

INSCRIPTIONS

The Newsletter of the Friends of the Egypt Centre, Swansea

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Egypt Centre's 10th Birthday Party



As many of you are aware, this year is the **10th anniversary** of the official opening of the best Egyptian museum in Wales!

As part of the museum's celebrations, Egypt Centre staff have organised a lecture and buffet reception on **Saturday September 20th**. The lecture will be given by **Professor Alan Lloyd** and is sure to be both interesting and entertaining!

After the lecture we shall have a fabulous buffet and drinks party. If you would like to attend the tickets are on a first come first served basis and are restricted to current friends members and our invited guests. Please contact Stuart or Wendy for tickets.

by Stuart Williams

Visit to Tutankhamun Exhibition at the O2 Stadium

by Claire Edwards



The visit began far too early as far as I was concerned. 5 a.m. is not an hour of day I am normally familiar with, but nevertheless, I duly found myself with about 50 other members of the Friends and volunteers on board the bus to London and the eagerly anticipated visit to the British Museum and the Tutankhamun exhibition. We set off along the motorway and after a break at the services arrived in London at the entrance to the British Museum about 1 p.m. For me, it was renewing acquaintance with some well-remembered friends, having visited the museum many times before. Since my last visit, there had been a re-arrangement of exhibits, and The Rosetta Stone, which I had last encountered in upper gallery, is now housed on the ground floor, much better lit, and displayed in a more spacious area allowing it to be viewed from all sides. I was disappointed not to find my 'pink' mummy

continued overleaf...



which I had discovered on my last visit. I loved the bright pink colour of the outer casing, so reminiscent of the pink powder paints I had happily mixed as a child. Instead, I discovered several mummy cases painted in tones of green, not a turquoise green, but a leaf green—a colour I have never encountered before in Egyptian art. So there are still surprises to found in The British Museum. The museum was very crowded, many visitors having come to view the famed Terracotta Warriors exhibition.

The rest of the day was left for shopping, but I took the opportunity to visit my family in Tufnell Park, where I watched the exciting Rugby match between Wales and England. I made my way to the hotel in the evening—The Hilton at Canary Wharf. It was extremely comfortable and my room was positively luxurious!

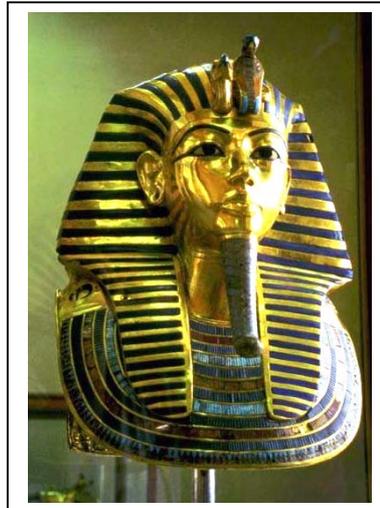
The following morning saw us gathering outside the hotel at the more acceptable hour of 10.a.m. to board the bus for the O2 stadium. Although we could see the O2 quite clearly, across the river, the bus took us down the riverside towards Tower Bridge, through parts of London I had never visited. We eventually crossed the river and pulled up outside the stadium, making our way indoors to the exhibition. We were not allowed in immediately, but had to wait to join a queue for the 11.30.a.m. entry. So we decided to have a coffee and I was delighted to find a newspaper with the headline 'Ospreys beat England'. I couldn't resist showing it to some of our members who were already in the queue!

The queue began to move and before long we found ourselves inside a dimly lit room, where we were shown a video about the discovery of the tomb. Much of the material was familiar, but it was impossible to move ahead into the exhibition proper. By some mysterious method we were kept moving at one pace. We passed along a short corridor into another dimly lit room which held the sarcophagus of Queen Tiy, its golden colour dominating the room. Other cases held artefacts from the tomb, again many of them familiar from books and similar objects in or own collection. We passed through into the next room which was in complete darkness, broken only by spotlights shining down on individual exhibits. The effect was most dramatic and one felt as if one was uncovering the glories of Tutankhamun's tomb for the first time. There were many visitors using headphones and it was difficult not to stumble into them as they inevitably

stopped in front of the exhibits. And so it continued—darkness—pools of light or soft lighting for room after room. So many beautiful objects; the tiny statue of the god Khonsu with Tutankhamun's features, the exquisite scarab necklace in gold, lapis lazuli, carnelian, and turquoise; the fabulous statue of Tutankhamun on a papyrus raft made in stuccoed and gilded wood and bronze. The detail of the drapery; the strength of the arm, poised to throw and the alert eyes of this statue are surely the work of a master craftsman.

In contrast, some of the objects were quite crudely executed but nevertheless charming. I particularly liked the rough-hewn shabti boxes which looked just

like a row of Victorian bathing huts. In the same room was a ceremonial throne made from ebony, ivory, gold leaf, stone and faience, decorated on its back with a vulture goddess with outstretched wings. In another room, a beautiful chalice-shaped vase made from alabaster and the well-known canopic jars again showed the wealth of the tomb. Finally, brightly lit, we came across the head of Tutankhamun emerging from a lotus flower.



Devoid of any royal insignia, this simple face of a young boy was more poignant than any of the other objects we had seen. The exhibition ended with a case holding the magnificent diadem Howard Carter had so carefully lifted off the head of the boy king. It was so delicately made that it appeared to tremble even in its glass display case. Once again, I was left marvelling at the skill and devotion of these craftsmen who created such beauty believing that their work would never see the light of day, once the king was entombed. More importantly, the exhibition begs the question: if this was the treasure found in the tomb of a comparatively minor pharaoh, what must have been buried in the tomb of someone like Ramesses the Great?

The weekend was a great success and, as usual, a credit to the organisational skills of the staff of the Egypt Centre. There was a great deal of laughter and fun, especially when it was discovered that one of our most ardent rugby fans had switched off the television when Wales were losing at half-time, and didn't discover the result until much later!

by Claire Edwards





Editorial

Welcome to the twenty-fifth issue of *Inscriptions*.

Congratulations to the Egypt Centre on reaching its 10th Birthday! It is encouraging to see the increasing popularity of the Centre, particularly on the educational front. The Friends and Staff of the Centre are to be congratulated for the efforts that have made this possible.

The programme of interesting lectures continues, and this summer we can particularly look forward to welcoming Vivian Davies who will give the Griffiths Memorial Lecture on 31 May, and Professor Lloyd's lecture at our birthday party on 20 September.

Interesting discoveries continue to be made in Egypt. More First Intermediate Period finds have been made at the Nomarchs' cemetery at Herakleopolis, including a high-quality false door bearing the name of Khety. An ancient agricultural settlement has been found at the Fayyom which is about 7000 years old. Bolton's female mummy has been shown to be male, and probably a son of Ramesses the Great!

We need contributions from the Friends!

We'd love to hear from anyone who has made a trip to Egypt recently, or indeed anyone who's made a trip anywhere! And we always welcome your letters, ideas, drawings, puzzles or recipes. Articles for the next issue (which must be your own work, not copied from other published, copyrighted material) should be sent to Mike Mac Donagh at the Egypt Centre.

Many thanks to those who have contributed to this issue.

Mike Mac Donagh



Lapis Neith
(BM60069)

Hair of the Gods: The Use of Lapis Lazuli in Ancient Egypt

Lapis Lazuli (Lapis) appears to have been used from around 3,500 BCE for inlays and beads. Its dark blue colour meant that it was sometimes identified with the night sky. Large carvings were executed during the Early Dynastic period and we do have one carved vessel from the Middle Kingdom.

The only identified ancient source is Badakhshan in Afghanistan, and it is believed that it was traded through Mesopotamia. The most instantly recognisable piece containing lapis is the funerary mask of Tutankhamun but there are some other wonderful treasures to be found including the cylinder seals

from the Tod cache, jewellery from the kings buried at Tanis and the countless small amulets of the Late Period.

In the Westcar Papyrus we are told that the headdresses of the newly born kings were made from lapis and many representations of the gods on funerary artefacts, coffins and papyrus, show them with 'blue' hair.

At the Egypt centre we have three objects that are made from lapis; a beaded necklace that contains some lapis beads, a Serket, the scorpion goddess, amulet (pictured right) and a Neith, mistress of the arrows, amulet (pictured left). Both the amulets were donated by the British Museum.

If you would like to find out more about the two lapis goddess amulets at the Egypt Centre there is a lot more information in the beautifully illustrated 'Offerings from the British Museum' which sells at the museum shop for £3.00. The shop also stocks beautiful lapis bracelets for the same price.



Lapis Serket
(BM11328)

by Stuart Williams

Further Reading:

- Redford, D.B. 2001. *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt Domestic*. Cairo: The American University of Cairo Press.
- Williams, S.J. & Goodridge, W.R. 2007. *Offering from the British Museum*. Swansea: Egypt Centre.
- Andrews, Carol. 1994. *Amulets of Ancient Egypt*. London: British Museum Press.





Deir el-Medina

Have you ever sat on the slopes overlooking the village? There's nothing quite like it! Ken thinks I'm mad, and so do lots of others, but there really is a feeling there that the villagers have never left.

If you're lucky enough to be there on a day where there are no tourists (yes, there are some) you can wander around the village on your own and sit or stand by the walls and close your eyes you can hear the chattering of women, gossiping about Paneb and his latest 'conquest', the lady at no. 6!..... Hear the screams of laughing children running up and down the narrow central path. If you're as mad as me you can even smell the smoke from the fires.

Your mind can get carried away with you at Deir el-Medina, especially at the great pit! Close your eyes (not too close to the edge) and imagine the years of toil and sweat that were given in the desperate attempt to hit the water table. If you scramble around in the thousands of potsherds that litter the area you will find pottery dating back to the Pharaonic period. Some pieces have handles; some have the remains of food, or blackened soot.

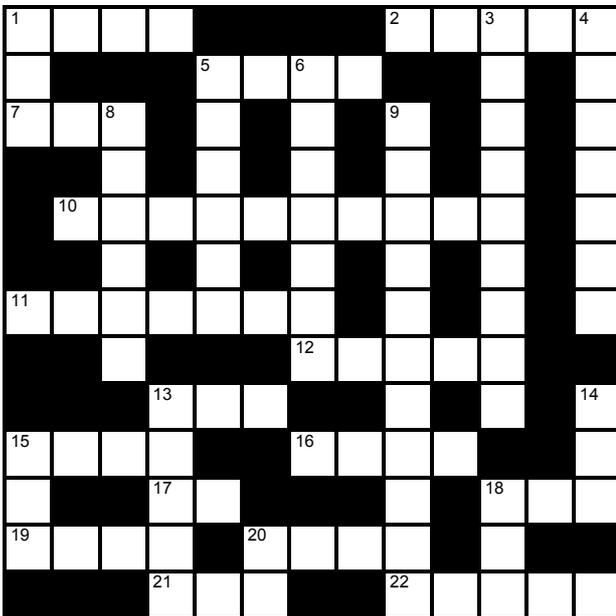


Wandering back to your taxi you have one last chance to soak up the atmosphere before the hordes of high-heeled European tourists arrive to scrape their bags along the walls of Pashedu's tomb, sit on the crumbling walls and stamp out their cigarettes on the sacred ground!

Next time you're lucky enough to go, try and spend some time imagining what life was like there. Close your eyes and soak up the atmosphere.... you won't look silly ...honest!

by Stuart Williams

Crossword



Across

- 1 Site of the great 4th Dynasty pyramids (4)
- 2 The black land (5)
- 5 God of the inundation (4)
- 7 Dwarf god who protects the home and childbirth (3)
- 10 Annual flooding of the Nile (10)
- 11 Funerary figurine (7)

- 12 Where the Nile spreads out as it approaches the sea (5)
- 13 God of infinity (3)
- 15 A great river that flows through Egypt (4)
- 16 5th Dynasty ruler with small pyramid (4)
- 17 Life-force of the deceased (2)
- 18 Fertility god (3)
- 19 An administrative region in Egypt (4)
- 20 Double sphinx (4)
- 21 Principal wife of Amenhotep III and mother of Akhenaten (3)
- 22 11th dynasty Theban rulers buried in Saff tombs (5)

Down

- 1 God of the earth (3)
- 3 Pharaoh who succeeded Ramesses II (9)
- 4 Hippopotamus god of childbirth (7)
- 5 Alabaster quarries (6)
- 6 Funerary monument (7)
- 8 His story is a 12th Dynasty literary masterpiece (6)
- 9 Site of Hatshepsut's mortuary temple (11)
- 13 Frog goddess (5)
- 14 Dynasty 1 king recorded on the Palermo stone (3)
- 15 God of the primeval ocean (3)
- 18 Vulture-goddess (3)
- 20 Successor to Tutankhamun (2)

by Daphne MacDonagh

(Solution on page 6.)





Nefertiti and Egyptian National Identity

"I do believe that Egypt's people have the right to see this beautiful sculpture — a vital part of their heritage and identity — in person"

—Zahi Hawass – February 27th 2008

A whole book could be written about the image of Nefertiti in popular culture.¹ She has been claimed by many groups to be 'theirs'. More recently², Nefertiti along with her husband, Akhenaten, have been claimed by Afro centrists to be Egypt's first black royal family³. This particular subject is one that is still hotly disputed and is the subject of recent research and debate.⁴ Nefertiti has been claimed by Berliners as a symbol of their heritage and city to them she is affectionately known as 'Noffie'.⁵ Most surprisingly is the adoption of Nefertiti by Adolf Hitler as the archetype of the purest Aryan stock.⁶ In fact it is due to Hitler's intervention that the bust still remains in Berlin today.

Nefertiti also contributes significantly to Egyptian national identity. Although she does not appear on the national flag of Egypt her enduring image has been used to promote Egypt since the middle of the last century. Other clearly identifiable ancient Egyptian images have been used to promote national identity in Egypt since before the end of British protectorate in 1922. Today the symbol used to promote Egypt's national airline is the ancient Egyptian god Horus, a god of the sky who took his earthly manifestation as pharaoh⁷. One year after Egypt's first postage stamp was issued, in 1866, the



Stamp from Berlin, 1989

Sphinx and the pyramids were used as images on the second issue of determinatives. Throughout Egypt's postal history many ancient Egyptian symbols have been used and reused⁸. In modern times, Nefertiti was first used as a 'symbol' of national identity when her bust was used on Egyptian postage stamps⁹. Her image was further used for this purpose in 1953,

1956, and 1959. Since then her image has been used a further seventeen times on postage stamps right up to the present day.

The National Bank of Egypt started issuing banknotes for the first time on April 3rd 1899.¹⁰ Since that date Nefertiti has been attached to the notes in one way or another either as a clearly defined symbol or as the watermark. Today she is the face that looks out from the 5 piastre banknote¹¹.



Stamp from Egypt, 1867



Stamp from Egypt, 1947

Surprisingly, for many Egyptians she is seen as the perfect wife and mother, a strong woman who supported her husband in all his plans who diligently looked after their six daughters.¹² The bust of Nefertiti is one of the most recognisable tourist 'trinkets' available in Egypt and with almost 1.5 million people either working in the tourist industry or who owe their jobs directly to the industry¹³ it is no wonder that she is seen as a symbol of national identity.

by Stuart Williams

(Taken from a much larger paper on National Identity written for The Department of Museum Studies, Postgraduate Diploma/Masters Degree in Museum Studies by Distance Learning, Leicester University, November 2005.)

¹ Dominic Montserrat, *Akhenaten: History, Fantasy and Ancient Egypt* (London: Routledge, 2000), p.72.

² <http://www.white-history.com/nefer.htm> (1 November 2005)

³ Montserrat, *Akhenaten: History, Fantasy and Ancient* p.117.

⁴ Fluehr-Lobban, Carolyn and Rhodes, Kharyssa, 'Introduction: The Study of Race and racism in the Nile Valley' in *Race and Identity in the Nile Valley: Ancient and Modern Perspectives*, eds. Carolyn Fluehr-Lobban and Kharyssa Rhodes (New Jersey: The Red Sea Press, 2004) pp. xiii-xxviii.

⁵ See Stamp from Berlin, 1989.

⁶ Michael Rice, *Egypt's Legacy: The Archetypes of Western Civilisation 3000-230 BC* (London: Routledge, 1997), p.216

⁷ Richard H. Wilkinson, *The Complete Gods and Goddesses of Ancient Egypt* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2003), p.200.

⁸ See Stamp from Egypt, 1867.

⁹ See Stamp from Egypt, 1947.



Egyptian 5 Piastre banknote

¹⁰ <http://www.mintsoftheworld.com/egyptianmint.html> 4 Oct 2005

¹¹ See Egyptian 5 Piastre banknote.

¹² Interview with Yasser Abdlebakr, Luxor resident, 28 Sept 2005.

¹³ [http://www.amcham.org.eg/publications/BusinessMonthly/October%2009/reports\(tourismroleunderestimated\).asp](http://www.amcham.org.eg/publications/BusinessMonthly/October%2009/reports(tourismroleunderestimated).asp) (1 November 2005)



