

INSCRIPTIONS

The Newsletter of the Friends of the Egypt Centre, Swansea

Issue 31

July 2010

In this issue:

Annual General Meeting	1
Surveying a Suspect Shabti	1
<i>by L. S. J. Howells</i>	
Editorial	3
Griffiths Memorial Lecture 2010	3
<i>by Sheila Nowell</i>	
Mummymania	4
<i>by L. S. J. Howells</i>	
Crossword solution	4
Cairo by bus: A Journey of the Rekhyt to Egypt's capital and beyond (Part Two)	5
<i>by L. S. J. Howells</i>	
A Ushabti Exhibition in Cardiff	7
<i>by Kenneth Griffin</i>	
Crossword	8
<i>by Daphne MacDonagh</i>	
Lecture Programme	8

Annual General Meeting

Don't forget this year's AGM will take place on

Wednesday 29 September

at 6.30 pm

to be followed by the first talk of the new academic year:

Beyond Isis and Osiris:

Alternative sexualities in ancient Egypt

John J. Johnston (University College London)

Through an examination of archaeological and textual evidence, this lavishly illustrated talk addresses those aspects of human sexuality which, largely, fall outside the 'official' record. The often outré behaviour of gods and kings in the literature of the Pharaonic period is contextualised alongside less ambiguous writings and graffiti from later periods, culminating in a consideration of the circumstances surrounding the death and apotheosis of the final god of the ancient world: Antinous.



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

Fulton House Room 2



Surveying a Suspect Shabti

Some months ago I was asked by an acquaintance whether I could find out whether a shabti which had been in his family's possession since the early 1970's was genuine. Unfortunately the piece had no provenance beyond it had previously been owned by a person of some importance in the Catholic Church and the only potential clue as to its origins was that at some point it had been contained within a box marked 'Cairo Museum', which had now unfortunately been mislaid. Perhaps this was a clue as to whether the item was a copy or not. Why would this item be kept within such a box?

by L. S. J. Howells

... continued overleaf



Surveying a Suspect Shabti (continued)

If the item was stolen, common sense would dictate that the box be discarded immediately. Alternatively perhaps the box was kept in order to further add to the possible illusion that the item was an original piece. However, it is also known that during the mid Twentieth Century the Cairo Museum adopted the practice of selling duplicate original shabtis in their shop.

Several weeks later the shabti arrived. Upon observing it a number of features were instantly apparent. Firstly, and most importantly, there is no inscription thereby making a difficult task a lot more onerous. Secondly, the piece has 'hooked feet', a rare feature which Stewart believes was to facilitate the removal of the shabti from its mould.

The shabti itself is mummiform, made from painted terracotta/pottery (colours present are yellow, blue and white) and is of a poor construction. It features a lappett or tripartite wig and has its arms crossed over the chest. However, it does not carry any equipment or symbols in its hands.



The actual proportions of the shabti itself do not correspond with any of the three published examples used as comparative pieces in this instance. This particular example consists of a much larger and more distorted make up.

Also of note is the extremely poor workmanship, although this does not necessarily preclude it as genuine, as attested examples exist of crude pottery shabtis. However this shabti does bear some similarities to shabti 23 in the book by Glenn Janes, *Shabtis: A Private View*, particularly the simple facial construction (see illustration below).



Shabti 23

The lack of contextual knowledge of the piece and of the presence of an inscription*, makes it extremely difficult to conclude whether or not it is a copy or an original item. It can be argued that its appearance makes it unlikely that it is a forgery. Who would copy such an ugly and ungainly example in order to make it marketable? Surely when constructing copies it makes sense to make one that would be attractive to a prospective buyer? In conclusion, judging by some elements of the decoration and a rough approximation of the design itself, it can be deduced that if the shabti is genuine it is based upon the late 19th, early 20th Dynasty shabtis manufactured at Tuna el Gebel.

by L. S. J. Howells

References

- Flinders Petrie, W.M. (1935) *Shabtis*. British School of Egyptian Archaeology. London.
- Janes, Glenn (2002) *Shabtis: A Private View*. Cybele. Paris.
- Schneider, H.D. (1977) *Shabtis: An Introduction to the History of Ancient Egyptian Funerary Statuettes*. Rijksmuseum Van Oudheden Te Leiden. Leiden.
- Stewart, H.M. (1995) *Egyptian Shabtis*. Shire Publications. Princes Risborough.
- With thanks to Ed Hinton, Ken Griffin and V. A. Donohue.

* At some future date the shabti will be observed under an ultraviolet light in order to determine whether there are any traces of an inscription.



A similar example is a shabti which belonged to an individual named Nekhtruamen and which can be found in Flinders-Petrie's book, *Shabtis*, published in 1935. It bears some comparison with the shabti under consideration, particularly with regard to the position of the arms (see left).

Another example of a shabti featuring hooked feet and bearing minor resemblance to the piece can be found in Schneider's *Shabtis: Volume III* (piece no. 3.5.2.7.) and can be seen below:



Piece no 3.5.2.7





Editorial

Welcome to the 31st issue of *Inscriptions*.

Please take note in your diaries of the date, timing and location of the AGM. The title of the talk that follows the AGM is most intriguing! Once again the Centre has had a successful year and our congratulations and gratitude go to everyone who made it all possible.

Readers may have noticed that *Inscriptions* has reduced in frequency of issue; that is because we need more contributions! We are very grateful those who have sent us material, without whose input we wouldn't have been able to put this issue together.

So please get scribing and give us something for the next issue. It doesn't have to be about Egypt. We'd like to hear about any adventures or misadventures that you may have had in your travels in various parts of the world. Obviously, if there's an ancient history or archaeology angle to your story, so much the better.

A short extract of part of the programme for the coming year is on the back page of this issue and it promises to be of the usual high standard.

We wish all Friends and associates a happy summer holiday and look forward to seeing everyone again at the AGM and lecture on 29 September.

Mike Mac Donagh

Griffiths Memorial Lecture 2010

On Saturday 8th May the Friends of the Egypt Centre proudly hosted the Griffiths Memorial Lecture. This year's lecture was delivered by Professor Alan Lloyd on the Tomb of Neferseshemtah.

In 1946 Gwyn Griffiths and Kate Bosse-Griffiths came to Swansea. Gwyn was born in South Wales and Kate in Germany and they met in Oxford. Their influence in Swansea for the growth of Egyptology was enormous. In 1971, through their various contacts they managed to secure for the University over 3,000 Egyptian antiquities from the Wellcome Trust. Kate, along with her work at Swansea Museum, catalogued and displayed many of these objects as well as writing articles on a number of them. There were various stipulations attached to its long term loan and use. One of the most important was that the collection would be available to students as a learning resource. A further clause included that the labels for the objects would be bilingual. Both Kate and Gwyn were members of Plaid Cymru and passionate about the Welsh language. Eventually, with the help of the Taliesin, The European Regional Development Fund and the National Lottery the Egypt Centre was built to display the collection. The museum opened in 1998 with over 1,000 objects on display in two galleries and now houses the largest Egyptological collection in Wales. Kate died in 1998, sadly before the opening of the Egypt Centre, and Gwyn in 2004.

The afternoon started with a welcome by our chair Ken Griffin, and after his opening remarks Heini Griffiths, son of Kate and Gwyn Griffiths gave a short bilingual talk about his parents with some entertaining stories about them. Robat Griffiths was also present, as were other members of the family.

After this came the Memorial Lecture, given by Alan Lloyd in his unique style, on the Tomb of Neferseshemtah. Neferseshemtah was the son-in-law of King Teti and brother-in-law of Pepi I, and his career saw the steady rise in his fortunes in the kingdom, though he clearly died before he was able to complete the decoration of his tomb. The decoration is generally very high quality, and the inscriptions provide a wealth of information on his status. The lecture not only discussed the artistic merits of what survived but used the text in an attempt to unlock the way in which high level administration was orchestrated during the early Sixth Dynasty. The re-excavation and full recording of the tomb were undertaken in the 1970s by a joint expedition with Alan Lloyd representing the EES.

After closing remarks and questions we all mingled in the foyer of the Wallace lecture theatre to chat and enjoy the wine and buffet provided by the Friends and excellently catered for by Alison and Phil John.

by Sheila Nowell



Prof. Lloyd, Ken Griffin and others pictured at the buffet after the Griffiths Memorial Lecture

Photos: Phillip John





Cairo by bus: A Journey of the Rekhyt to Egypt's capital and beyond (Part Two)

After a concerted effort to remove the trapped minibus from the sands between the Red Pyramid and the Bent Pyramid whilst Reg watched from a safe distance and advised us upon our physical progress, we returned to the Oasis Hotel to await our reinforcements for the second week which would see us travel outside Cairo to other sites in Lower Egypt.

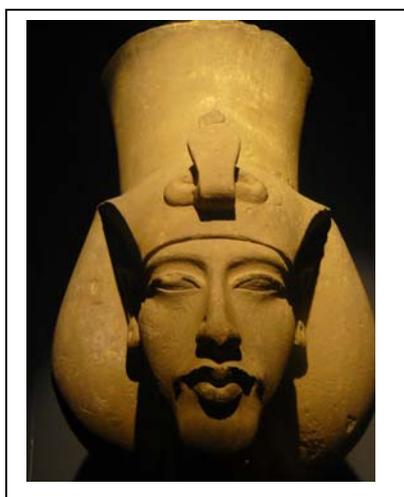
These reinforcements included Janie, a woman with an awe-inspiring talent for shopping in whatever form it may come. In fact on another Rekhyt trip her pursuit of a bargain stooped to the point of having a large wooden statue sawn in two in order to fit it in her case and get it back home.

Suitably reinforced, our party under heavy police guard headed for the Delta in order to visit firstly Bubastis and then Tanis. There's not much left of Bubastis, capital of Egypt during the 22nd and 23rd Dynasties and the cult centre of Bastet; though what remains is definitely worth visiting, particularly the huge statue of Merytamun, daughter of Ramesses II. Tanis however was a lot better, though firstly we had to chase away the Egyptian children who thought it made a fantastic soccer pitch. What do Egyptologists know?



Goalpost or Fine Example of Egyptian Workmanship?

The next day we left Cairo behind and travelled to Alexandria. Once there we began the day's explorations at the catacombs of Kom el Shoqafa followed by a visit to 'Pompey's Pillar' and its open air museum. Then on to Alexandria's museum which is the best lit and laid out museum I have ever visited. Unusually for Egypt you are also allowed to take photographs as the portrait of the statue of Akhenaten from Karnak Temple below proves.



We would not be staying in Alexandria that night; that honour instead would pass to the resort of Mersa Matruah. But first a gargantuan bus journey which involved passing El Alamein, scene of two very important World War Two battles which were decisive for the Allied forces in North Africa. Indeed Winston Churchill is quoted as saying *"Before Alamein we never had a victory. After Alamein, we never had a defeat."*

Upon arrival at our hotel in Mersa Matruah we discovered it was magnificent and opulent and a welcome relief after several hours thundering along the road from Alexandria. The Jaz Almaza Hotel which sits on the shores of the Mediterranean is incredibly posh however it was also a bit soulless and full of a lot of noisy young Italians indulging in some serious

partying. No matter, we were only staying one night. The next morning as we attempted to board the bus and move on to Siwa Oasis we were stopped by the hotel security. What god had we angered now? Several, it would appear, as some unnamed members of our team had availed themselves of the mini fridge and goodies in their room under the illusion they were free. *Mental note*...nothing is free in Egypt except the sunshine. After some horse-trading and the return of several packs of peanuts we were on the road again.

Our next destination was to be Siwa Oasis, until fairly recently the most inaccessible of the oases in Egypt and renowned for its mineral water. First a short eternity in the back of the minibus travelling through some of the most magnificently isolated landscape. Upon arriving at Siwa we firstly visited the Mountain of the Dead, a hill honeycombed with late period tombs, then the Shali, an abandoned fortified village, before moving on to our hotel, the completely fantastic and well recommended (should you find yourself in that part of the world) Siwa Safari Paradise. It was paradise indeed.

Once night fell we investigated the town and discovered three things. Firstly you could obtain bottles of fizzy karkade* there. Secondly, the silver jewellery manufactured there is of excellent quality, and thirdly you don't tend to see many women there other than a stray tourist or two. However, it is a very relaxed place to visit and I take great pains not to suggest in any way at all that this is in fact linked to point three...

The next morning we visited the temple of the Oracle of Amun as

* The thirst quenching beverage of choice for your common garden Egyptologist if the bar has run out of Egyptian Stella.





The Shali at Siwa Oasis is well worth visiting

visited by Alexander the Great in 331 BCE. If you're planning on visiting it at some point, I'd do it sooner rather than later as the seriously eroded rock it sits on is unlikely to be hanging around for too much longer. We then moved on to Cleopatra's Bath, named after you-know-who but, typically, there is absolutely no evidence to link her to it. After a short time admiring its clear waters we climbed aboard the bus and began our journey back to Alexandria.

Our Alexandrian hotel was interesting. It was very brown and 1970's. Pleasant enough, or so I thought, until I found a bath containing more filth than a Flanders trench circa 1917. No matter, we wouldn't be hanging around too long, we were eating out tonight.

An unnamed member of our party had us believe that he had great knowledge of all of Alexandria's finest eating establishments and convinced us to dine at a 'special restaurant' he knew. Some of the vegetarian members of our party were surprised, and less than delighted, to find some small pieces of chopped up meat in their allegedly vegetarian food—the Egyptian interpretation of vegetarianism is akin to that of the grandmother in the TV show, the Royle Family, who upon being confronted with a vegetarian offered them some 'thinly sliced ham'.

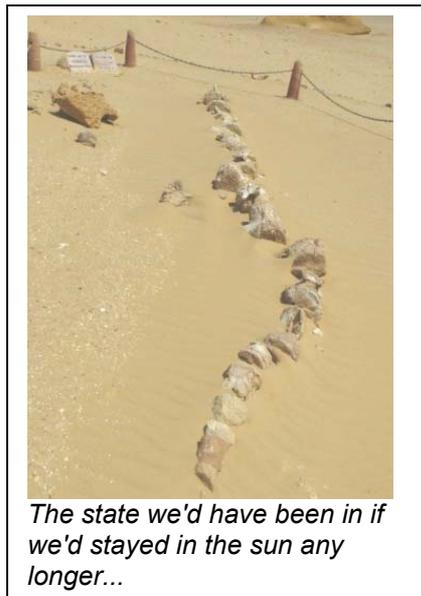
At least the tahina salad was safe and after the meal was partially rescued the more prudent members of our party went searching for something to drink as dehydration had begun to set in. After negotiating several locals offering 'holiday Rolexes' for sale at a bargain price of £10 who appeared in our path, a bar

was located and its contents made the impending evening's stay at our hotel seem bearable.



A welcome sight...

The next morning we left the 'interesting' hotel behind and travelled toward the Faiyum. Before we reached the Faiyum we stopped off at the Roman town of Karanis, a site as well preserved as you could imagine and wandered, under heavy police guard once more, around its temples and settlements before we departed for our hotel on the shores of Lake Faiyum, the Shakshok. An excellent hotel and well recommended to anyone should they find themselves in the vicinity. It was a 'dry' hotel but they accommodated our crew of thirsty Egyptologists by sending someone out to obtain a 'quantity' of bottles of Egyptian Stella for very reasonable prices. We needed this rehydration as the next day was to see us visit the Valley of the Whales, a notoriously warm location and so it proved.



The state we'd have been in if we'd stayed in the sun any longer...

Our Egyptian guide and driver were not keen for us to visit this particular attraction, possibly because a) it is in

the middle of nowhere, and b) it was so hot that what little tarmac that covered the alleged roads to our destination had begun to melt. After failing miserably to convince us that going to the Valley of the Whales was in fact a really bad idea they then proceeded to drive as slow as is humanly possible in some form of protest. At one stage my GPS recorded that we were travelling at 8 miles an hour. It would have been quicker to walk.

Nevertheless we eventually reached our destination to be greeted by some more perfect desolation and many fossils of long dead creatures. Rather than add to their number we walked round as long as we could bear and steeled ourselves for our eventual return to some form of civilisation. After the strangely speedy return journey we headed to the Meidum pyramid (but were told we were too late to get in— personally I blame the Egyptian guide and driver).

We then returned to the Oasis Hotel in Cairo to prepare for our departure the next day. Some of our team then suffered a relapse of their addiction to books and the final morning saw a swift visit to the French Institute bookshop. The end result of this involved much repacking of bags and at least one member of our team wearing a raincoat, pockets stuffed with books, as we negotiated the customs.

It had been an exhausting two weeks, involving somewhere around 1200 miles of bus travel, but had been well worth the effort for the number of difficult to reach places we visited. Leaving Egypt one is reminded that parting is such sweet sorrow and so it proved once more. I suspect that I'm not alone amongst my companions in looking forward to the next Journey of the Rekhyt.

by L. S. J. Howells

If you missed the first part of Syd Howells' fascinating article, ask at the Egypt Centre for a copy of Incriptions Issue 30! —Ed





A Ushabti Exhibition in Cardiff

This year, the National Museum of Cardiff decided to put on a temporary exhibition of their ushabti collection. The exhibition will last for 6 months and will finish at the end of this year. In total the museum has around 40 specimens with the vast majority of them being on display during this period. The collection consists of both wooden as well as faience examples which date from the New Kingdom through to the Late Period. Additionally, several years ago a further group of ushabtis belonging to the museum were donated to the Egypt Centre. While a number of the figures, particularly the wooden ones, are uninscribed many of them contain the hieroglyphs which reveal the names of the owners.

Of the inscribed ushabtis, a group of nine belong to a man named Ankhwennefer. Ushabtis of this man are known from elsewhere with two examples in Leiden and one in The Hague respectively. While the tomb of Ankhwennefer is unknown, it is believed that he was originally buried at Saqqara with his tomb being disturbed—like so many others—during the 19th Century. The style of the figure further suggests that Ankhwennefer was alive during the First Persian Period of the 27th Dynasty. The inscription, which runs vertically down the back pillar, reads as “the illuminated one, the Osiris, Ankhwennefer, born to Ireteru.” Ireteru, a fairly



Ushabti of Ankhwennefer

common name of the period, was the name of his mother.

A group of seven ushabtis belong to the same individual but unfortunately the crudeness of the execution of the hieroglyphs makes it difficult to identify the owner. These figures, which date to the same period as the previous set, are inscribed on three sides with the back pillar being blank.

A single faience specimen belongs to a man named Gemeneffhorbak, whose ushabtis are known in Leiden, Bologna, Budapest and the old Hoffmann collection. The provenance is also believed to be Saqqara and is probably Late Period. The whole inscription, which is carved on the front, reads as “the Osiris, the *kheseff*-priest, Gemeneffhorbak, born of

Mer(et)ptah(hapy)”. As the shabti breaks off at the feet the hapy section of his name is gone although traces of it are just visible. The title *kheseff*-priest related to the Delta town of Sebennytos which might suggest that Gemeneffhorbak served in this town.

The highlight of the exhibit is undoubtedly the five wooden figures belonging to the 19th Dynasty pharaoh Seti I. The ushabtis of Seti are known from many museums throughout the world, with the king believed to have had more than 700 examples, if not many more. In fact, early travellers to the tomb of Seti relate to how they were handed wooden figures as torches to better view the recently discovered tomb!

... continued overleaf



Ushabti of Seti I



Photo of the exhibit





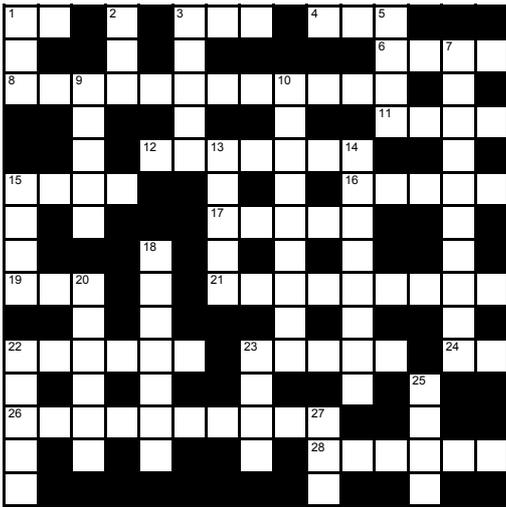
... continued from page 7

Each figure contains five to six lines of hieroglyphs running around the body of the ushabti while a heavy layer of black pitch hides the finer carving.

This exhibit is certainly well worth visiting with the excellent display panels and lighting helping to bring the ushabtis to life.

by Kenneth Griffin

Crossword



Across

- 1 Personality of the deceased, often represented as a bird (2)
- 3 Dynasty 1 king recorded on the Palermo stone (3)
- 4 Sky-goddess (3)
- 6 5th Dynasty ruler with small pyramid (4)
- 8 He carries the king's footwear (6-6)
- 11 The sun disk (4)
- 12 Sneferu has two pyramids here (7)
- 15 Sacred bull (4)
- 16 Modern city at the first cataract (5)
- 17 God of Elephantine (5)
- 19 Vulture-goddess (3)
- 21 Important female ancestor of 18th Dynasty rulers (9)
- 22 Container for the dead (6)
- 23 11th dynasty Theban rulers buried in Saff tombs (5)
- 24 Successor to Tutankhamun (2)
- 26 Annual flooding of the Nile (10)
- 28 Sacred cobra decorating the king's brow (6)

Down

- 1 Dwarf god who protects the home and childbirth (3)
- 2 A festival to renew the king (3)
- 3 Where the Nile spreads 6 as it approaches the sea (5)
- 5 Type of limestone used to case the Great Pyramid (4)
- 7 Fine city on the coast of Egypt (10)
- 9 Country to the south of Egypt (5)
- 10 Infamous "heretic" pharaoh (9)
- 13 Frog goddess (5)
- 14 Birth-name used by many New Kingdom rulers (spelt with three Ss) (8)

Lecture Programme

Please take note of the autumn's Friends meetings as follows:

Wednesday 29 Sept 2010

6.30 pm AGM

**7.00 pm John J. Johnston
(University College London)**

'Beyond Isis and Osiris: Alternative sexualities in ancient Egypt'

Through and examination of archaeological and textual evidence, Beyond Isis and Osiris is a lavishly illustrated talk by John J. Johnston, addressing those aspects of human sexuality which, largely, fall outside the 'official' record. The often outré behaviour of gods and kings in the literature of the Pharaonic period is contextualised alongside less ambiguous writings and graffiti from later periods, culminating in a consideration of the circumstances surrounding the death and apotheosis of the final god of the ancient world: Antinous.

Wednesday 13th Oct 2010

**Dylan Bickerstaffe
(Independent Scholar)**

'The Royal Mummies of Thebes: Clues to Identity'

It seems almost too good to be true that we actually have the mortal remains of famous pharaohs and queens who ruled Egypt during the New Kingdom over 3000 years ago. In some cases the identity seems reasonably secure, but there are other cases where severe doubts exist. This talk will explain the context of the discovery of the royal mummies, before exploring the various methods by which we establish or verify their identity—including an explanation of what the recent DNA tests do and don't say.

Wednesday 17th Nov 2010

**Katharina Zinn
(Cambridge University)**

'Amun in Cambridge? Cryptographic Writings, Secondary Archaeology in Museums and the Problem of Faked Objects'

A small bequest, given to the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge in 2006, was the starting point to a project dealing with the museum's interesting scarab collection. This scarab's cryptographic base decoration brought up a discussion about possible cryptographic writings, their classification as fakes and a food search in the basement as well as for similar objects in other museums.

Wednesday 8 Dec 2010

**Steve Harvey
(Ahmose-Tetisheri Project)**

'Mother of My Mother, Mother of My Father: The Pyramid of Queen Tetisheri at Abydos'

Discovered by Charles Currelly in 1902, the mud brick monument built by King Ahmose (ca 1550-1525 BC) in honour of his grandmother Queen Tetisheri is best-known from the magnificent limestone stela found within. Although the text of the stela clearly describes the construction of a pyramid, it was only with renewed excavation in 2004 that the Ahmose and Tetisheri Project was able to definitively identify the structure as a pyramid, making it the last known royal example constructed in Egypt for a queen. Renewed work in 2010 revealed considerable further information on the manner of construction and collapse of the pyramid, and important fragments of inscriptions were discovered that shed new light on this important monument.

15 Creator-god of Heliopolis (4)

25 Double sphinx (4)

18 City besieged by Tuthmosis III (7)

27 God of the primeval ocean (3)

20 Goddess of moisture, depicted as lips or a lioness (6)

22 Modern city near the pyramids (5)

23 White bird with long curved bill (4)

by Daphne MacDonagh

