

# INSCRIPTIONS

*The Newsletter of the Friends of the Egypt Centre, Swansea*

## Issue 28

December 2008

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*Whatever else you do this Christmas...*

### *Re-discovery of the South Asasif Necropolis*

ELENA PISCHIKOVA is the Director of the South Asasif Conservation Project and a Research Scholar at the American University in Cairo. On 7 January 2009, she will visit Swansea to speak on three decorated Late Period tombs that were recently rediscovered by her team on the West Bank at Thebes.

Described by travellers of the 19th century as among the most beautiful of Theban tombs, these tombs were gradually falling into a state of destruction. Even in their ruined condition they have proved capable of offering incredible surprises. An entire intact wall with an exquisitely carved offering scene in the tomb of Karakhamun, and the beautifully painted ceiling of the tomb of Irtieu are among them.



This promises to be a fascinating talk from a very distinguished speaker. Please do your best to attend and let's give Dr Pischikova a decent audience!

Wednesday 7 January

7 p.m.

Faraday A Lecture Theatre

*... don't miss this talk!*



## Fakes Case in the Egypt Centre

If you go into the Egypt Centre you will see we have a lot of new items on display. We have decided to put together a selection of some of the fakes and copies. Fakes and copies tell us what people thought ancient Egyptian artefacts looked like in the past. They can also tell us about earlier collectors. The idea that only genuine ancient antiquities should form part of a collection was not always followed in the past. So, if collectors did not have genuine pieces they would often have copies made. Here is a bit more information on one piece you can see on display.



This artefact (W215) is made from pottery and shows the prenomen of Ramesses II. It was purchased at auction by Wellcome in 1932.

Such objects are often mistaken for the bases of funerary cones, however they are an early form of copy. Most, unlike ours, bear the cartouche of Ramesses III. So, ours is a rare type of fake.

Cyril Aldred (1957) recognised these as forgeries based on funerary cones. He quotes an 1884 letter from Charles Edwin Wilbour which says 'I visited the woman Giudeeyeh, who showed me the (modern) stamp from which she moulds and bakes the round brick stamps of Rameses III, that are always offered to you in his temple at Medinet Haboo. She lives north of Yussuf and I encouraged her industry; it saves monuments from destruction.'

### References

Aldred, C. 1957. 'The Funerary Cones' of Ramesses III'. *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 43, 113.

by Carolyn Graves-Brown

## Introducing Ashleigh

Hello! My name is Ashleigh, and I'm the new volunteer manager for the Egypt Centre. I know how much Stuart did for everyone, and I hope I will live up to his high standards for the Egypt Centre and continue to develop the volunteering programme. I have had a baptism of fire in my first few weeks here, and I am enjoying it immensely.

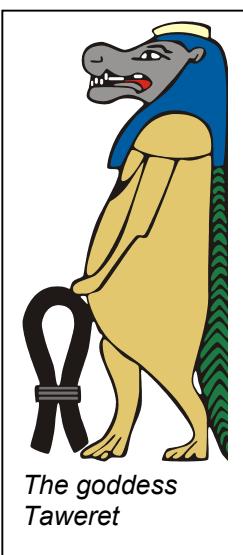
Everyone here is so friendly, I already feel like

I am a part of the team, for which I am very grateful. If you have any queries, or would like to talk to me about anything, I am always here in the Egypt Centre, Tuesday to Saturday.

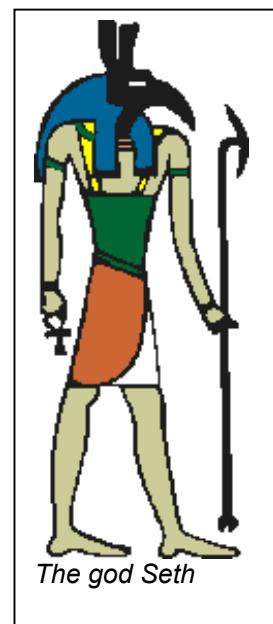
A few things you might like to know about me: I studied archaeology at Durham for my undergraduate degree and then did my postgraduate Masters in Egyptology. I have worked in museums for two years as front of house and have volunteered for about the same time in the local county museum. My previous job was as a project manager working with communities and volunteers to tackle drugs and alcohol abuse in my local county.

My personal interests in Egyptology are Spell 125 of the Book of the Dead, particularly the demon Ammit. I am also interested in the goddess Taweret,

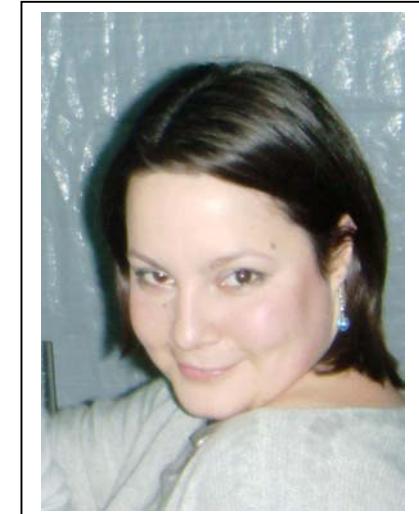
Seth, the proof of the imagination, and individuality within Ancient Egypt, which was the topic of my Masters thesis.



The goddess Taweret



The god Seth



I am really looking forward to working here, and based on my experience so far I think that it will be exciting and fulfilling for many years to come.

by Ashleigh Taylor





## Editorial

This issue has been put together in a great hurry, so we hope you'll understand if it's not quite up to our usual standard!

The attendance at some of our recent talks has been a bit disappointing, perhaps because the weather has been so awful and it's hard to drag yourself out on a cold dark night! We hope as many as possible will make the effort to come on 7<sup>th</sup> January to our forthcoming talk by Dr Elena Pischikova, which promises to be very interesting indeed.

The Editor welcomes our newly appointed officers. Ken Griffin will, I'm sure, be a knowledgeable and dynamic Chair and a worthy successor to Claire who served us so well; and it is great to have Ashleigh Taylor as our Volunteer Manager to fill the considerable gap left by Stuart's departure.

The Editor and his wife would also like to thank the Committee for the most generous gift presented to us at the September AGM. It was very much appreciated and most enjoyable!!

Many thanks to those who have contributed to this issue. People sometimes ask "When is the next Inscriptions coming out?" Well, the answer is, the next issue will be prepared as soon we've got enough material! So please send your contributions for the next issue to the Egypt Centre, marked for the attention of Mike Mac Donagh.

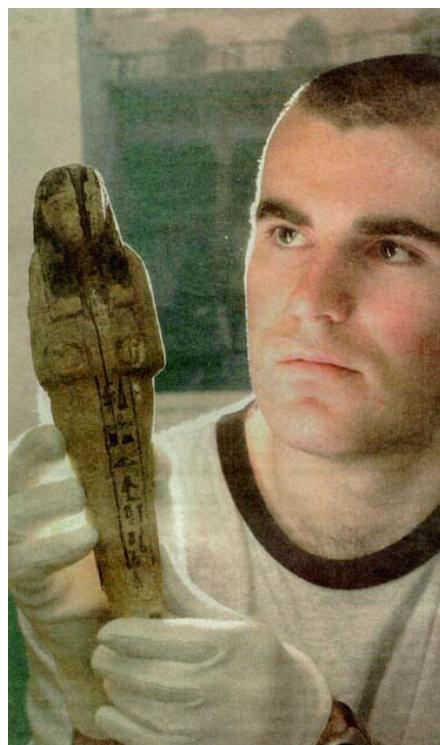
As always we welcome any type of contribution, whether chatty or scholarly, but we can only publish original or copyright-free material, not items published elsewhere and subject to copyright.

It remains to wish all our readers a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. We look forward to seeing everyone again in 2009!

*Mike Mac Donagh*

## Introducing Kenneth Griffin

Originally from Belfast, my fascination with ancient Egypt started at a very young age, with regular visits to the Ulster Museum and the mummy of Takabuti housed within. While Egyptian history was obviously not a part of the national curriculum, I was fortunate to take classes in Classical Civilisation and Ancient History. In 2000 I moved to Swansea where I finally had the opportunity to study Egyptology, completing my BA, and later my MA, in Ancient Egyptian Culture. In 2006 I started my Ph.D examining the role of the *rekhyt* within the religious sphere. Studying in Swansea also brought me in close contact with the Egypt Centre, the largest collection of Egyptian antiquities in Wales, where I have worked since 2000. I have also been a member of the Friends of the Egypt Centre since September 2000 and have served as membership secretary, programme organiser and now Chair. Since 2003 I have been the co-ordinating tutor of Egyptology with DACE (Adult Education), developing and teaching a wide range of topics including history, religion, art and architecture, literature and language modules. I first visited Egypt in 1997, during which time my eagerness to follow the



*Ken Griffin examining a Shabti figure in the Egypt Centre*

Egyptological path was strengthened. To date, I have travelled to Egypt on over 20 occasions, including nine as a tour leader, visiting sites from Alexandria in the north to Abu Simbel in the South.

### Publications:

#### Articles:

'Images of the Rekhyt From Ancient Egypt', in *Ancient Egypt* 7:2 (2006), 45-50.

'A Reinterpretation of the Use and Function of the Rekhyt Rebus in New Kingdom Temples', in *Current Research in Egyptology* 2006. Edited by M. Cannata. Oxford, Oxbow Books, 2007, 66-84.

'An Ax iqr n Ra Stela from the Collection of the Egypt Centre, Swansea', in *Egyptian Stories: A British Egyptological Tribute to Alan B. Lloyd*. Edited by T. Schneider and K. Szpakowska. Alter Orient und Altes Testament 347. Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2007, 137-148.

#### Edited:

With the collaboration of Meg Gundlach. 'Current Research in Egyptology 2007'. Oxbow Books, Oxford, 2008.

*by Kenneth Griffin*

*See Ken's fascinating article on X-raying the animal mummies in the Egypt Centre, on page .... - Ed*





# A visit to Highclere Castle

## — ancestral home of the Earls of Carnarvon

Since the sun had decided it was not going to make an appearance in August in order that we could laze on the beach, we decided to have a long weekend in Winchester as neither of us had been there. It also gave my husband the opportunity to act out his youthful fantasy and drive his car with the roof down around country lanes.

Winchester was lovely and the cathedral had the remains of Jane Austen, St Swithin and King Canute and his wife Emma to mention but a few. The next day we went to Highclere to visit the 5<sup>th</sup> Earl's Egyptian collection and see the house and grounds. The drive through parkland to the car park was very impressive. During the 1840s the 3<sup>rd</sup> Earl had commissioned the Victorian architect Sir Charles Barry, who designed the Houses of Parliament, to transform the original Georgian house into the present mansion. We had a guided tour around the magnificent house, however the Carnarvons' link with Wales seemed a bit tenuous as it came from another family they were linked with who had estates in Wales.



Highclere Castle

interesting, most of the pieces had come from the excavations Carnarvon had organised with Carter between 1907 and 1913. Unfortunately we were not allowed to take pictures. The centrepiece was a sycamore coffin of an Egyptian Noblewoman "Irtyru" (c 1300bce) covered with paintings depicting scenes from "The Book of the Dead". Amongst many other exhibits are small pieces from the tomb of Tutankhamun, and an alabaster carving of Amenhotep III, one of the greatest Pharaohs and possibly grandfather of Tutankhamun. There were also some very nice silver bracelets found in Tell el-Balamun. Also interesting was an alabaster jar from the mummification of Merenptah, whose mortuary temple we had visited earlier this year.



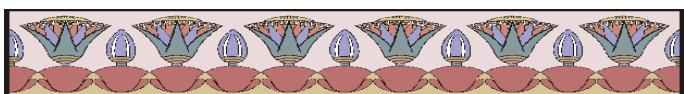
Monk's Garden – spot the Earl!

The discovery of the tomb of Tutankhamun was possibly one of the greatest archaeological discoveries of all time, still firing the imagination today and the two names forever linked with its discovery are those of Carter and Carnarvon.

The Egyptian Exhibition is in the cellars of the Castle, though during our tour we did see two small cupboards where a few pieces had been hidden and forgotten. The 5<sup>th</sup> Earl was one of the last of the Edwardian adventurers who had the time and money to devote to archaeological research and originally went to Egypt for his health. Most of pieces he had collected had been sold to the Metropolitan museum in New York after his death to pay for death duties. The collection though small was very

The collection was only a fraction of the size of ours but we were very glad to have seen Highclere and enjoyed our visit enormously. We even thought we saw the present Earl cutting the grass in the Monk's garden. Fiona, the 8<sup>th</sup> Countess of Carnarvon and wife of the present Earl, has continued the family's interest and has recently written a book about the lives and times of Carter and Carnarvon.

by Sheila Nowell





# *Life After Death on the Nile: A Journey of the Rekhyt to Aswan*

October saw a motley crew of Egypt Centre volunteers, Friends of the Egypt Centre Committee members and D.A.C.E. Egyptology Certificate students head to Aswan in Upper Egypt for a week of sightseeing, and alleged study.

It didn't start well. The minibus taking us to Gatwick died suddenly in the Swansea Valley. Fortunately a replacement bus was secured and we were on our way. Luckily the rest of our journey from Swansea to Luxor was trouble free.

Upon arrival at Luxor Airport we met up with Ahmed, whom many of you know, our guide for the visit. After checking in at the Mercure Luxor<sup>2</sup> (the hotel which appears to feature the friendliest staff in Luxor), we headed off to the Amoun Restaurant, which can now be found at the rear of the Savoy Mall on the Corniche, not far from the Mercure. An excellent meal was interrupted by several power cuts<sup>3</sup>, which ensured an unexpected candlelit supper. Upon returning to the hotel we were confronted by "entertainment" in the form of Luxor's answer to Margarita Pracatan.<sup>4</sup> Fortunately we were due to leave for Aswan with the convoy at 7.00 a.m. the following morning and this meant we were unable to listen to her entire repertoire...

En route to Aswan the next day we visited Kom Ombo Temple, which is a Ptolemaic temple dedicated to Sobek and Horus the Elder. In daylight the temple is a revelation. Previously I had visited whilst on Nile cruises and this had always coincided with the sun setting and shadows and gloom. By day the quality of the reliefs can truly be appreciated (see picture opposite).

After refreshments we hit the road and it wasn't long before we arrived at Aswan. Once we had checked into the Pyramisa Isis hotel (set on its own island in

the Nile) we crossed back over the river and visited the Nubian Museum<sup>5</sup>. If you should find yourself in Aswan and haven't visited the museum, I can recommend it. It's an excellent museum and is partly open air where prehistoric cave art can be viewed alongside ancient Egyptian artefacts. That evening ended with a visit to the Salah-Din riverside restaurant. Amongst its considerable charms are excellent food, superb location and the fact that Stella Lager was available...

The next day we visited the Unfinished Obelisk, which is usually attributed to the reign of Hatshepsut and which, if it had not been abandoned due to a flaw in the stone, would have been 42 metres in length and would have weighed approximately 1216 tonnes. The exit from the Obelisk features a small market and this involved us running the gauntlet of souvenir "traders". It would however appear that some of our entourage were of the opinion that you can never own too many stuffed camels.

Our next stop was the Aswan High Dam, which was finally completed in 1970 and originally supplied up to 50% of Egypt's electricity. The dam is a staple of any Nile cruise and consequently I had already visited it several times—although this time several of us had the opportunity to visit the Egyptian/Russian<sup>6</sup> monument, an impressive (and huge) concrete structure in the shape of a lotus flower.



Reliefs at the Kom Ombo temple

Next we were off to the Temple of Isis at Philae, which, it is believed, was closed in 550 A.D. and was the last pagan temple in use in Egypt. Highlights of the temple included interesting Bes headed columns,

<sup>1</sup> Why the title? Of course some believe that Agatha Christie wrote Death on the Nile in 1937 whilst staying at the Old Cataract Hotel in Aswan. I attempted to visit it whilst we were there. Sadly it was closed. Perhaps next time...

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.mercure.com/gb/hotel-1800-mercure-luxor/index.shtml>

<sup>3</sup> We found out later that the reason for the power cuts was due to President Mubarak's planned visit to Luxor the following week. Apparently the local electricity substations were switched off in order to "paint them". Only in Egypt...

<sup>4</sup> Cuban singer with an "interesting" voice.





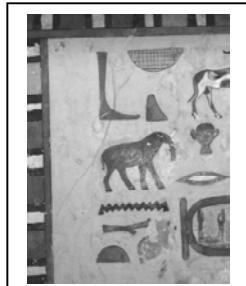
the last attributed hieroglyphs ever carved<sup>7</sup> (please don't ask me to translate these) and lots of Rekhyt birds for Ken. Some things never change.

After a two-hour felucca cruise up the Nile we were dropped off at the Aswan Moon restaurant. This night featured Janie's epic retelling of the story of Chloe the Goat which, once heard, will never be forgotten. Space precludes me from relating it here. The evening ended with a walk through Aswan's not inconsiderable, and very interesting, market and the consumption of sweet mint tea and shisha.

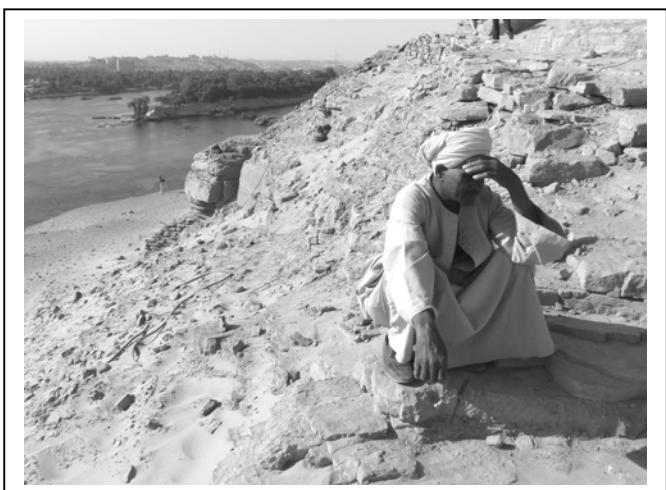
The next day we departed for New Kalabsha Island in order to visit the temples and shrines moved there by UNESCO during the construction of the Aswan High Dam and Lake Nasser. The island is visible from the High Dam and features several interesting Nubian temples, including that of the impressive Kalabsha temple, dedicated to the Nubian god Mandulis, as well as a shrine of Ramesses II, originally from Beit el-Wali which was located 50 km south of Aswan, and which features some well-preserved victory scenes of Ramesses and his sons against Nubian tribesmen.

Little change there!

The following day saw most of us visit the Tombs of the Nobles, which overlook Aswan. Perhaps the most interesting tomb, which can be found here, is the tomb of Sarenput II, which features an unusual elephant hieroglyph (see picture).



One of the less appealing parts of the visit to the Tombs of the Nobles was the tomb guardian who insisted on showing us some of the previous occupants in the form of an excavation bucket full of bones.



Following this, some of the group headed off in the convoy to Abu Simbel. However, as I had already been there previously I decided to have a relaxing day off at the hotel.

The next day our first visit was to Sohil Island, with its premier attraction perhaps being the Famine Stela, which is a Ptolemaic carving of a tale set in the Third Dynasty involving Djoser. Sohil features over 250 inscriptions and was documented by Flinders Petrie in 1887.

Then we were off to Elephantine Island. You could realistically spend a whole day exploring Elephantine Island, as it is absolutely full of ruins. Interesting features include the Nilometer<sup>8</sup> and an early dynastic shrine, which is located beneath the Temple of Satis. Unfortunately we couldn't gain access to it as the keeper didn't know where the key is kept, which I suspect is a modern Egyptian phrase which means, "it is hot, please stop bothering me!"

Also worth visiting on Elephantine is the original Aswan museum, which is in stark contrast to the new Nubian museum. Through dusty glass cabinets you can view various mummified animals, sarcophagi and a less than attractive mummified head (minus the body). Our final day in Aswan ended with an evening at a Nubian style restaurant, which, in common with the rest of our trip, featured excellent food. Although those troubled by loud music should probably avoid any restaurant that advertises an evening of traditional Nubian music and a whirling dervish. It was superb!

On our return journey to Luxor we were fortunate to visit the shrines and quarries of Gebel El-Silsila. Perhaps the most important feature here is the temple of Horemheb, although several of the shrines were in my opinion equally worth viewing.

Finally we arrived back in Luxor, a much cleaner and spruced up version of Luxor where everything was freshly painted and every shop appeared to be related in some way to the President's imminent visit. Of particular note was the Mubarak shopping centre, which appeared to have sprung from nowhere!

The trip with Journeys of the Rekhyt was excellent, and I'd recommend it to anyone who wants to stray from the path of the package holiday.

Many thanks to Ken, Meg, Ahmed, Stuart and my fellow travellers.

*by L.S.J. Howells*

<sup>7</sup> These were carved in 394AD.

<sup>8</sup> Used by the ancient Egyptians in order to measure the height of the Nile flooding and calculate taxes for the next harvest.



# X-raying the Animal Mummies at the Egypt Centre: Part One

At the end of November, I had the opportunity to X-ray a curious female figurine from the Egypt Centre for an ongoing project. At the same time it was suggested that this might be a good opportunity to also X-ray one of our animal mummies to determine its contents.



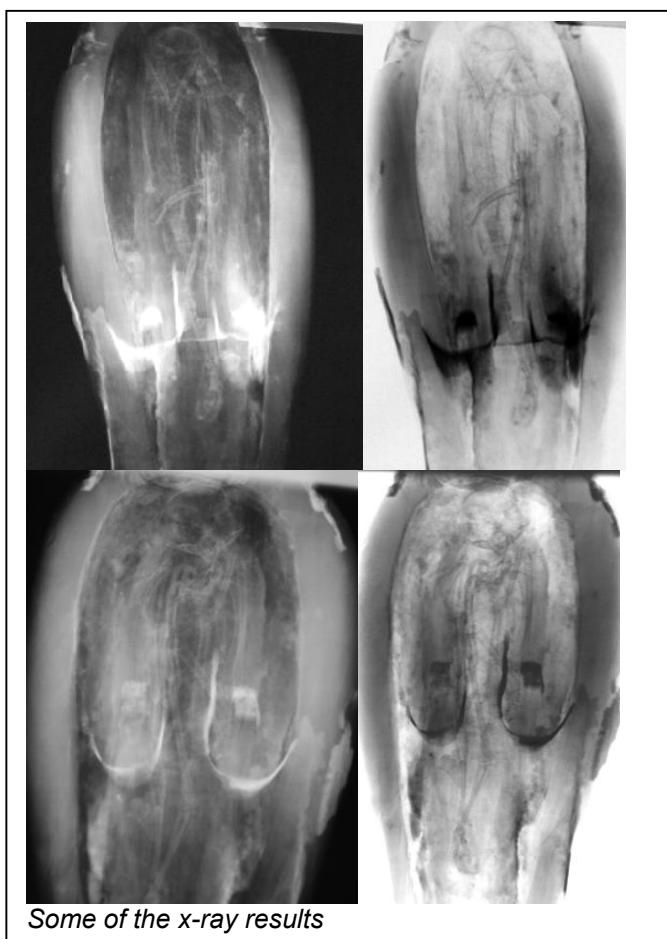
Ken prepares to x-ray W535

The mummy in question, W535, is contained within a wooden coffin shaped as a falcon, which would lead us to believe that a falcon was contained inside. This bird was the sacred animal of the god Horus and many such mummies have been found in large quantities in Egypt. While the coffin in the Egypt Centre, which is on display in the Animal Case in the House of Death, has been stripped of most of its decoration, remains of gilding show that it was once an elaborate object.

However, despite this ornate decoration, we were aware that the contents of the coffin might disappoint. The ancient Egyptians, especially during the Graeco-Roman Period, produced many fake mummies which were sold to naïve worshippers, to be deposited in the vast catacombs. In fact, often the most elaborate appearing mummies contained nothing more than reeds as packing. It was even possible for the Egyptians to house different mummified animals than their coffins might suggest. Raptors were among the most frequently faked animals, possibly because of

the difficulty of catching them. We were therefore very apprehensive about the contents of our mummy.

The five minute wait for the processing of the X-ray seemed to take forever before our radiographer Liz came hurriedly and excitingly into the room to view the results on the light box. To our excitement the X-rays revealed the tantalising skeletal remains of avian creature. Despite the fact that the remains of gold hindered the view slightly, after a slight adjustment of the X-ray settings the remains became much clearer. Finally, we were able to identify certain anatomical features including the feet, legs and skull.



Some of the x-ray results

We then decided to take more X-rays from various angles which might reveal more about the skeleton and hopefully provide an identification of the bird species. This proved a great success and the new angles revealed even more details about the anatomy of the bird. Our final angle proved to be the most revealing and we were able to make out the facial features in great detail. While at this stage we are unable to positively identify the species of bird, cause of death and age, the X-rays have been shown to a number of bird experts and are awaiting response.





This venture has therefore proved extremely successful and it is hoped that in the not too distant future the rest of the animal mummies from the Egypt Centre collection will also be X-rayed. In fact, at the time of writing this article we were able to have our mummified crocodile X-rayed, the results of which will follow in the next edition of *Inscriptions*.

#### Further reading

Ikram, Salima. (2004). Beloved Beasts: Animal mummies from ancient Egypt. Cairo: The Supreme Council of Antiquities Press.

Ikram, Salima. ed. (2004). Divine Creatures: Animal mummies in ancient Egypt. Cairo: American University in Cairo Press.

<http://animalmummies.com/>

by Kenneth Griffin

## Objects in the Egypt Centre: Pottery cones

Simple Name: Pottery cones

Catalogue Number: W1077a and W1078

**These items were Egypt Centre's 'Object of the Month' June 2008 in which we invited people to guess what the items were.**

We were not sure ourselves. These items are made from hard fired pottery (presumably stoneware). They were found at Armant by the Egypt Exploration Society in their excavations of 1929-1931 and then became part of the Wellcome collection.

An early Egypt Centre card catalogue identified them as grenades used in the 'Nubian war' of the 19th century. Various Egyptologists have since supplied additional information. These objects have been found on various excavations in Islamic Egypt. For example, Nora Shalaby states that several were found in Cairo. The most popular theories as to their purpose seem to be that they were either drinking flasks (possibly for wine as their shape is seen by many to resemble a bunch of grapes) or grenades!



Pottery hollow cones c30cm in circumference and 10.5cm high

One Egyptologist was able to direct us to a publication on these items. The publication is: Miriam Avissar and Edna J. Stern, 'Pottery of the Crusader, Ayyubid, and Mamluk Periods in Israel' Israel Antiquities Authority Reports, 26, Jerusalem 2005, 119-121, pl. XXXIII. Here they are called "Sphero-conical vessels ('grenades')" and dated "from about the second half of the twelfth century to the end of the fourteenth century" (p. 119). The function of the 'grenades' was "far unclear", and several suggestions are given such as containers for mercury, fire-blowers etc. This Egyptologist adds that since both Ayyubids and Mamluks were centred in Egypt, it is not surprising that such vessels are found not only in Israel, but also in Egypt. The Egyptologist recalls having seen one in a private collection in Germany, its provenance was reportedly the Assuan region. Liverpool Museums also have an example from Amarna which can be seen at:

<http://www.globalegyptianmuseum.org/record.aspx?id=3232>.

We are very grateful for all the information from colleagues and hope this will help others with these enigmatic objects. They are now on display in the pottery case in the upstairs gallery.

by Carolyn Gravett-Brown



*A Merry Christmas and  
A Happy New Year to all our Readers!  
Don't forget our next talk — See you on the 7<sup>th</sup> January !!*

