played a form of football, sometimes using the heads of their enemies as balls. This may explain the dominance of the South Americans in football today!

Although the cleared site was bathed in sunshine, the surrounding rain forest created a threatening air. I felt this had not been a peaceful world to live in, and, unlike the Egyptians, the Mayan pictures were full of cruel images. The peaceful agricultural and domestic scenes of Egyptian wall paintings were not evident. Quiriga is a recent excavation and was lacking in guide books, maps etc. Who knows what else is lurking under the jungle canopy, and maybe, in the future, a connecting link with Egypt **will** be found?

by Claire Edwards





Widening Participation in a University Museum

First a few details about us: – Egypt Centre is a small museum of Egyptian antiquities run by University of Wales Swansea. We are open five days a week, free to the public and have small budget of about £7000 per year plus costs for four members of staff. The collection comprises over 4000 objects and we have 19,000 visitors per annum.

Like many museums we have access problems. The majority of visitors tend to be from restricted socio-economic backgrounds and age-groups. However the problem is exacerbated by our situation on a University campus. To get to us you have to pass through a manned checkpoint and parking is almost impossible – not a welcoming experience. However, we have tried to overcome these problems and our two most successful schemes, our volunteer scheme and our out of school hours workshops have gone some way to widening participation.

The volunteer programme made a virtue out of a necessity. Initially we were set up with only one member of staff with two galleries and a shop sales area to run! We had to rely on volunteers. However, we have since turned this to advantage, using our volunteers to widen participation in the community. We now have a full time volunteer liaison officer who panders to their every need! Volunteers mainly help in the galleries acting as guides and leading school hands-on workshops. Workshop activities are very labour intensive with one leader working with six or seven children. A school usually visits for a day, and volunteers will normally work half a day or a day at a time. No changes are made to the activities, nor new activities introduced without the input of volunteers.

Of course we have a number of ‘traditional’ volunteers whose help we welcome. However, we have also worked with Pathways Training and Job Force Wales to employ people with various difficulties. Their development after a few weeks here can be remarkable.

We now have around 70 volunteers of all ages and types and have been successful in gaining a Millennium Volunteer Award of around £5000. This is used for volunteer training, trips to other museums, volunteer sweatshirts, etc.

All volunteers are checked by the Criminal Records Bureau. We will still take volunteers with a criminal record but our real concern is related to child protection.

Advice was taken from the Child Protection Agency and includes a strict written code for volunteers working with children. Some volunteers are also children! If you visit the museum on a Saturday you may well be greeted by an enthusiastic child anxious to show you how to do Egyptian maths or demonstrate mummification on our ‘dummy mummy’.

Our other big success concerns out of school activities for disadvantaged children. Last year we successfully obtained c.£3000 for a pilot scheme. This being successful, we were given around £4000 from the lottery New Opportunities Fund (NOF) toward running the project this year. We also fundraise ourselves, but that’s another story.

Schools with a high number of disadvantaged pupils are targeted. Pupils may be socially or economically disadvantaged. The scheme is a partnership programme with Swansea Council and so we have had advice and support from the schools. The teachers are asked to send those pupils whom they think would most benefit. Sadly, occasionally, the parents will not allow the children to visit despite the fact that transport and lunch are also provided free of charge.

Fifteen children come to the Centre for two consecutive Saturdays and are given various fun activities to do – taking the innards out of the dummy mummy to practice embalming is extremely popular. We also allow the handling of real Egyptian objects, children go to ‘scribe school’ and learn to write their names in hieroglyphs (some of these children cannot read or write English/Welsh), Egyptian maths is taught, etc. There are lots of craft activities and the resultant objects can be taken home.

At the end of the two days we have a presentation ceremony. Friends and relatives are invited and each child has its moment of glory as it goes up to collect a certificate proving its status as a “Young Egyptologist”. Many of these children and their carers have never set foot in a museum before, let alone a University museum. However, the initial apprehension is soon overcome by the children’s excitement.

Our aim is to improve literacy, numeracy but most importantly to build confidence. Child-friendly questionnaires help us judge success or failure, other evidence is more individual. We received a letter from one teacher saying that a particular child’s attitude to learning had changed so

dramatically that she was now giving class talks on Egyptology and researching the subject in her own time!

Finally, who actually runs these programmes? Stuart Williams is our Volunteer Liaison Officer, himself an ex-volunteer here. Wendy Goodridge administers the NOF workshops. She was the Centre’s very first volunteer. One leader and three helpers supervise the activities. All of these are ex-volunteers, now employed part-time. Last but certainly not least, the Egypt Centre uses the *Friends of the Egypt Centre* to officially employ our workers. Unfortunately we would not be able to continue the NOF project through traditional University channels.

If you want to know more you can contact Wendy or Stuart. Their e-mail addresses are:

s.j.williams@swansea.ac.uk and
w.r.goodridge@swansea.ac.uk
or ring (01792) 295960.

by Carolyn Brown

Plea for Articles!

Once again we are desperate for articles to fill the pages every issue, and what we want more than anything else is input from our members. It does not have to be long, or about Egypt; it can be about your holidays, or a puzzle, or cartoon. Anything thing you think you would like to share will be welcome. This newsletter is for the friends, by the friends, and as our numbers are growing all the time, it would be great if we could hear from as many of you as possible.

Please send all submissions to The Egypt Centre, and mark them c/o Mike MacDonagh, our editor.

Thank you!

by Rebecca Shields

