

# INSCRIPTIONS

The Newsletter of the Friends of the Egypt Centre, Swansea

## Issue 30

December 2009

In this issue:

<b>Cairo by bus: A Journey of the Rekhyt to Egypt's capital</b>	2
<i>by L. S. J. Howells</i>	
<b>Editorial</b>	4
<b>Toy or votive offering?</b>	4
<i>by Jayne Holly</i>	
<b>Saturday Club Still Going Strong!</b>	5
<i>by Alison John</i>	
<b>Crossword: Animals of Ancient Egypt</b>	6
<i>by Daphne MacDonagh</i>	
<b>Why not write something for the next Incriptions?</b>	6
<b>Animal Mummies of the Egypt Centre: Part Two</b>	7
<i>by Ken Griffin</i>	
<b>Christmas and New Year opening times</b>	8
<b>Lecture Venue</b>	8
<i>by Ken Griffin</i>	
<b>Crossword solution</b>	8



Carolyn Graves-Brown, Curator of the Egypt Centre (right), receiving a cheque for £1,000 from the Friends at the AGM. Also shown are Jayne Holly, membership secretary, Sheila Nowell, treasurer and Ken Griffin, chairman.  
(Photo: Tony Nowell)



## Amarna twilight: The mystery of Akhenaten's coregent(s)

*A talk by Aidan Dodson*

After the triumphal durbar of Year 12, when much of the known world brought gifts to Akhenaten at his capital of Tell el-Amarna, gloom rapidly descends on the Horizon of the Aten. A series of family deaths was accompanied by the appearance on the scene of some shadowy figures whose names, gender and identity have been a matter of debate for over a century. Dr Dodson will discuss the evidence for this period and set out his proposals for the events that surrounded the last years of Akhenaten and the accession of Tutankhaten.

*Don't miss what promises to be a fascinating lecture!*



**Faraday A Lecture Room**



**Wednesday 13 January 2010, 7 p.m.**



## *Cairo by bus: A Journey of the Rekhyt to Egypt's capital*

After an uneventful flight from Heathrow courtesy of BMI Baby (good food, free drink...typically I slept through the first round...thanks for waking me up Reg) we arrived in Cairo, our base for most of the following two weeks, and headed for our first hotel, the Oasis Hotel, close to the Pyramids on the Alexandria Desert Road. An excellent hotel with comfortable accommodation and several good restaurants (of course we were there for the culture...), I'd return there in an instant.

Our first full day in Cairo saw the compulsory visit to the Pyramids. Fortunately we arrived early and were therefore able to obtain tickets to enter the Great Pyramid. After several minutes of a furnace like heat and stairs and steps and stumbling we arrived in the burial chamber to discover two pyramidiots and a small child chanting and speaking in tongues. The noise was enough to make Khufu turn in his grave. Fortunately however he wasn't in and was spared the relentless caterwauling of these demented creatures. Once their noise was too much to bear we departed for the interior of Khafre's pyramid which appeared to attract a better class of clientele, or at least those who were quieter and perhaps less prone to "exotic" concepts of Egyptology. Before we departed Giza we visited Khufu's Boats Museum, plus several of the smaller pyramids and mastabas before moving on to the Sphinx (it looks smaller in real life!) and the valley temple.



The next day saw the first of two scheduled stops that week at the Cairo Museum. Anyone who has ever visited will realise that at the very least you need two full days to get to see most of the exhibits. There are many items in the garden outside, including to the left of the museum, the reconstructed sarcophagus of Akhenaten. Admittedly it consists mostly of reconstruction and much less of sarcophagus, but it is still well worth seeing, nevertheless. Several of us took the option of viewing the pharaohs' mummies, for an extra fee naturally, and I can recommend you do this should you be at the museum. It is well worth viewing the work of the embalmers, which is generally amazing.

Once we were all "museumed" out we started back to the hotel. A fatal flaw in our plan to return there presented itself when we ended up at the American University in Cairo Bookshop. Several members of the party, possibly including myself, have an addiction to books, and once inside we went berserk. I may for example have ended up with a book on Karnak, which when weighed may or may not have measured five kilos on the scales. Suddenly my twenty-kilo baggage allowance looked a distant memory. Disaster! After this we headed to the French Institute to look at their bookstore where thankfully we bought little, though I did notice some of the more literary amongst our party taking their catalogue, an act which would have repercussions during our second week.





Next day, first stop Memphis. Not Memphis, Tennessee, a different king resides at Memphis, Lower Egypt. As can be seen from the photograph above, Ramesses the Great lies in his slumber. A quick viewing of the open air museum and we were off to Saqqara to visit a selection of mastaba's, including the mastaba of the two brothers as well as Djoser's funerary complex. The site does look as impressive as any of the documentaries on National Geographic.

Our fifth day in Egypt began with a visit to Old Cairo, including the Roman fortress of Babylon and specifically the Coptic Quarter. We visited a number of churches and sat in on a service at the Hanging Church, a church built upon the Roman fortress with part of the building being suspended over a passageway, hence its name. Then on to the Citadel, built by Saladin and my first ever visit inside a mosque. It is a stunning building, with amazing ceiling decoration, lighting and beautiful Islamic design wrought iron work.



A vulture-goddess, Mut or Nekhbet

The day concluded with our second visit to the Cairo Museum, this time focussing upon the ground floor galleries.

The next day saw us being joined by Kasia Spakowska who was visiting Egypt for a few days in order to produce a podcast for the University. This coincided with our visit, to the allegedly closed site of Abusir, home of the Fifth Dynasty sun temples and pyramids. The pyramids are a lot smaller than those of Giza though they do feature valley temples and causeways. The site also features a number of smaller pyramids and mastabas. After spending around an hour and a half in Abusir we returned to Saqqara to view the Imhotep Museum. I can honestly say that this was the best lit and presented museum I have ever visited and would certainly recommend a visit should you be in the area.

Day Seven saw us visit Dahshur, the southernmost part of the Memphite necropolis and home to Sneferu's Red and Bent pyramids. Some of the more naturally curious members of our party descended into the Red Pyramid. In order to enter the pyramid one must descend backwards for quite some distance. About half way down the lungs began to burn with the stench of the ammonia created by the Bat Guano. Clearly the pyramid has a number of unwanted residents and gained some more when two of our team impersonated pyramidiot in the burial chamber for the pod cast.



Then the van got stuck midway between the Red Pyramid and the Bent Pyramid. Would we make it to Lisht to see the pyramids of Amenemhat I and Senwosret I? Would we arrive back at the hotel in order to meet our reinforcements for the second week? Would we find a guard who didn't want "Baksheesh"? Was it true that the chaos god Seth was following us because Reg didn't tip the waiter enough at the Oasis Hotel?

Tune into the next issue of *Inscriptions* where these questions, and others, may be answered....

by L.S.J. Howells





## Editorial

Welcome to the 30<sup>th</sup> issue of *Inscriptions*. The editor and his wife thank the Committee and Friends of the Egypt Centre for their generous gift presented at the AGM —it was much enjoyed!!!

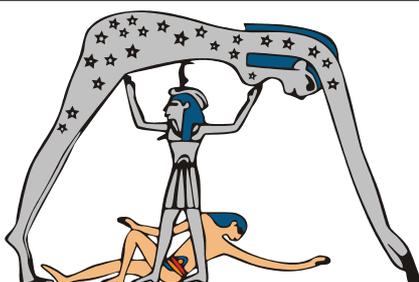
Please note the changes to the lecture venue, which are referred to in Ken Griffin's note on page 8. This will be a welcome change from the "bar room" where, unfortunately, some of our excellent talks were marred by "noises off". Please note especially that Aidan Dodson's talk on 13 January, which promises to be extremely interesting, will take place in our old haunt, the Faraday A Lecture Theatre.

As a matter of interest, some reports are surfacing of the possible discovery of the lost army of Cambyses (Herodotus 3:26). This army was sent to destroy the Oracle of Amun at the Siwa Oasis, but Herodotus says it vanished without trace after a massive sandstorm. For more information, see [www.archaeology.org/0009/newsbriefs/cambyses.html](http://www.archaeology.org/0009/newsbriefs/cambyses.html)

**Don't forget that the Egypt Centre shop has a wide variety of beautiful gifts with an Egyptian theme. It's a great place to find those last-minute presents. Check the back page for Christmas and New Year opening times!**

We wish all our readers a very Happy Christmas and a prosperous New Year, and look forward to seeing everyone again at the talk in January.

*Mike Mac Donagh*



Geb, god of the earth

## Toy or votive offering?



Every month the Egypt Centre selects an object to focus on and puts it on display in a case in the House of Life.

November's object was a roughly made pottery bird (EC25) approximately 12cm long. Its head is missing and there is a hole through the middle.

Pottery items like these have been found at numerous sites in Egypt and Nubia such as Amarna, Mirgissa, Lahun and Askut. Those found at Lahun and Mirgissa are dated to the Middle Kingdom (2025-1750 BC), and on stylistic grounds this piece also probably dates to this period. Examples have also been found dating to the Roman Period including a wooden example from Hawara.

It has been suggested that these pottery birds were used as children's toys, with sticks or pottery wheels being inserted into the hole to allow movement. There is much evidence for the use of clay and mud to make toys animals, including crocodiles, hippopotami and monkeys. Clay would have been the perfect material for making children's toys as it is commonly occurring and basically free to source.

Other examples of Egyptian toys include a group of naked pygmy dancers found in the Middle Kingdom cemetery of Lisht. The ivory dancers are attached to a base and are linked to strings that when pulled allow the figures to dance. Some later wooden toys also have movable parts, for example a bird and a cat in the British Museum have moving mouths.

There are many problems that arise from objects like this. Whilst they can be interpreted as toys for children, the ancient Egyptians also used models made of clay in human and animal form as votive offerings to the gods. Many times it is the context in which items were found that gives an idea of the function of the piece. This is demonstrated by the female figurines typically made from wood or faience. For a long time these were interpreted as children's dolls but the emphasis on the genital areas and the fact that they were often found in the burials of adults makes it more likely that they were associated with fertility, death and rebirth. Roughly made unfired clay items were found at the domestic settlement of Lahun, which suggests that those particular examples were used as children's toys.

There could have been religious significance to the clay animals found throughout ancient Egypt, as animals like crocodiles and hippopotami were very dangerous creatures to the ancient Egyptians and greatly feared, but they are also associated with gods. As mentioned it is often the context in which items are found that can lead to the true nature of objects.

...continued overleaf





Continued from previous page

Many clay votive animals have been found in Middle Kingdom fort sites such as Buhen, as well as at shrines dedicated to Hathor.

The choice of bird is not unusual for ancient Egypt. Many species of birds lived in, or migrated via, Egypt, and the various species can be seen in many forms from mummified birds to depictions on tomb walls. Birds were used as a food source and pastimes such as hunting birds in marshes is well attested in ancient Egypt. Birds were also linked with the religious world with many gods and goddesses taken bird forms, such as Horus, Isis and Nephthys. It is therefore not surprising that birds were chosen as models for children's toys.

### Bibliography and Further Reading:

A.R. David (1979) 'Toys and Games from Kahun in the Manchester Museum Collection' in *Glimpses of Ancient Egypt: Studies in Honour of H.W. Fairman*. Ed. by John Ruffle et al. Warminster: Aris and Phillips Ltd. 12-15

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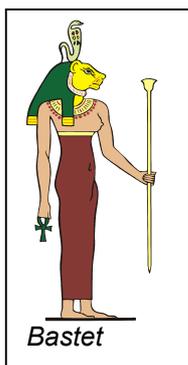
K. Szpakowska (2007) *Daily Life in Ancient Egypt: Recreating Lahun*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

J. Tyldesley (2007) *Egyptian Games and Sports*. Buckinghamshire: Shire Egyptology.

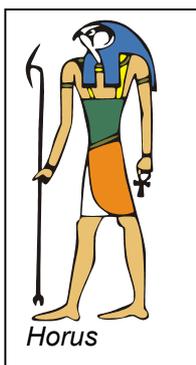
by Jayne Holly



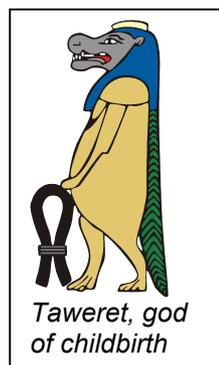
Khnum



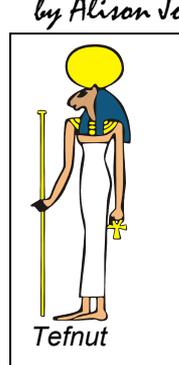
Bastet



Horus



Taweret, god of childbirth



Tefnut

## Saturday Club Still Going Strong!

I have been asked recently at Friends and Egypt Centre events about the Saturday workshops. Yes they are still running very successfully. In fact January 2010 starts our ninth year, so watch this space for tenth anniversary celebrations!

For new members, who do not know about it, the Egypt Centre runs Out of School Hours Workshops, two Saturdays a month. Fourteen children from a different school each month come to the museum and take part in all of the Centre's activities plus arts and crafts sessions. The school chooses the children they think would most benefit from the experience, mostly those with learning difficulties, behavioural problems or those who have never been to a museum or university before. The activities aim to encourage academic skills but also team building and discussion, through the medium of Egyptology. We make all the activities as fun as possible so the children often don't realise they are learning, including dressing up and face painting. At the end of the two-day course, each child is presented with a certificate, a photograph and all their arts, crafts and worksheets. The parents and teachers are invited to attend the presentation. The children are picked up and dropped off by mini bus and have a buffet lunch like a party, all free of charge.

The workshops were originally started with money from the New Opportunities Fund; since then Wendy has sometimes managed to find money from other Trusts or the University. Sometimes, however, we have to fund ourselves and that is why the Egypt Centre and the Friends hold Fun Days, Raffles or other fundraising events. To all those who have supported these events or bought and sold raffle tickets, the workshop staff say a big THANK YOU. The staff members have changed somewhat in the eight years. Currently we are Alison John, workshop leader, with assistants Sandra Hawkins, Peter Jones and Ken Griffin, Friends current Chairman. Wendy Goodridge, Egypt Centre Assistant Curator, does most of the paperwork, contacting schools, arranging consent forms, lunch, mini bus and more.

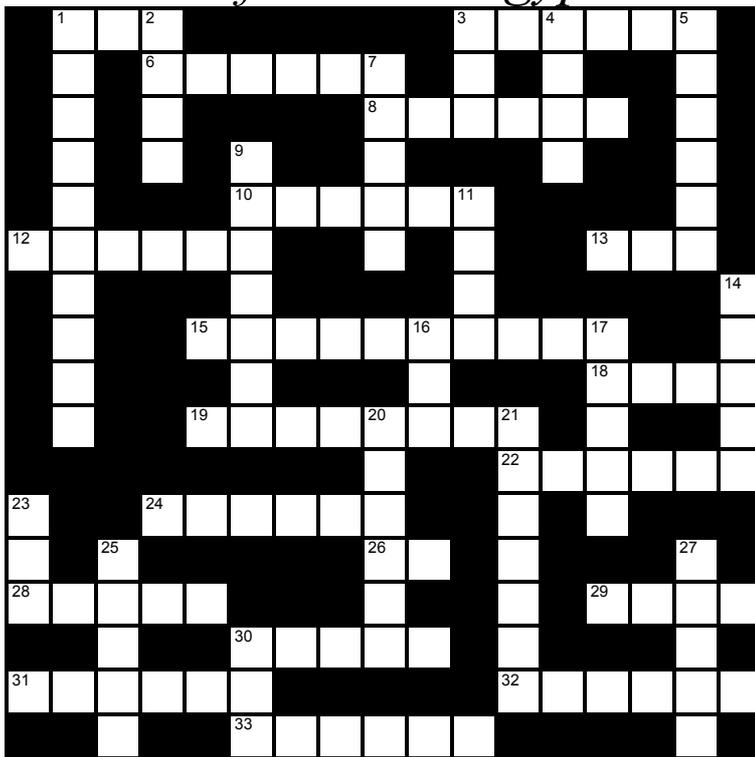
We measure our success by the fact that most years there is a reserve list of schools in case one cancels, and some schools book more than one month due to the number of children waiting to participate. We have had several of the children return as junior volunteers on Saturdays and one of the first workshops inspired a child to go on to higher education, the first member of his family to go to college in several generations. The scheme has been nominated for numerous awards and has even won a few! We are proud of our success and hope to continue for a long time yet. So another thank you to all the Friends committee and members for your support, to Jayne Holly who has been organising everything during Wendy's illness and to everyone at the Egypt Centre, staff and volunteers.

by Alison John





## Crossword: Animals of Ancient Egypt



This crossword is all about animals depicted in Egyptian writing, art or theology. See if you can solve it with the help of the pictures scattered about this issue. The solution is given on the back page.

### Clues Across

- 1 A creature representing Khnum (3)
- 3 Amulets were made in the shape of this beetle (6)
- 6 Snake-god of the underworld (6)
- 8 God of war and hunting, sometimes lion-headed (6)
- 10 Sacred cobra decorating the king's brow (6)
- 12 Anubis, god of embalming, appears as this animal (6)
- 13 Bastet is sometimes depicted as this animal (3)
- 15 Small bird representing the hieroglyph *w* (5,5)
- 18 Sokar can have the head of this bird (4)
- 19 Like Anubis, often represented as a canine (8)
- 22 Goddess of the Nile, sometimes depicted as a gazelle (6)
- 24 Moon god, sometimes linked to the baboon as a sacred animal (6)
- 26 Personality of the deceased, often represented as a bird (2)
- 28 God of knowledge and writing, sometimes shown as a baboon (5)
- 29 Heket appears as this animal (4)
- 30 The sacred animal of Geb (5)
- 31 An aquatic animal associated with Set (6)
- 32 Goddess of moisture, depicted as lips or a lioness (6)
- 33 An ape representing Thoth or Khonsu (6)

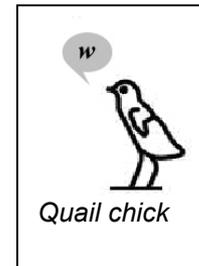
## Why not write something for the next Incriptions?

Contributions are always welcome and should be sent to Mike Mac Donagh c/o The Egypt Centre. We have no set timetable but will produce an issue whenever there's enough material.

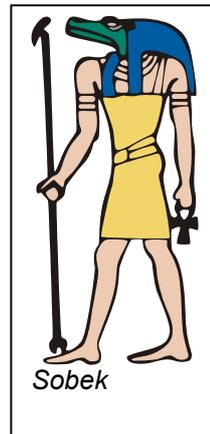
Many thanks to those who contributed to this issue.



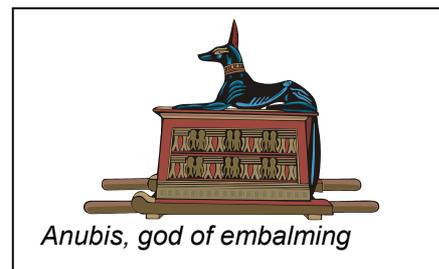
Scarab beetle



Quail chick



Sobek



Anubis, god of embalming

### Clues Down

- 1 Sun god embodied in the Sphinx (10)
- 2 Goddess of harmony, with ostrich feather in her headdress (4)
- 3 God of air and dryness (3)
- 4 A sacred bull (4)
- 5 Cat goddess (6)
- 7 Crocodile god (5)
- 9 This bird can present Mut or Nekhbet (7)
- 11 God of chaos and confusion (4)
- 14 Frog goddess (5)
- 16 Hathor, mother and protectress, is depicted as this animal (3)
- 17 Ram-god worshipped at Elephantine (5)
- 20 Jackal-headed god of embalming (6)
- 21 Hippopotamus god of childbirth (7)
- 23 Vulture-goddess (3)
- 25 A snake who appears on the king's brow (5)
- 27 Falcon-god who embodies kingship (5)
- 30 The black land, also represented as a goose (3)





## *Animal Mummies of the Egypt Centre: Part Two*

A few issues back I reported on the x-raying of the Egypt Centre's mummified hawk which confirmed that the bird was still present within its coffin. This turned out to be the first of the animal mummies from the Centre to be x-rayed and it is hoped that more will be done in the future.

As many of you may know, the Egypt Centre has been doing an 'object of the month' series and I was asked if I would like to choose an object for January 2010. Not knowing where to start I suggested to Carolyn that we could x-ray another one of our animal remains which could in turn be used for the display. The Egypt Centre has a small collection of animal remains, many of which can easily be identified. However, one particular parcel was labelled on the Centre's catalogue as "mummified animal, possibly human". We thus thought that this would be a particular intriguing object to x-ray, although Carolyn was a little dubious and thought that if it was human viscera the x-rays would reveal very little.



*The mummified object selected for examination*

On the 26<sup>th</sup> October I arrived at the Egypt Centre to meet Carolyn before transporting our mysterious object to Pets at Home for its 'examination' (see picture above). With the help of our vet, Liz, we laid the mummified package on the x-ray table and quickly evacuated the room for health and safety purposes. Having taken the x-ray, it had to be put through a machine, which would take around five minutes, before we would be able to view the results. The last time we x-rayed the mummified hawk it took us a number of tries before we could get it on the right setting.

To our surprise Liz quickly ran into the room holding the x-ray very excitedly. The x-ray had worked first time and when held up to the light box it revealed that our mysterious mummified remains were actually a coiled up snake! (see picture below). In fact, the snake was so well preserved that it was still possible to see its head. This was a great surprise to us all as none of us had envisaged that it might turn out to be a snake. We took a further few x-rays, with the package in different positions, to see if we could get any better images but none surpassed the first.



It was possible to tell from the x-ray that the head was still intact, this in itself being quite rare for mummified snakes. However, it was also possible to establish that the snake had been severed half way along the length of its body. This may have been the fatal blow to the snake before it was mummified although x-rays do not enable us to come to any conclusions on this matter. The following day, with the help of a piece of string, I measured the length of the snake expecting it to be around 60cm. This length is actually quite long for a snake from Egypt. Again, to our surprise, the length of the snake turned out to be just short of 80cm! I contacted Salima Ikram, a world authority on animal mummies and the founder of the Cairo Museum Animal Mummies Project (AMP), who was very excited when she saw the x-ray. Salima had x-rayed quite a few snakes in the Cairo Museum and had said that ours was particularly wonderful as the head was still intact and that it was such a long example.

*...continued overleaf*





## Christmas and New Year opening times

The Egypt Centre will close for Christmas at  
4 p.m. on Friday 23 December 2009  
and will reopen at  
10 a.m. on Tuesday 5 January 2010.

Continued from previous page ...

Snakes were particularly mummified in Thebes from the Late Period through to the Roman Period of Egypt when they were seen as being one of the many sacred animals of the god Amun. Snakes were also associated with rebirth and regeneration for the simple reason that they are able to shed their skin. They were also associated with the god Atum of Heliopolis, the primordial creator god of Egypt.<sup>1</sup> Snakes, some simply wrapped in bandages, others placed in elaborate bronze boxes, were subsequently offered to Atum in the temples or were buried in the associated cemeteries. One particularly cemetery, that of Amara West which Neal Spencer enthralled us on in the December lecture, contained a 'shrine' with a series of snake burials associated with it.<sup>2</sup> While they were not mummified, the containers contained the skeletons of many snakes, believed to be pythons. It is likely that these snakes represent some kind of unknown Nubian snake cult.

While this object will be on display as the object of the month for January only, it is hoped that in the not to distant future it will be placed on the animal case of the House of Life, perhaps with the picture of the x-ray for the public to view these fascinating results.

### Further Reading:

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Taylor, John H. (2001) *Death and the Afterlife in Ancient Egypt*. BM Press: London. Pgs. 244-63.

<sup>1</sup> Taylor (2001) 256-7.

<sup>2</sup> Shinnie (1951) 10.

## Lecture Venue

Dear members,

As you will all know, due to the University's new regulations in charging for the use of lecture rooms, the Friends were forced to look into alternative lecture venues. We exhausted all possibilities and were told that the only rooms that were available free of charge were in either Fulton House or Keir Hardie. With the recent increase in membership fees we thought it would be best to find a free venue as opposed to hiking up the fees again in order to continue using Faraday A.

Having checked the available rooms, during the daytime, it appeared that Fulton House Room 5 was our best option. What we underestimated, as those members who attended any lectures this programme will be aware of, is the noise coming from the student bar next door. We have had a number of Friends members express their concern about the lecture room, including having difficulty hearing the speakers and, as Chair of the Friends of the Egypt Centre I would like to offer our apologies.

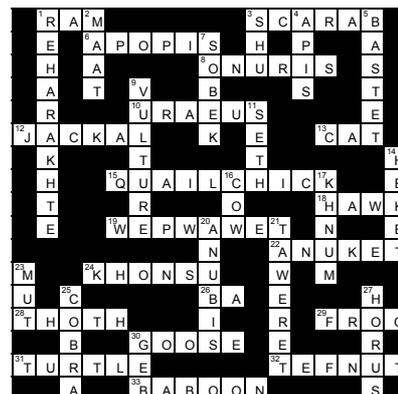
In our November committee meeting the lecture room was the top of our agenda and following lengthy talks we all agreed that we should move back to Faraday A for the rest of the programme. That is from January through until June 2010, with the exception of April which was already booked.

For April we have the option of either using Fulton House Room 5, which should be quiet due to the students being on vacation, or trialling the rooms in Keir Hardie. Room 250 of Keir Hardie is a large spacious room which can hold around 70 people, with the layout bringing the audience closer to the speaker for a better audiovisual experience. The only downside to this room is that there is no direct disabled access. It is however possible to take an elevator to the second floor before descending a number of stairs. This would avoid the climbing of stairs. We understand that this is by no means completely adequate and hope that this does not affect our membership. We would very much appreciate any feedback on the matter, particularly your thoughts for next year's programme.

Wishing you all a merry Christmas and a happy New Year.

Ken Griffin

## Crossword solution



For crossword see page 6.



Thoth

