

THE ILLUSTRATED GUIDE TO THE **EGYPT CENTRE**



THIRTY HIGHLIGHTS

Map of Egypt



Map by Peter Robinson

Introduction

This booklet is the first of several illustrated guides planned to highlight the diverse collection of the Egypt Centre. The thirty highlights included here were chosen by our award-winning volunteers and members of the public, with the results announced during Volunteer Week in June 2019. Voters were asked to select up to fifteen objects currently on display in each of our galleries (House of Death and House of Life).

The majority of the objects featured in this booklet originate from the collection of Sir Henry Solomon Wellcome, which arrived in Swansea in 1971. Many of the objects had been purchased by Wellcome at auction from the well-known collections of the Reverend William MacGregor, Robert de Rustafjaell, and the Reverend William Frankland Hood, to name just a few. They range in date from the Old Kingdom to more modern times. Several come from known sites and excavations, including those of the Egypt Exploration Society at Armant and Sir William Matthew Flinders Petrie at Qau el-Kebir. Additionally, some present the Egyptian personalities of the Egypt Centre, including Amenhotep son of Hapu, Iwesemhesetmut, Khabekhnet, Ptahhotep, and even the infamous Paneb.

As with any Egypt Centre project, this was very much a team effort. In particular, we would like to thank our volunteer Dr Dulcie Engel, who helped to push the production of this booklet forward. We would also like to thank all our volunteers for their hard work and continued support. Without you the Egypt Centre couldn't be the success it is today!

We hope that you enjoy these highlights, either in person or simply through this booklet!

This booklet is dedicated to the memory of Sybil Crouch, who sadly passed away in January 2020. Sybil had been instrumental in setting up the Egypt Centre, helping to secure Heritage Lottery Funding and European Regional Development Funding. She is greatly missed by all of us.



History of the Collection

The Egypt Centre collection will forever be associated with the pharmaceutical entrepreneur Sir Henry Solomon Wellcome (1853–1936). Wellcome had a passion for collecting medically related artefacts, aiming to create a Museum of Man. He bought for his collection anything related to medicine, including Napoleon's toothbrush, currently on display at the Wellcome Collection in London. But he also collected non-medical objects, including many from Egypt. He was a keen archaeologist, in particular digging for many years at Jebel Moya, Sudan, during which time he hired 4,000 people to excavate. Wellcome was one of the first investigators to use kite aerial photography on an archaeological site, with surviving images available in the Wellcome Library.

When Wellcome died in 1936, his collection was cared for by trustees, who were eventually based in London. Much of the collection was dispersed to various museums in Britain, but by the early 1970s some of it remained in the basement of the Petrie Museum. Gwyn Griffiths (1911–2004), lecturer in the Classics Department of University College Swansea (now Swansea University), and David Dixon (1930–2005), lecturer in Egyptology at University College London, arranged for a selection of the artefacts to come to Swansea. The condition of the loan being that the objects 'should be made available to research workers all over the world, and that part of it, at least, should be shown to the public'. In 1971, ninety-two crates of material arrived in South Wales. These were later supplemented by forty-eight pottery vases. Kate Bosse-Griffiths (1910–1998), wife of Gwyn Griffiths and an Egyptologist, carefully unpacked them and rediscovered a wealth of objects, some of which were still wrapped in 1930s newspapers. These included objects from Armant, Tell el-Amarna, Deir el-Medina, Esna, Mostagedda, Qau el-Kebir, etc. Additionally, some of the artefacts can be traced back to the collections of Robert de Rustafjaell (1853–1943), Robert Grenville Gayer-Anderson (1881–1945), Revd Randolph Humphrey Berens (1844–1922), Luigi Palma di Cesnola (1832–1904), Revd William Frankland Hood (1825–1864), and the Revd William MacGregor (1848–1937), amongst others.

As a determined and indomitable woman, Kate succeeded in setting up a small museum which resided in the Chemistry Department for two years [fig. 1]. However, under the patronage of John Gould (1927–2001), Chair of Greek, a small room in the Classics Department soon housed a number of unique and exciting pieces, several of which Kate and others later published. Roger Davies, the Arts Faculty photographer, and his wife assisted Kate in the setting up of the exhibition. David Dixon, as a Welsh-speaking Welshman had requested that all labels were bilingual, a policy that is still adhered to.



Fig. 1: Dr. Kate Bosse-Griffiths with the collection housed in the science lab (1972)

The collection, which became known as the Wellcome Museum, formally opened to the public in March 1976 [fig. 2] for two afternoons in each week of term (Thursdays and Fridays 2.30–4.30). Some artefacts were also displayed at the Royal Institution of South Wales (now Swansea Museum). Within the University, while some cases were available, many artefacts were displayed unprotected and so in 1978–1979 additional display cases were purchased from the University reserve fund. In 1978 the collection was added to by items from the surplus of items from the Egypt Exploration Society excavations, including many from Amarna, which were distributed by the British Museum. Additionally, in 1982 the Twenty-first Dynasty coffin of the Chantress of Amun, Iwesemhesetmut, was transferred from the Royal Albert Memorial Museum in Exeter [fig. 3].



Fig. 2: Official opening of the Wellcome Museum in 1976. Left to right: Prof. Gwyn Griffiths, Prof. Robert Steel (College Principal), Dr. Kate Bosse-Griffiths, Mayoress and Mayor of Swansea, Harry James.



Fig. 3: Dr. Kate Bosse-Griffiths with the recently acquired coffin of Chantress of Amun, Iwesenhesetmut (1982).

In 1993 the title ‘Honorary Curator’ was passed to David Gill, lecturer in the Department of Classics and Ancient History. David had formerly been a research assistant in Greek and Roman antiquities at the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge (1988–1992). Kate continued as ‘Honorary Adviser’. The collection remained under-used, possibly because of resource limitations in terms of staff, money, and space, but also perhaps because of the then unfashionable nature of object-centred learning in universities. In January 1995, Sybil Crouch, manager of the Taliesin Arts Centre, produced a report to the University Image and Marketing Sub Committee suggesting the setting up of a new museum for the Egyptology exhibition. After the suggestion to improve access to the collection, Heritage Lottery Funding and European Regional Development Funding was sought. This, together with a sum from the University, allowed the building of a purpose-built museum as a wing of the Taliesin Arts Centre. A working party, chaired by Alan Lloyd, an Egyptologist and Head of the Department of Classics and Ancient History, worked on ideas for display. During this time members of the group had included: Sybil Crouch; David Gill; Anthony Donohue (1944–2016), an Egyptologist who had studied the collection over a number of years; Fiona Nixon, a Swansea University architect; and Gerald Gabb, from Swansea Museum Service.

During the interim period, David Gill, together with Alison Lloyd of the Glynn Vivian Art Gallery, Swansea, organised an exhibition in the Glynn Vivian called ‘The Face of Egypt’ to show selected items from the Wellcome Museum, as well as items loaned from other Welsh museums, as a foretaste of the new museum. This exhibition proved to be a great success.

In 1997, 130 objects were transferred to Swansea from the University of Wales, Aberystwyth, where they had been part of a general teaching collection. In the same year the first professional curator, Carolyn Graves-Brown, was employed, and in September 1998 the Museum was officially opened to the public by the Viscount St. Davids (1939–2009) [fig. 4]. The following year the Friends of the Egypt Centre was formed and continues to this day. The museum originally had one curator, partly funded by the Council of Museums in Wales. We now have five full-time members of staff, four part-time, and over one hundred volunteers. Each year, around 20,000 visitors come to see the collection of almost 6,000 artefacts, many of which are housed

in the two galleries: The House of Death and the House of Life. Since opening its doors, the Egypt Centre has had several donations and loans of artefacts. In 2005, forty-two objects were loaned by the British Museum, while in 2012 a collection of fifty-eight artefacts arrived from Woking College.

In the twenty years since the Egypt Centre was formed, several special exhibitions have taken place. The first was *Reflections of Women in Ancient Egypt: Women, museums and Egyptologists*, which was launched in 2001. In 2005, the Egypt Centre was fortunate to have the temporary loan of the Rhind Mathematical Papyrus from the British Museum, which accompanied the exhibition *Pharaoh's Formula: Maths in ancient Egypt*. The most recent was *Through the Lens: Images of Egypt 1917–2009*, launched in 2010, which showcased photos taken by L.Sgt Johnston of Carmarthen during the First World War.



Fig. 4: Official opening of the Egypt Centre in 1998. Left to right: Sybil Crouch, Fiona Nixon, Dr. Carolyn Graves-Brown, Prof. Robin Williams (former Vice Chancellor), Prof. David Gill, Prof. Alan Lloyd, Lord St. Davids, Mayor and Mayoress of Swansea.

Volunteer programme

Without volunteers, the youngest of whom is nine years old and the oldest over ninety, the Egypt Centre simply could not function. We have a full-time volunteer manager, Syd Howells, to oversee a diverse group of approximately 150 volunteers. These volunteers are often student placements from home and abroad, others who have mental health issues or learning difficulties, are long-term unemployed, or people who simply want to give back to the community. We are particularly proud of our child volunteer programme.

Volunteers welcome our visitors, demonstrate the public activities (senet, mummification, and the materials handling board), welcoming them, answering enquiries, and giving guided tours. They also work as educational leaders for visiting school groups and workshops and are closely involved with the development of hands-on activities with the Education Officer. Many adapt activities already on offer by making props to enhance the activity, such as headdresses, wigs, etc. Volunteers also pilot new activities before they are offered to our visitors and evaluate the activities. Some volunteers help with shop duties serving customers, answering enquiries, and carrying out general reception and administrative duties.

Over the years, the Egypt Centre volunteers have been the recipient of many awards. In 2010 the volunteers won the Welsh Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA) Volunteer of the Year Awards (Group of the Year). The young volunteers have won the annual Diana Award seven times (2011–12, 2015–19), which is the most prestigious accolade a young person aged 9–25 can receive for their social action or humanitarian work. The most recent (2018), and certainly the most prestigious, is the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service. The award is equivalent to the MBE and is the highest award that can be made to a voluntary group.



Chronology of Egyptian History

Palaeolithic Period	700000–7000 BC
Neolithic Period	8800–4700 BC
Predynastic Period	5300–3100 BC
Early Dynastic Period	3100–2686 BC
Old Kingdom	2686–2181 BC
Dynasty 3	2686–2613 BC
Dynasty 4	2613–2494 BC
Dynasty 5	2494–2345 BC
Dynasty 6	2345–2181 BC
First Intermediate Period	2181–2050 BC
Middle Kingdom	2050–1795 BC
Dynasty 11	2050–1985 BC
Dynasty 12	1985–1795 BC
Second Intermediate Period	1795–1550 BC
New Kingdom	1550–1069 BC
Dynasty 18	1550–1295 BC
Dynasty 19	1295–1186 BC
Dynasty 20	1186–1069 BC
Third Intermediate Period	1069–715 BC
Dynasty 21	1069–945 BC
Late Period	747–332 BC
Dynasty 26	664–525 BC
Ptolemaic Period	332–30 BC
Roman Period	30 BC–AD 395
Byzantine Period	395–639
Islamic Period	640–1517
Ottoman Period	1517–1805
Khedival Period	1805–1919
Monarchy	1919–1953
Republic	1953–today

**Dates are only certain after 664 BC. The earliest dates are often very unsecure.*

The House of Death



The hieroglyphs above the doors to the gallery read as *per-nefer*, which translates literally as ‘House of Beauty’. In Egyptian terms, it was used specifically to refer to the funerary workshop where the mummification would have been performed.

Turn **right** upon entering the gallery in order to explore the highlights in numerical order.

1. W927: Khabekhnet Wall Relief

(on wall behind mummification table)



Material: Painted limestone

Date: Nineteenth Dynasty, reign of Ramesses II (c. 1279–1212 BC)

Painted limestone relief depicting Khabekhnet and his wife Sahte (to the right) presenting offerings to the gods Ptah (coloured green), Ptah-Sokar (wearing a headdress), and Isis (holding a *menat*-collar). Several enthroned deities were also depicted in the scene above, although only their feet are preserved. Khabekhnet is identified in the hieroglyphs as the “Servant in the Place of Truth”, which was the Egyptian name for the workman’s village at Deir el-Medina (Luxor). The exact provenance of this relief is unknown, although it is likely from a tomb-chapel at Deir el-Medina where Khabekhnet was buried (TT 2). Khabekhnet was the eldest son of Sennedjem, whose well-known tomb (TT 1) at Deir el-Medina was discovered undisturbed in 1886. While Ptah was the main deity at Memphis, he was also the patron god to the villagers of Deir el-Medina. The relief was purchased in 1906 from the collection of Robert de Rustafjaell (1876–1943).

2. W1283: Bes Pot

(Religion in the Home case)



Material: Marl clay

Date: Ptolemaic Period (c. 332–30 BC)

Pottery vessel in Marl clay, 13.2 cm high, with a stylised depiction of the god Bes. Such vessels have been found in Palestine as well as in Egypt. While their exact function is unknown, it has been suggested that they contained wine or milk to be drunk at festivals. It is believed that this type of vessel was probably made in a single workshop at Saqqara. Bes was a protective deity connected with women in childbirth and children. He is usually depicted as a dwarf, with a lion's mane, and often with his tongue sticking out. W1283 seems to have been part of the famed collection of the Reverend William MacGregor (1848–1937), which was sold in 1922. Also in this case is another Bes pot (EC546), a Bes cosmetic container (BM2569), and two Bes fragments (EC257, W1702). See also the faience bell, which features as number 23 in this booklet.

3. AB110: Cippus

(Religion in the Home case)



Material: Steatite

Date: Late Period to Ptolemaic Period (c. 664–30 BC)

AB110 is 11.5 cm high and is made from steatite, a soft stone also known as soapstone. It is commonly referred to as a Horus stela or cippus, the latter term being used to refer to a low, round, or rectangular pedestal set up by the ancient Romans for military purposes such as a milestone or a boundary post. In ancient Egypt, a cippus was used primarily for protection. It shows the god Horus the Child standing naked on a crocodile and holding snakes in his hands, thus displaying victory over dangerous animals. It was believed that if you poured water over the cippus, the magical spells on the back would impart healing powers to the water, which you would then drink. A similar belief was practised with offering trays (see number 13 in this booklet). A mirror placed behind the cippus reflects the spells written on the back. It probably dates from the Late Period to Ptolemaic Period (c. 700–30 BC) and was donated to us by Aberystwyth University in 1997.

4. W1013: Cartonnage Coffin with Foetus

(Body Coverings case)



Material: Cartonnage

Date: Late Period (c. 600 BC)

W1013 is an extremely rare object: a cartonnage (linen or papyrus and plaster) coffin possibly dating to the Twenty-sixth Dynasty. It had long been considered as fake as the hieroglyphs on the case are meaningless. However, it was not unusual for sham hieroglyphs to be placed on coffins. For example, several of the Twenty-first Dynasty intrusive coffins (c. 900 BC) found in the Nineteenth Dynasty tomb of Iurudef at Saqqara, the Memphite necropolis, are also inscribed with mock hieroglyphs. Additionally, a CT-scan undertaken in 2014 showed it to contain a 12–16 week old foetus. One can only imagine the grief of the woman who gave birth to this child. Sham hieroglyphs may have been used because hieroglyphs were considered to have special, magical powers, although few people could read (or write) them by this date. W1013 was purchased at auction by Sir Henry Wellcome in 1934.

5. W918: Gilded Cartonnage Mask

(Body Coverings case)



Material: Cartonnage covered in gold leaf

Date: Graeco-Roman Period (c. 332 BC–AD 395)

Throughout Pharaonic history, masks were placed on the mummies of the dead. Early masks were made of wood, and later, cartonnage. Royal death masks could be made of gold or other metals. Cartonnage death masks were also painted or gilded since gold represents the flesh of the gods. Additionally, the hair is a dark blue colour since the hair of the gods was said to have been of lapis lazuli. Around the neck is a collar of bands and lotus buds. The black stains on the front of the mask are where bandages would have been elaborately wrapped around the body, covering the lower part of the mask. The deceased wears a headband with a sun-disc in the centre, with the tips of a winged scarab projecting down from the top of the head. This particular mask was purchased from the collection of Charles James Tabor (1849–1928) in 1928. It is flanked in the case by two other gilded masks from the same period.

6. W1982: Coffin of Iwesemhesetmut (Central Space)



Material: Wood

Date: Twenty-first Dynasty (c. 1069–945 BC)

This Twenty-first Dynasty coffin belonged to Iwesemhesetmut, who was a musician in the temple of Amun at Thebes. The coffin was probably excavated in 1817 by ex-circus strongman turned explorer, Giovanni Battista Belzoni (1778–1823), before being presented to the Royal Exeter Memorial Museum in 1819 by the Reverend Robert Fitzherbert Fuller (1794–1849). The coffin was subsequently gifted to Swansea in 1982. The design is typical of its date: crowded scenes of the afterlife painted on a white background, which has since turned yellow because of the ancient varnish used. Scenes on the coffin include the ‘weighing of the heart’, during which time Iwesemhesetmut’s heart is weighed against the feather of truth. If the heart is lighter than the feather, then she has led a good life and can proceed to the afterlife. However, if it is heavier, Iwesemhesetmut’s heart would be eaten by Ammut (the devourer), who was part lion, crocodile, and hippopotamus.

7. W1367: Sarcophagus of Amenhotep Son of Hapu (Coffin Fragments case)



Material: Granodiorite

Date: Eighteenth Dynasty, reign of Amenhotep III (c. 1355 BC)

The term ‘sarcophagus’ comes from the Greek, and literally means ‘flesh-eating’. It refers to a large stone container into which the wooden coffin (or coffins) would be placed. Although from the same sarcophagus, these two pieces of spotted black granodiorite fragments do not fit together. The sarcophagus belonged to Amenhotep Son of Hapu, the most important official of Amenhotep III. He was born around 1430 BC in Athribis (Lower Egypt) and became scribe and royal architect of the king. His titles include Commander of the Army, Fan Bearer on the Right Side of the King, Overseer of the Two Granaries of Upper and Lower Egypt, and Hereditary Noble. He died in his 70s and was buried in a rock cut tomb in Western Thebes. After his death, he was revered for his wisdom and from the Late Period onwards was worshipped as a god of medicine. These pieces were purchased by Sir Henry Wellcome from the de Rustafjaell collection auctioned in 1906.

8. W379: Overseer Shabti of Ptahhotep

(Shabti case)



Material: Wood

Date: Ramesside Period (c. 1292–1189 BC)

Like most museums, the Egypt Centre has a large collection of shabtis. Shabtis, which are also called ushabtis or shawabtis, acted as a substitute for the deceased in the afterlife, and would do the work demanded from their gods on behalf of their owner. W379 is one of twenty shabtis in the Egypt Centre collection belonging to Ptahhotep, scribe of the divine offerings in the House of Amun. The figure highlighted here can be identified as an overseer as he is wearing a kilt, whereas worker shabtis were usually shaped like mummies. Shabtis were often made in groups of ten workers with one overseer, which were subsequently placed in boxes in the tomb. Two shabti boxes belonging to Ptahhotep are in the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery (1969W3635), a legacy of the division of Wellcome's collection amongst different museums. They were all purchased in 1924 from the collection of the Reverend William Frankland Hood (1824–1864).

9. W867: Book of the Dead Papyrus

(Provisions for the Dead case)



Material: Papyrus

Date: Ptolemaic Period (c. 332–30 BC)

W867 is a papyrus sheet inscribed with the *Book of the Dead*, a collection of spells intended to assist a deceased's journey through the *Duat*, or underworld. The owner of the papyrus is identified as Ankh-Hapi, the son of Pasherienmin (father) and Taenaset (mother). In total, almost 200 spells of the *Book of the Dead* are known. The forty-four columns of text, written in cursive hieroglyphs, contain Chapters 15a–g, which are a series of hymns dealing with the rising and setting of the sun. The pictures (vignette) above, which include the Opening of the Mouth ceremony being performed on the owner's mummy, represent Chapter 1 of the *Book of the Dead*. This spell enabled the dead to be able to speak, hear, and see again in the afterlife. The complete papyrus of Ankh-Hapi was originally at least over five metres in length, and most likely much longer, with larger sections being housed in the British Museum (BM EA 9946).

10. W429: *Ba* bird

(Provisions for the Dead case)



Material: Wood

Date: Ptolemaic Period (c. 332–30 BC)

This small wooden bird has a human head, beard, and wears a broad collar. The wood is covered with gesso (plaster) and is brightly painted. Originally the bird would have been placed on top of a wooden stela, such as number 14 of this booklet. Examples of *ba* bird statues appear in the New Kingdom, but W429 actually dates to the Ptolemaic Period. The *ba* is similar to our idea of personality. The dead person had to leave the tomb to join with his/her *ka*, or life force, in order to become an everlasting spirit (*akh*). As the actual body could not leave the tomb, the *ba* had to do this. The *ba* was commonly shown as a bird, usually with a human head, so that they could be as mobile as possible. We have eleven *ba* birds in our collection, some with outstretched wings.

11. W164: Reserve Head

(Provisions for the Dead case)



Material: Limestone

Date: Fourth Dynasty (c. 2613–2494 BC)

W164 is a type of sculpture commonly referred to as a ‘reserve head’ by Egyptologists. Despite being life-sized (23 cm), it was clearly not part of a larger statue as it is carefully smoothed off on the base. The head has close-cropped hair, eyebrows that are sculpted in raised low relief, and no ears present. Additionally, a ‘cranial groove’ is visible, a careful and deliberate cut that typically starts from the top of the cranium and extends to the back of the neck. Reserve heads are one of the most distinctive types of objects dating to the Old Kingdom, specifically to the Fourth Dynasty and the reigns of Khufu and Khafre. Only around thirty-seven are known, most of which are made of limestone. Their function is uncertain, although it is possible that they were intended as a substitute for the actual head of the deceased, or a means by which the dead could identify their own body. W164 was purchased at auction in 1928.

12. W1377: Theban Tomb Painting

(Provisions for the Dead case)



Material: Painted plaster

Date: Mid-Eighteenth Dynasty (c. 1400 BC)

Theban tomb painting depicting a man seated on a chair, which is decorated to resemble an animal hide, while sniffing a lotus blossom. For the Egyptians, the lotus flower was primarily a symbol of death and rebirth. This association arose from the way that the flower would retract into the water at night and emerge with the rising sun. Before him is a table contains various breads and cakes, meat, grapes, and lettuce. Beneath the table are two vessels, which would have contained wine. Just as in life, the Egyptians believed it was essential for the deceased to receive nourishment in the afterlife. Egyptian tomb paintings were commonly executed on a grid, as can be seen with this relief. Similar pieces, perhaps from the same anonymous tomb, can be found in the British Museum, the Petrie Museum, and the Walters Art Museum. All the pieces originate from the 1906 sale of the Robert de Rustafjaell collection.

13. W481: Offering Tray

(Provisions for the Dead case)



Material: Pottery

Date: Middle Kingdom (c. 2055–1800 BC)

W481 is a red pottery offering tray of a quasi-rectangular shape with two water channels. Depicted in the central space are the head of an ox, four pieces of bread, a trussed calf, the foreleg of an animal, and a container with four bowls. Trays such as these were placed above the grave of the deceased. It is thought that water would be poured over the tray and a spell recited. The water would then trickle over the pottery food and down onto the grave. Thus, the tray would provide much needed nourishment for the deceased. Such trays usually date from the First Intermediate Period to the Middle Kingdom (2181–1650 BC). The writing on the base probably indicates the provenance of the object. W481 was originally part of the collection of Robert de Rustafjaell, which was purchased by Sir Henry Wellcome in 1906. The Egypt Centre has other offering trays made of pottery and offering tables made of stone, some of which are on display in the same case.

14. W1041: Stela of Pasherienimhotep

(Provisions for the Dead case)



Material: Wood

Date: Ptolemaic Period (c. 200–100 BC)

Wooden funerary stela belonging to a priest at Edfu called Pasherienimhotep. The stela is decorated on two sides, with the front divided into four registers. The top register (lunette) depicts two recumbent jackals flanking a *djed*-pillar, with the winged disc of Behdet above. The second register shows the deceased on a lion bier with Anubis performing the mummification. Anubis is flanked by Isis, Nephthys, and the Four Sons of Horus. Additionally, Pasherienimhotep is shown on the far right dressed as a *Sem*-priest. The third register contains a long inscription requesting that the gods grant the *ka* of the deceased various food provisions in the afterlife. On the bottom register, a further two recumbent jackals flank a *djed*-pillar (Osiris). The back of the stela is divided into three registers: a winged disc at the top, Isis and Nephthys adoring Osiris in the centre, and *tyet*-symbols flanking a *djed*-pillar at the bottom. The stela was purchased in 1922 from the MacGregor collection.

15. W529: Cat Mummy Mask

(Animals case)



Material: Cartonnage

Date: Ptolemaic Period (c. 200–100 BC)

Painted cartonnage mask for the mummy of a cat. In the Late Dynastic to Ptolemaic Period (747–30 CE), cats were specifically bred to be killed and then mummified in honour of the goddess Bastet, who took the form of a cat. Catacombs for cats were specially built throughout Egypt, with the Bubastian at Saqqara being the most well-known. W529 is believed to have been purchased by Sir Henry Wellcome in 1928. In the case next to the cat mask is an example of a cat mummy and various small cat statues. Another cat mummy is on display in the Votive Offerings case in the House of Life. Millions of cats were mummified as votive offerings during the First Millennium BC. When British explorers pillaged Egypt in the 1890s, they shipped many of them home to use as fertilizer, even transporting 180,000 cat mummies on one ship. Ancient Egyptians mummified animals from the size of a hippopotamus down to that of a scarab beetle! Can you spot the tiny shrew coffin in the case?

The House of Life



The hieroglyphs above the doors to the gallery read as *per-ankh*, which translates literally as ‘House of Life’. In Egyptian terms, it was used specifically to refer to a library or scriptorium.

Turn **left** upon entering the gallery in order to explore the highlights in numerical order.

16. W957: Offering Stand

(to left of door as you enter)



Material: Limestone

Date: Nineteenth Dynasty (c. 1200 BC)

Limestone base of an offering table belonging to Paneb, Chief Workman at Deir el-Medina, the village occupied by workmen who built the royal tombs in the Valleys of the Kings and Queens. The stand was probably set up in one of the small private chapels adjoining the village. The vertical text on the front is a dedication of offerings to Amun. The horizontal text records the name of his father Neferseret and son Aapahte. On the rear is a dedication to Khnum, Satet, and Anuket, gods of the First Cataract region, who were held in particular honour by the workmen at Deir el-Medina. According to Papyrus Salt 124, which is housed in the British Museum, Paneb lived a wild and disreputable life. He was given to fighting and drunkenness, seducing married women, stealing from the royal tombs, and threatening to murder. W957 was purchased by Wellcome from the 1907 sale of the Robert de Rustafjaell collection.

17. W5308: D-Ware Vessel

(Egypt Before Writing case)



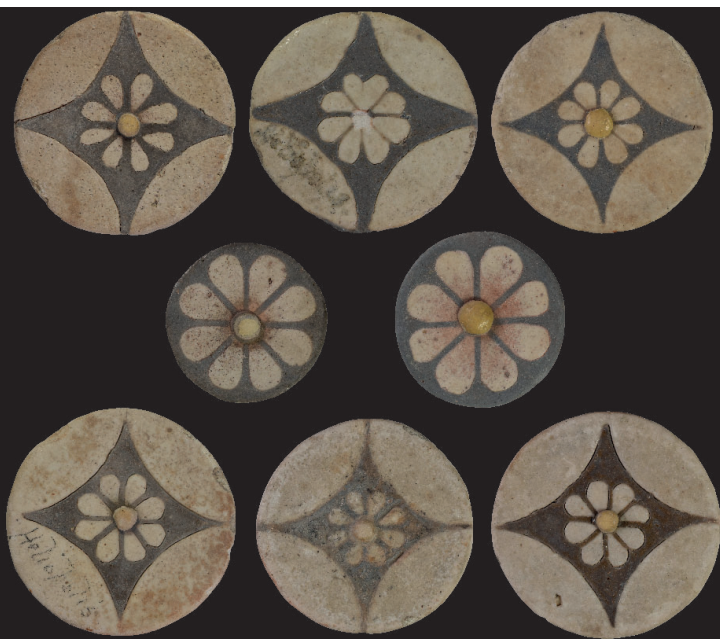
Material: Pottery

Date: Naqada IIA–Naqada IIIB Period (c. 3600–3100 BC)

W5308 is a small (10.7 cm in height) decorated ovoid Marl clay pottery jar with a flat base, ledge rim, and two cylindrical pierced handles on the shoulder. The exterior is decorated in dark red paint with representations of two oared boats, one on each side. The boats contain two central cabins to which a standard has been attached, each bearing a different emblem: a Z-motif or zigzag, and five triangular hills or mounds. One of the boats has a large frond hanging from the left prow that arches over the vessel and terminates in an irregular shape above the cabins. The other has a fan-shaped bush motif projecting from the rear cabin. A similar fan-shaped bush is also shown under the boats. Additionally, S-motifs are painted below and between the boats. Four wavy lines encircle the top of the rim, with a further five covering each handle. Small pottery vessels of this type were common during the Predynastic Period and may have contained scented oil. Purchased from the MacGregor collection in 1922.

18. W500: Faience Wall Tiles

(Faience and Glass case)



Material: Faience

Date: Ramesside Period (c. 1292–1069 BC)

These daisy pattern faience inlays would have been placed amongst plainer tiles to give a more decorative effect. Tiles such as this commonly date to the Ramesside Period, when they were used for decorating the royal palaces. Writing on the tiles suggest they were found at the sites of Heliopolis and Tell el-Yahudiya. Flowers of all kinds were very popular in ancient Egypt, the most notable being the lotus and lily. Flowers were used as offerings in temples, to decorate mummies, and as garlands in festivals. They were also used as motifs in temples, in homes, on furniture, and jewellery. Faience is a ceramic material much favoured by the ancient Egyptians. It is a combination of sand, lime, and ash, which is mixed into a paste and then fired to create a hard shiny material. It was used to make shabtis, amulets, pots, and beads. Colour was added either before firing, or applied afterwards. These inlays were part of the collection of Ellinor Frances Berens (1842–1924), which was sold at auction in 1923.

19. W9: Amarna Collar

(Amarna case)



Material: Faience and semi-precious stones

Date: Amarna Period (c. 1335 BC)

Broad collar dating to the Amarna Period with a central amulet of Beset. Beset was the female version of the household god Bes. They were protectors of women in childbirth and of children. This collar was possibly worn by one of the Amarna princesses (i.e., Akhenaten and Nefertiti's daughters, and Tutankhamun's half-sisters). However, we cannot be sure if the stringing is original. The beads are made from a variety of materials, including faience and carnelian. One would expect such collars to have faience terminals. However, these may have been cut off and sold separately. Broad collars seem to have been a common feature of Egyptian dress. It is unusual to find collars with the thread still intact: often dealers made up collars with beads from a variety of sources and usually of different dates. It is possible that the same has been done with ours, although the beads do seem to date to the same period. This is one of four Amarna collars in the Egypt Centre collection, all of which originate from the collection of Ellinor Frances Berens, which was sold in 1923.

20. AR50/3540: Miniature Quran

(Writing case)



Material: Copper alloy and paper

Date: Nineteenth century

This miniature book measures just 4.6 cm across when open and by 2.5 cm in height. It consists of a hinged metal cover containing thirteen pages held in place by the metal spine. The book cover has been embossed with geometric patterns including triangles, circles, stars, and lines. The pages are printed on both sides with excerpts of chapters (Surah) of the Holy Quran. Islam became the main religion of Egypt, and Arabic the main language, following the Arab conquests (AD 639–642). Printed Arabic texts have been found in Egypt dating from the Fatimid Period (tenth century). Multiple copies of texts of Quranic extracts, prayers, and incantations were printed on paper strips to meet the huge demand for amulets and charms. The strips were often rolled up and enclosed in a locket. This is, of course, reminiscent of ancient inscribed Egyptian amulets. AR50/3540 was found at Armant by the Egypt Exploration Society. Next to the book in the case is a slightly larger set of Quranic texts used as a charm, in the form of folded pieces of paper inside a leather case.

21. W967: Book of Esther

(Writing case)



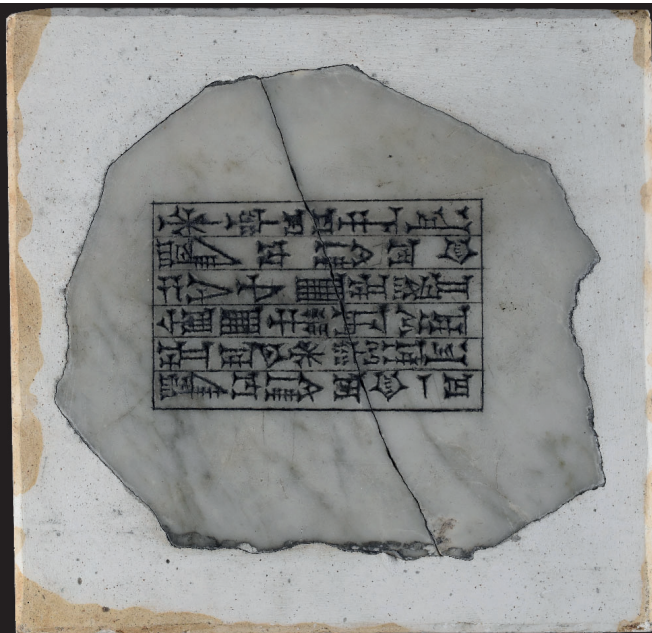
Material: Ivory and parchment

Date: Nineteenth century

W967 is a parchment scroll, about two metres in length, comprising the Book of Esther from the Old Testament. The scroll is affixed to a wooden roll decorated with a triple crown of ivory, which dates to the nineteenth century. There are twenty-eight columns of writing, most containing eighteen vertical lines of script. The story of Esther is read out in synagogues at the festival of Purim. Its place in the collection represents the fact that there was a Jewish presence in Egypt from about 650 BC, when Jewish soldiers helped Psamtek I in the Nubian campaign. In 597 BC, Jews took refuge in Egypt after the destruction of Judah. Most significant, however, was the massive Jewish immigration to Alexandria during the Ptolemaic Period, 332–30 BC. The Jews were virtually wiped out by the Emperor Trajan in the Jewish Revolt (AD 115–117). However, many Hellenised Jews in Alexandria converted to Christianity in the first century. W967 was purchased at auction in 1921.

22. W952: Cuneiform Brick

(Writing case)



Material: Marble

Date: Twenty-sixth Dynasty (c. 605–562 BC)

W952 is a marble brick dating to the reign of Nebuchadnezzar II, king of Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar was an important figure in Jewish history, responsible for the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem. The brick contains six horizontal lines of text in Akkadian cuneiform, to be read from right to left, which proclaims the king as son of Nebopolassar and a provider of temples. Cuneiform (wedge-shaped) writing dates from the fourth millennium BC and developed from a pictographic system to one that marked words, syllables, and phonetic elements with stylised symbols consisting of straight strokes, often in a wedge shape. These were pressed into soft clay with a stylus, although later the writing was inscribed on harder surfaces such as stone. It was used to write various languages in the Near East, such as Sumerian and Akkadian, which was the diplomatic language of the region in this period. W952 was purchased at auction in 1935.

23. WK44: Bes Bell

(Music and Games case)



Material: Faience

Date: Ptolemaic Period (c. 332–30 BC)

Faience bell in the shape of the head of Bes, which is 3.7 cm in height. This bell came to us in 2012 as part of a loan from Woking College. It is made out of pale green faience, in the shape of a hollow hemispherical Bes-head crowned with feathers, with a hole for suspension. An additional hole, presumably for the now missing tongue, is also present. Parallel examples of this type have been dated to the Ptolemaic Period. The fact that this bell is made from faience suggests it is a votive or amuletic item, particularly as faience would have been too fragile to shake vigorously. It is also possible that these bells were worn around the necks of children to protect them. In several cultures, bells are used to ward off evil. See also the Bes vessel in the House of Death (number 2) and the Beset amulet in the House of Life (number 19).

24. W946: Commodus Stela

(Votive Offerings case)



Material: Sandstone

Date: Roman Period, reign of Commodus (c. AD 190)

W946 is a sandstone stela dating to the reign of the Roman Emperor Commodus. It was commissioned to honour the death of the mother of a sacred Buchis bull, which was buried in the Baqaria cow cemetery at Armant. The stela is divided into three registers, with the lunette depicting a winged sun-disc flanked by two seated jackals representing the god Anubis. The middle register shows a priest (or perhaps even Commodus himself) burning incense and pouring a libation before a mummiiform figure of Isis, who stands before the recumbent cow. The bottom register contains a text written over five horizontal lines, which state that the cow died in 190 AD. According to Herodotus, sacred bulls were chosen because of their special markings. In the Graeco-Roman Period, both they and their mothers were treated to a life of relative luxury, which included being given a full royal mummification and funerary rites. W946 was excavated by the Egypt Exploration Society.

25. W793: Amethyst Scarab Bracelet

(Body Adornment case)



Material: Copper alloy, amethyst, garnet, and carnelian

Date: Twelfth Dynasty (c. 1985–1795 BC)

This bracelet was found in the undisturbed grave (number 734) of a wealthy female at Qau el-Kebir in 1923. According to the excavation report, it was one of three bracelets adorning her right arm. The bracelet consists mainly of beads made out of garnet, carnelian, and amethyst. Yet the most striking bead is the one shaped like a scarab beetle, which is made out of amethyst. Scarabs are associated with resurrection and the sun god Khepri, as the rolling of a dung ball by the dung beetle mirrored that of the journey of the sun in the sky. Jewellery making in ancient Egypt reached its peak during the Middle Kingdom, with many semi-precious stones and metals used. Amethyst, for example, was sourced from the site of Wadi el-Hudi in Lower Nubia. The Egypt Centre has two further bracelets (W795 & W796) and two waist girdles (W792 & W794) on display in the same case, all of which also originate from the same burial. These objects were gifted to Sir Henry Wellcome in 1927 by Sir William Matthew Flinders Petrie (1853–1972).

26. W277: Carnelian Anklet

(Body Adornment case)



Material: Carnelian

Date: Twelfth Dynasty (c. 1985–1795 BC)

This string of carnelian beads dates to the Middle Kingdom. The beads have been restrung in modern times and it is not known if all of them were originally found together. Given its length, it may have been worn as an anklet. The three larger beads are in the shape of the heads of snakes, two of which have engraved eyes. Snake head amulets were often made of carnelian, which symbolised blood, and therefore life. Carnelian was believed to possess magic healing properties and to protect the wearer from evil. In death, snake amulets were often placed at the throat of the mummy for protection during the journey to the afterlife. This object was purchased by Wellcome in 1924 from the collection of the Reverend William Frankland Hood (1824–1864).

27. W769: Paddle Doll

(Body Adornment case)



Material: Wood

Date: Middle Kingdom (c. 2055–1795 BC)

W769 is a flat, paddle shaped, wooden figure, a type of object that Egyptologists refer to as ‘paddle dolls’. Both sides of the figure are decorated with black markings to represent tattoos. The most prominent feature is the dotted pubic triangle, which is the one constant in the iconic repertoire of paddle dolls. Additionally, the rear of the figure contains the representation of a frog, an animal closely associated with fertility and the goddess Heket. Paddle dolls are a particular type of figurine named because they are made from a flat, shaped piece of wood, which usually have long strings of mud or faience beads attached at one end to imitate hair. In the past, they have been interpreted variously as concubines for the dead, as children’s toys, or as figurines embodying the concept of fertility and rebirth. Most recently, it has been argued that they were representations of a specific group of women, who can be identified as the *khener*-dancers of Hathor. The majority of paddle dolls excavated can be dated to the Eleventh and Twelfth dynasties.

28. W1376: Temple Relief of Neferure

(Body Adornment case)



Material: Limestone

Date: Eighteenth Dynasty, Reign of Hatshepsut (c. 1478–1458 BC)

W1376 is an irregularly shaped limestone fragment. The front of the fragment contains the head of a figure whose face is now missing, with the carving of the eye displaying a long cosmetic line and low brow. The figure wears an *ibs*-wig with echeloned curls that completely cover the ears. The head is adorned with a *seshed*-diadem, knotted at the back in the shape of two lotus flowers with double ribbons. An *uraeus* entwines the diadem on the forehead. Behind the head are the remains of a fan possibly held by a personified-*ankh*. This iconography clearly indicates that the head belongs to a royal person. The key to identifying the figure lies with the hieroglyphs above the head, which indicate that it depicts a female. Combined, the iconography and the hieroglyphs point to it depicting the God's Wife of Amun Neferure, who was the daughter of the female Pharaoh Hatshepsut. The relief, which was purchased from the de Rustafjaell collection in 1906, originates from Hatshepsut's memorial temple at Deir el-Bahari (Luxor).

29. W581: Battle Axe

(Metals case)



Material: Copper alloy

Date: Middle Kingdom (c. 2055–1650 BC)

This axe has a copper alloy (i.e. bronze), crescent-shaped blade attached by rivets to a bronze case socket for the shaft. The rivets, eight in number, were inserted through holes in the tubing, which correspond to perforations in the tangs of the axe. The cylindrical case socket originally enclosed a wooden haft, decayed remains of which survive inside. The object has recently undergone conservation at Cardiff University. This type of axe dates to the Twelfth Dynasty and originated from Mesopotamia, Syria, and Palestine. It was used as a cutting/slashing weapon: the long blade is intended for cutting rather than piercing. Eventually, such items went out of fashion because of the increasing use of body armour, which meant that weapons had to be able to penetrate the armour. Purchased by Wellcome in 1922 from the collection of the Reverend William MacGregor.

30. W921: Statue of Aba

(to left of door as you exit)



Material: Limestone

Date: Twenty-sixth Dynasty (c. 664–525 BC)

Limestone block statue of the priest Aba (or Iba). Aba is represented sitting on a plinth with his crossed arms resting on his drawn-up knees. He wears a kilt from waist to shins, leaving the upper torso bare. An inscription of five horizontal lines of hieroglyphs is located on the front of Aba's garment. The text records that Aba was a priest at Saft el-Henna in the Delta, the cult centre of the god Sopdu. Sopdu was a falcon-headed deity who protected the eastern frontier of Egypt. The text also provides Aba's genealogy, including the names of his parents, grandfather, and great-grandfather. Stylistically, the statue dates to the early Twenty-sixth Dynasty. Block statues refer to those where the individual is enveloped by a long cloak with legs drawn up toward the chest, and are a classic type of private sculpture from the Middle Kingdom onwards. They seem to have been commonly placed in temples to enable the official to participate in rituals. Purchased by Wellcome in 1922 from the collection of the Reverend William MacGregor.

Practical Information

Everything you want to know about the Egypt Centre, from its history to the catalogue, from planning your visit to volunteering, is available on our bilingual (English/Welsh) website at: www.egypt.swan.ac.uk

Location: Taliesin Building, Swansea University, Singleton Park, Swansea SA2 8PP

Admission: Free

Opening Hours: Tuesday–Saturday 10am–4pm (last admission 3.50pm)
(Please note we are not open Sundays, Mondays, or Bank Holidays)

Getting There:

By Bus: Roughly a 15 minute bus journey from Swansea City Centre

By Train: Nearest station is Swansea High Street

By Car: Use SA2 8PP for Sat Nav users. We have a pay and display car park, which is a 2-minute walk from the museum, located at the front of the University.

Access:

Entrance to the museum is via a small ramp and through a set of automatic sliding doors. We have a self-operated lift for access to the first floor, café, and toilets. Both galleries, gift shop, café, and disabled toilets are accessible to wheelchair users. Baby changing facilities are situated within the disabled toilet cubicle on the first floor. Seating is available throughout the Museum. Some of our information sheets are available in braille and in large print. We welcome assistance dogs on site. Audio guides are available on the shop. We are an autism-friendly and dementia-friendly venue. Photography is allowed (including the use of flash) throughout the Museum. Signage is available in English and Welsh.

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