



Volunteer Newsletter

Jan-Mar 2021

Museum of Egyptian Antiquities



Dr. Abeer Eladany

An Egyptological journey from Cairo... to Aberdeen!



Eyes Without A Face

Eye-lights of the collection - and even cornea puns - from Dr. Ken Griffin.



Medical Papyri

The role of the pharmacist in ancient Egypt.

egypt.swan.ac.uk



Welcome



Syd Howells
Editor in Chief

Welcome to the latest edition of the Egypt Centre Volunteer Newsletter. As you can see the museum remains closed due to the Covid-19 pandemic, but we have been working hard to ensure no-one forgets about us for when we eventually reopen, through online engagement where possible.

In this issue you will find lots of old favourites such as Meet the Volunteer, Sam Powell's reviews of the Friends of the Egypt Centre talks, Egyptology in the News, wordsearches etc. as well as fascinating articles on ancient Egyptian medical papyri and an exceptional interview with Abeer Eladany, Curatorial Assistant at Aberdeen University's Museums, which was conducted by our very own Dulcie Engel.

Many thanks to all who have contributed this time (and if your contribution is not in this issue, it will be in the next!). A reminder that we are always looking for contributions, do not be afraid! If you have any ideas for the newsletter, please email us and we will have a chat.



Dulcie Engel
Associate Editor

A former French and linguistics lecturer, I have volunteered at the Egypt Centre since April 2014. I am a gallery supervisor in both galleries, and author of the Egyptian Writing Trails. Apart from language, I am particularly interested in the history of collecting. I won the 2016 Volunteer of the Year award.



Rob Stradling
Technical Editor

A volunteer since 2012, before the world ended you could find me supervising the House of Life on Tuesdays & Thursdays; at the computer desk, painstakingly assembling periodicals not entirely unlike this one; or patrolling Cupboard 8, bravely expanding mankind's horizons, one biscuit at a time.

Cover photos: **Dier el Bahri & Karnak Temple**,
by Dulcie Engel

If you would like to contribute to the newsletter or submit articles for consideration please contact:
dulcie.engel@icloud.com

The Newsletter will be published every three months - Next issue due **Jun 2021**.



Office News

The Egypt Centre has continued to offer online talks, workshops, and opportunities during the current lockdown, and this is certainly an area we will continue to pursue once we return to the museum.

In conjunction with the new online journal, Interdisciplinary Egyptology, the Egypt Centre has contributed to and hosts a series of fascinating talks on a variety of Egyptological topics. The list of talks can be accessed through this link:

<https://journals.univie.ac.at/index.php/integ/events>

Egypt Centre has an Eventbrite page which features lots of information on fundraising lectures, Friends of the Egypt Centre talks and information on Ken's next Egyptology course. Forthcoming workshops etc. will be posted there as soon as they are finalised:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/o/the-egypt-centre-26128686399>

An excellent blog post by Dr Ken Griffin on the history of the 50th anniversary of the Egypt Centre's collection arriving in Swansea in 1971 can be found at our Collection Blogspot:

<https://egyptcentrecollectionblog.blogspot.com/2021/02/a-special-day-in-history-of-egypt-centre.html>



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Meet the Volunteer



Former Volunteer
Chelsea Thomas

I come from: Swansea.

I started volunteering: Jan 2020

I chose to volunteer because: I was on placement for my cultural heritage apprenticeship.

My Favourite artefact is: The mummified animals.

How volunteering at the Egypt Centre helps me: It has helped me gain my qualification and experience teaching school groups, which helped me to get my new job as a teaching assistant.



Young Volunteer
Scarlett Murray

I come from: Reynoldston, Swansea.

I started volunteering: Because I really like ancient Egyptian mythology.

I chose to volunteer because: I would be able to make new friends with the same interests.

My Favourite artefact is: Ibis statue (W1048) HoD.

How volunteering at the Egypt Centre helps me: I have been able to make new friends with similar interests to mine, and become more extroverted. I have learned more about ancient Egypt

And I Quote...

"I felt no small degree of sorrow to quit a place which was become so familiar to me, and where, in no other part of the world, I could find so many objects of inquiry so congenial to my inclination. I must say, that I felt more in leaving Thebes, than any other place in my life."

Giovanni Belzoni, 1819





Adult Volunteer

Kathryn Smith

I come from: Alvechurch, Worcs.

I started volunteering: Jan 2021

I chose to volunteer because:

I love Egyptian history and have never really studied it before, so this placement is a great way to educate myself on Egyptian artefacts. It's also a good way to gain work experience as I am considering going into archiving or museum work.

My Favourite artefact is:

The Wadjet Eye Amulets, especially the one in translucent carnelian (EC840). I think the colour is beautiful and I love the story behind the eye of Horus.

How volunteering at the Egypt Centre helps me:

It has really helped me with paying attention to detail, as the cataloguing requires a lot of attention and it has to be so precise. It's really interesting as it tells you what artefacts the Centre holds and has on loan. It has massively improved my time management, as I am able to do bits when I can.



Adult Volunteer

Molly Osbourne

I come from: Southport, Merseyside.

I started volunteering: Aug 2019

I chose to volunteer because:

I want a museum career working with Egyptological collections and I thought volunteering here would be a great opportunity.

My Favourite artefact is:

The votive offering of Osiris in the House of Life (AB120), as it was the first artefact I studied and handled.

How volunteering helped me: I have gotten so much confidence when talking to the public and teaching children. I have also gained a lot of experience in collections work, a great network of museum workers, and an awesome bunch of friends.



Interview

Dr Abeer Eladany,
University of Aberdeen Museum

I was delighted to connect with Abeer, who was happy to do an e-mail interview for the Newsletter this February.



DE: Can you tell us a bit about your background?

AE: I was born in **Cairo** and studied Egyptian Archaeology and Conservation at Cairo & **Helwan** Universities before I started working in the *Egyptian Museum* in Cairo. My first job was with the team responsible for preparing the royal mummies for display. I later went to **Manchester** to do my MSc and PhD in Biomedical and Forensic Studies in Egyptology. Recently, I gained an MLitt in Museum Studies in **Aberdeen**. Before I started my PhD, I was offered a job in Aberdeen to excavate the site at the East

Kirk of St Nicholas. This site was my first excavation in Scotland, and it was an amazing experience for me. More than 1000 articulated skeletons were discovered in the site and a large number of artefacts including organic material such as leather and textile were well preserved.

DE: What is your current post?

AE: I joined the team at the *University of Aberdeen Museum* in 2018 as a curatorial assistant. My work includes looking after a wide range of artefacts from all over the world as well as a fantastic art collection including a painting by **Canaletto**! I also contribute to, and support, teaching in a number of university courses.

DE: What inspired your interest in Egyptology? And what particular area(s) of the discipline interest you?

AE: It is hard not to be inspired by Ancient Egypt when you live near the Egyptian Museum in Cairo. I also remember visiting the archaeological sites in **Alexandria**, **Luxor** and **Aswan** when I was a child. My research interests are focused on human remains & mummies as this was the subject for my PhD research. I am also interested in repatriation and restitution.

DE: Can you tell us about your links with the Egypt Centre?

AE: My links with the Egypt Centre go back to 2004 when I first arrived in Manchester! I attended a conference at the Egypt Centre and was lucky to see the collection there. More recently I have attended all the online courses organised by Ken and Sam and I am very grateful for all their hard work in delivering fantastic content in a friendly environment. I also wrote one of the blogs about religion at **Deir el Medina** which was published on the Egypt Centre website. However, one of the surprising connections to the Egypt Centre was through the archaeologist, **Dr Anna Ritchie**, who was in Aberdeen for a research visit. When Anna



learned about my Egyptology background, she mentioned that she had catalogued the collection in Woking some time ago*, and that the Egypt Centre had been the new home for the collection since 2012. In December, Ken and Sam organised a live online tour of the collection and it was amazing to visit the collection and the store through the lens of a webcam!

DE: Can you tell us how you found the famous cigar box? (where was it, how did you realise the significance...)

AE: Shortly after I arrived in Aberdeen, I joined the team of volunteers at the then *Marischal Museum*. I was fascinated (still am) by the Egyptian collection at the University and wanted to learn more about it. While volunteering, I became aware that in 2001 a record of a wooden fragment that was discovered in 1872 by the engineer **Waynman Dixon** & **Dr Grant Bey** came to light. This wooden piece was donated to the University of Aberdeen's museum collections, but the current location of the object was unknown. Then at the end of last year, while the team was conducting a review of items housed in the University's Asia collection, a colleague (**Christina MacKenzie**) and I came across a small box and I was immediately intrigued because the item had the old Egyptian flag on the top and did not seem to belong in the Asian collection. I cross-referenced it with other records. Once I looked into the numbers in our records of the Egyptian Collection, I instantly knew what it was, and that it had effectively been hidden in plain sight in the wrong collection.

DE: You've said that the response to the find was phenomenal: what's it like to be in the media spotlight?

AE: It has been amazing experience for me. I received a huge support from my colleagues at the Museums and Special collections team and the University's communications team. The interview requests came from all over the world and

were done mostly online or over the phone. Certainly, the media training I received while volunteering in the local community radio station became relevant. Collection access is one of my main duties as a curatorial assistant and I hope that this media coverage highlighted the collection and brought it to the attention of the public and researchers. I enjoyed talking to many reporters from Egypt and it was great to communicate this rediscovery to the Egyptian audience in Arabic. However, some may say that my Arabic is a little rusty!

DE: What next for the wooden ruler; will there be a special display?

AE: We are very much looking forward to being able to share the find with the public once our exhibition spaces reopen.

DE: And what are your current plans/projects?

AE: I am currently working on a rehousing project that include objects from South Africa as well as updating the records of the Art collection on the database. As a member of the *Museums Galleries Scotland's "Empire, Slavery and Scotland"* project steering group, I am honoured to be part of the exploration of how the story of Scotland's involvement in the British Empire, colonialism, and transatlantic slavery, should be told using museum collections and spaces.

DE: Thanks so much Abeer for giving up your time to tell us your fascinating story. Here's to more exciting discoveries!

Written by: Dulcie Engel

**Anna catalogued the collection as a schoolgirl in Woking in the late 1950s/early 1960s (DE).*



The Eyes Have It: A Pair of Inlaid Eyes from Sanam

In August 2019 the reserve collection of the Egypt Centre was moved into a new state of the art storage facility. Yet this was only the beginning of the task to reorganise roughly 4,000 objects not currently on display in the museum. Over the subsequent eight months, around 3,000 objects had been repacked and given a new location. However, because of the COVID-19 lockdown, this project went eye-dle for six months. Therefore, the reorganisation was only completed in December 2020.

Working directly with the Egypt Centre collection during the pandemic has been a challenge since, because of the social distancing rules, I'm the only person able to work in the storeroom. However, with the rise of Zoom, it has been possible for me to work with the objects while Zooming with Sam who updates our online catalogue remotely. Therefore, this greatly improves the productivity and processing speed. A few weeks ago, we were going through a box of thirty-eight eye inlays, many of which originally belonged to wooden coffins. One particular pair of eyes immediately attracted our attention (W624 & W626). They are made of a copper alloy frame with the white scleras made of ostrich eggshell. Ostrich shell was used throughout Egyptian history for inlays, including occasionally for the whites of eyes (Phillips 2009). Unfortunately, in both cases the pupils are missing, although the stained outlines are still visible:



W624



W626

So what makes these objects so interesting? Well, with the Egypt Centre collection it is always important to keep an eye out for any previous numbers written

on the objects. In the case of W624 and W626, faint five-digit numbers were spotted in the lower right corners of the scleras, written in white ink. Only the number on W624 could be fully read (12440), which I immediately identified as a Wellcome "R" number. These were written on objects as they were registered at the *Wellcome Historical Medical Museum* (WHMM) from 1913 until 1933. In recent years, the Wellcome has digitised many of their historical archives, including the registration ledgers. The entry for 12440 indicates that the object was identical to 12439, which is described as an "eye - of bone - with haematite pupil + bronze rim from mummy". Thus, while the number on W626 was only partially readable, it was possible to identify it as 12439 having located its matching eye.

But the story doesn't end here! The next page of the ledger indicates that these eyes were "*excavated at Sanam cemetery by Llewelyn Griffith*". I couldn't believe my eyes! We had no idea that the Egypt Centre housed any of the objects from **Sanam**, which was excavated during the 1912-13 season of the *University of Oxford Excavations in Nubia* led by **Francis Llewellyn Griffith** (1862-1934). The eyes were subsequently presented to the WHMM in 1921. I searched the Wellcome archives further for additional details on the eyes. One file contained letters of correspondence between Griffith and Wellcome, often via the curator of the WHMM, **Charles J. S. Thompson** (1862-1943). In one letter written by Thompson to Griffith, dated 02 February 1921, an "enamelled eye" is mentioned as one of several objects from Sanam that "would be of most interest for his [Wellcome's] collection".

Looking further through the file, I was excited to see that the eyes were listed as having been found in tomb 691, which dates to the Twenty-fifth Dynasty. The



accompanying tomb record reads as: "Cave tomb, 15 steep steps, drop of 70 to narrow platform before embrasure, approach L. 380, W. 100–120, total D. 380, main chamber 600 by 180, with two side chambers, axis 320. On floor of main chamber, pair of bronze eyes and eyebrows from a wooden coffin, the former inlaid with white (ostrich egg?) shell on which is fixed a raised disc of obsidian? as pupil; fragments of hollow bronze..." With this information, I then searched the excavation report and found that the eyes were mentioned twice. Firstly, Griffith says that "amongst the cave graves 691 preserves clear evidence of having contained a coffin in a pair of bronze eyes and eyebrows, such as are found inlaid in well-made wooden coffins from Egypt" (Griffith 1923, 84). Secondly, he said that "in the cave grave 691 were found a pair of bronze eyes and eyebrows from a wooden coffin, the eyes inlaid with white (ostrich egg) shell on which is fixed a raised disk of obsidian (?) as pupil; also fragments of hollow bronze, which perhaps had formed the lobes, etc., of a pair of ears" (Griffith 1923, 106).

Sanam is located 25km south of the Fourth Cataract in modern day **Sudan**. The site is situated just a few kilometres south of the sacred site of **Gebel Barkal**, and between the royal cemeteries of **el-Kurru** (to the south) and **Nuri** (to the north). Over the course of four months at the site, Griffith and his team excavated an eye-popping 1550 tombs. Finds from the cemetery are scattered throughout the world, including the collections of the *National Museum Khartoum*, the *Ashmolean Museum*, the *British Museum*, the *Ägyptisches Museum* Berlin, and now Swansea. Knowing that the eyes were from the cemetery of Sanam, I contacted Professor **Angelika Lohwasser**, who has been researching the site for many years (Lohwasser 2010; 2012). Remarkably, W624 and W626 are the only eye inlays from a coffin found in the cemetery (Lohwasser 2012, 92). While the pupils of the eyes were recorded at the time of their registration of the WHMM, they have since become detached and subsequently lost. The eyebrows listed in the excavation report were not, however, listed as having

been accessioned at the WHMM and it can only be assumed that they never accompanied the eyes to the museum.

This article has shown that sometimes discoveries can be made right in front of your eyes!

Written by: Ken Griffin

**I am grateful to Professor Lohwasser for sending me the relevant pages from her 2012 publication.

(This is an edited and abbreviated version of the EC Collection blog post from 28 December 2020)

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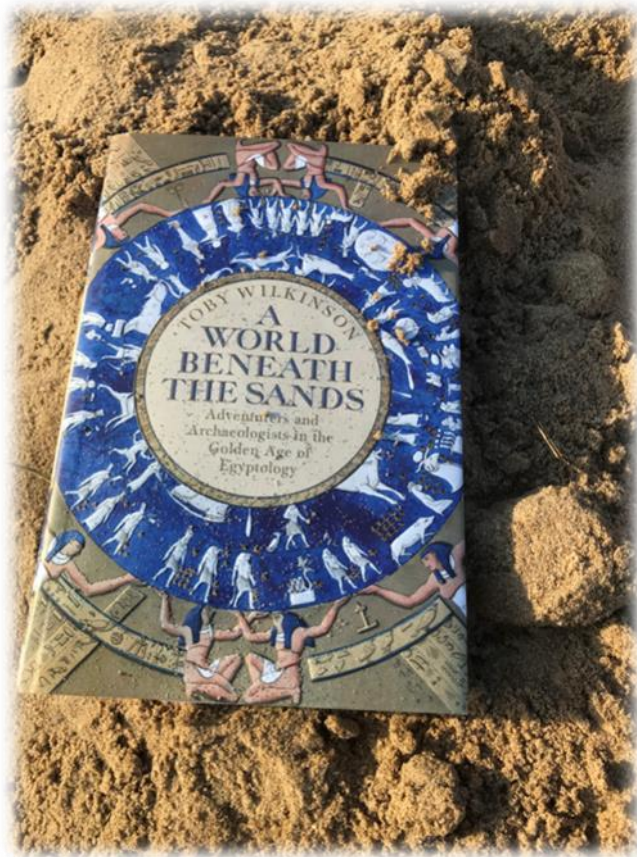


A World Beneath the Sands. Adventurers and Archaeologists in the Golden Age of Egyptology

-by-

Toby Wilkinson

This beautifully written and illustrated book explores the development of Egyptology, focussing on the 100 years that constituted the 'Golden Age' of the discipline. That is, from 1822 (publication of **Champollion's** decipherment of hieroglyphs) to 1922 (**Carter's** discovery of the tomb of Tutankhamun).



In contrast to other books on the subject, Wilkinson brings in the Egyptian viewpoint: efforts to modernise the country, and the changing attitudes of Egyptian rulers towards Westerners, colonialism, and their own ancient heritage. He also emphasise the importance of women in the story, and mentions lesser known figures in the history of Egyptology. Thus, the book is more than a tale of Franco-British rivalry over power and influence in Egypt, superiority in scholarship, and competition

over acquisition of artefacts (although of course that is a very important part of it).

As Wilkinson acknowledges, the Western world has been fascinated by Ancient Egypt since the time of the ancient Greeks, but this fascination came to a head with the development of the academic discipline of Egyptology: there is a close relationship between scientific excavation and colonial expansion. This really started with Napoleon's expedition to Egypt, which had both political and scholarly aims. The lasting legacy of the French expedition was the decipherment of hieroglyphs following the discovery of the Rosetta Stone: 'For the first time since the Roman empire, the monuments of ancient Egypt could once again speak for themselves' (p.92). Of course, the final breakthrough decipherment was the work of a Frenchman, Jean-François Champollion, who later travelled to Egypt and became Egyptian curator at the *Louvre* in **Paris**: although the key to his success, the Rosetta Stone, was taken by the English to the *British Museum*...

Both France and Britain continued to have a vested interest in Egypt and in its archaeological treasures. Of the serious scholars in the first half of the nineteenth century, it is worth singling out **John Gardner Wilkinson**, whose 1837 book *'Manners and Customs of the Ancient Egyptians'* was the first to be based on archaeological evidence and to present the Ancient Egyptians as real people, while at the same time making Egyptology accessible to a general readership. Interestingly, Wilkinson retired to **Reynoldston** in Gower, and is buried at **Llandovery**, Carmarthenshire, in an obelisk-shaped tomb.

A new rival to British and French competition came from the emerging Prussian Empire, with its own colonial ambitions in Africa. On the academic front, the most important of these German scholars was **Karl Richard Lepsius** who brought back many artefacts from his expedition to Egypt for the Berlin collection, and showed a particular interest in chronology. His most important work on Ancient Egypt was the 12 volume 'Monuments'. As Wilkinson summarises : 'Champollion cracked the code, Wilkinson gave the ancient Egyptians a human face, but it was Lepsius, through his meticulous and systematic approach, who separated Egyptology from classical antiquity and founded it as an independent, scientific discipline' (p.172).

In Egypt itself, the French were laying claim to archaeological precedence. In 1852, **Auguste Mariette** made what is considered the first great discovery in Egyptology: the *Serapeum* at **Saqqara**. He later became Head of the new Egyptian Antiquities Service, and established the first Egyptian museum at **Bulaq** (near Cairo).

Meanwhile, **Amelia Edwards**, an established British novelist, was inspired by Wilkinson's book to travel to Egypt. Her book, *A Thousand Miles up the Nile*, was more than a travelogue: she consulted leading scholars, and was very critical of the damage being made to monuments. Later she would be instrumental in the founding of the *Egyptian Exploration Fund* (in 1882), and on her death, would bequeath her collection of antiquities to *University College London*, and endow the first chair of Egyptology there, for her protégé **W. M. Flinders Petrie**.

Petrie is remembered mainly for his systematic excavation and classification techniques, transforming the practice of archaeology. Meanwhile a German, **Adolf Erman**, acquired the Amarna Letters and the Green Head for the *Berlin Museum*, and produced an important grammar and dictionary of Egyptian, helped by a team that included **Alan Gardiner** (who later wrote his *Egyptian Grammar*, still used

today) and the American **James Henry Breasted** (who carried out important epigraphic work and collected for the *Chicago Museum*). A more controversial scholar was **Ernest Budge**, from the British Museum, who was not averse to smuggling artefacts out of Egypt. Another important American Egyptologist was **Theodore Davis**, who worked in the *Valley of the Kings* with Howard Carter and **Harold Jones** (another Egyptologist with Camarthenshire connections). Davis discovered 18 tombs in the Valley. The German archaeologist **Ludwig Borchardt** excavated at Amarna, and made the most iconic discovery before that of **Tutankhamun's** tomb : the head of **Nefertiti** in 1912.

The First World War put a stop to excavations. Egypt became an army and hospital base for allied troops. After the war, the German archaeologists were excluded for some years. Howard Carter, no longer sponsored by Davis, found a new patron in **Lord Carnarvon**, and they took over Davis' concession in the Valley of the Kings. We all know the story of Carter's great discovery in 1922, but Wilkinson emphasises two points. Firstly, Carter was assisted by a large team of archaeologists and other experts (mainly British and American), the first time there was such a collaboration. Secondly, the discovery had an important influence on Egyptians in their struggle for independence: for the first time, Egyptians could take pride in their glorious past. And the decision was made that all finds were to stay in Egypt. 1922 also marks the year that Egypt became independent, as a constitutional monarchy, although the United Kingdom still had political influence. Instability eventually led to the revolution of 1952, following which the country became a republic.

Written by: Dulcie Engel



Who, Then, Will Pour Out Water For You?

The 'Letters to the Dead' and their place in the changing Egyptian funerary landscape

The funerary landscape of Egypt was not a stationary one. As we can see with regards to the developing Memphite cemetery, changes occurred on a physical and ideological level. At the start of the 4th Dynasty, some of the largest examples of pyramid structures were constructed. The pyramid complex at this time could be found to incorporate many (often uniform) tombs of close officials and members of the extended royal family. Tomb biographies reiterated a sense of devotion to the king, whereby the "individual's sense of personal identity and self-worth is measured in terms of his relationship to the king" (Allen 2006: 13).

By the 5th and 6th Dynasties, a series of changes in the funerary sphere started to manifest. Tombs were no longer as closely linked to the royal burial and became less consistent in terms of form and shape. **Moreno García** identifies this trend as a time in which private tombs became larger, while the pyramid became smaller (García 2010: 5). The concept of the necropolis was altering, as many officials moved further away from large, centralised localities, and were now being buried in surrounding provincial regions and areas selected as agricultural centres (García 2010: 4). In line with Moreno García, I would not associate this with the decline of the crown's power, more perhaps as an adaption of the ruling system to accommodate the rising importance of the provinces, as well as the increasing population, which perhaps made possible the proliferation of agricultural centres.

The level of decoration - stelae, statues and coffins - began to increase exponentially. Mastabas incorporated multiple inhumations, consisting of a central chamber with a series of false doors and several burial shafts situated internally. A striking example is the 5th Dynasty Saqqaran (North) tomb of **Nefer** 'Overseer of Priests' which included nine burial shafts within (Snape 2011: 59-61). A trend emerged in which monuments became established for the commemoration of a single elite but incorporated the wider family. García builds on this, stating the mastaba at this point had: "two sets of ideological values, one stressing the social centrality of the king and the other the importance of the extended family" (García 2010: 3). It is important to note that this was not a linear trend during the Late Old Kingdom, but we could argue that the transition into the 5th Dynasty (and further into the 1st Intermediate Period) marked a time, which combined with rich biographies, symbolised greater autonomy for not just the individual, but for the wider family inclusively.

We can observe a transition both in physical and written culture, whereby acknowledgement of an individual and their lineage becomes more prominent. We move away from the idea that the Osirian afterlife was only available to the ruler, and the transition into the 1st Intermediate Period, in connection with the emergence of coffin texts, outline the possibility that such an afterlife was available to the common person (Graves-Brown 2018:70).

The 'Letters to the dead'

The corpus of texts attributed as 'Letters to the Dead' were first published in 1928 by **Gardiner** and **Sethe**, who attributed the name we use now to their discovery. Collectively, they are attested from the Late Old Kingdom to the Late Period, with a contemporary study identifying nineteen artefacts on which twenty-one letters were found (Donnat Beauquier 2014). A further four currently remain in scholarly contention. Letters to the dead cover a wide geographical area, with examples being recorded at **Cairo**, **Naga el-Deir**, and **Diospolis Parva (Hiw)**. Unfortunately, a large quantity of examples are unprovenanced (Troche 2018: 6). Commonly, they were deposited within cemeteries, but the removal of several examples means we can only address certain artefacts in the context of the location from which they were bought. Internal evidence in the text can sometimes highlight the location of original deposition, seen in Berlin Papyrus 10.482, which mentions the tomb of a man called **Sedekh** in **Assiut** (Donnat Beauquier 2014: 63).

They are primarily written in hieratic text, with text being found on ceramic vessels, jar stands, ostraca, stelae, papyri and linen. On bowls they could be found either written as columns or in a circular pattern (spiralling from the rim to the centre). 'Letters to the dead' bearing hieroglyphic text are also attested, such as on the statue of **Ahmes-Sapar** (Louvre E15682). Unusually, the recipients of these texts were immediate deceased family members, in the hope that they would intervene in their problems. They were written by both male and female petitioners, the majority being addressed to women (Troche 2018: 5). A significant problem in assessing the letters is the variety of meanings used at the time, e.g. "brother" relates to both a husband and a dear friend (Troche 2018: 6). This, coupled with the limits of archaeological contexts, presents a 'clouded' picture in terms of ascertaining expressed relationships between the individuals represented.



'Letters to the dead' are often identifiable by a similar writing style, a dialogue between the addresser and the addressee. They were used as a vessel for communication with the recently deceased, out of a belief that they were intermediaries who held agency within the earthly sphere, and consequently in the divine. Evidence of their function as an intermediary is replicated on the 'Oxford Bowl' (Pitt-Rivers 1887.27.1), which displays a drawing of a coffin. This is thought to be the visual representative of the addressee, Menipu (Troche 2018: 8).

As Troche (2018) writes, they were predominantly written for two circumstances. Firstly, when a problem arose that they felt could not be completely solved only through personal intervention, as it was believed to have been fuelled by supernatural causes. This is evidenced in the 'Cairo bowl' (CG 25375). A woman named **Dedi** writes to the deceased priest **Intef** in place of her maidservant **Imau**. In this text, the petitions ask to "rescue her" from the malevolent forces that were causing her harm.

Secondly, certain situations were described not as being directly caused by the 'supernatural forces' of the deceased, but which involved the deceased. Troche cites the exterior of the 'Qau Bowl' (UC 16163) as an example of this. A mutual contract exists between the author and the deceased: **Shepsi** appeals to his parents as his inheritance (land) is being robbed. He presumably had other means of settling the problem, such as going to court, but he consults the benefactors of his inheritance. It was believed that the deceased were influential and particularly powerful in dealing with issues of this type. Shepsi tells them that it is their duty to support him in immortality, as he continues to fulfil their mortuary rites. A subtle threat can be seen from Shepsi, directed at his mother as he writes: "who, then, will pour out water for you?" if the situation persisted (Wente 1990: 212).

Calculating an exact number of examples is difficult as scholars often disagree about the characteristics of a 'letter to the dead' and the varying forms that appear to exist. An additional difficulty is that the forms of ancestral 'consultations' in ancient Egypt were not conducted through a single method. As **Silverman** writes: "... interaction between the living and the dead would have been more casual, with spoken prayers that have left no trace" (Silverman 1997: 142). On other occasions, they were often read aloud before being deposited. This practice is evidenced within another 'letter of the dead'; Brooklyn Papyrus 37.1799 E, which reads: "**Hersaiset**, son of **Tenhem**, son of **Nakhttamut** [...], recite it before him at the tomb of Tenhem" (Jasnow and Vittmann 1992/1993: 27). An offering chapel alongside a tomb (for the

wealthy) would have acted as a location to donate food and drink offerings to the soul. In this context, **Ikram** suggests they would have been used to either appease or bribe the deceased. (Ikram 2007: 350).

Following the offering, they would wait for a response, which depending on their daily action and ritual performance, was expected to be positive. The dedication of offerings was an expression of 'loyalty' towards the deceased. In a stela written by a husband to his deceased wife, he imparts: "I will then deposit offerings for you [as soon as] the sun has risen and outfit your offering slab to you" (Wente 1990: 215). Another example which displays an evident domestic relationship between the petitioner and the akhw ('blessed spirits') can be read on the Hu Bowl with part of the inscription reading: "...who makes funerary offerings to the spirit in return (?) for watching over the earthly survivor" (trans. Gardiner & Sethe 1928: 5).

To conclude, leading into the 1st Intermediate Period, the family began to be more represented, featuring in autobiographies, along with 'standardised' expressions describing the benevolence from an official to his family (known as abet) or the preservation/extension of a house from their father (García 2010: 5). Funerary culture was changing, as we find that writing became more prominent, a previously reserved form of expression. The interventions that were called upon indicate a desire to preserve harmony amongst the living, and clearly reveal their deference to their forebears. As **Donnat Beauquier** (2014) makes clear, the significance of these texts lies in uniting the links of a single family together, even if in two distinct spheres: the dead and the living. It created their ancestors as a source of legitimacy. The use of linen as a tool for expression points towards private usage of a previously prestigious item. This is only one part of a social trend whereby the Egyptians move away from a 'monopolised palatial culture'. This personally was facilitated by two key events. The accessibility of gods like Osiris to the populace, seen in the frequency of the Cult of **Osiris** in the 5th Dynasty (Wilkinson 2017: 122), as well as the growth of the provinces of Egypt meant the archetypal role of the king as mediator between deity and people started to fade. Private funerary culture flourished, seen as local necropoli often were formed on a familial level (Seidlmeyer 2001). The 'letters to the dead', although rare, nevertheless provide us with a view of the highly personal communications between the living and the dead, within a non-royal afterlife, their desires for guidance and continued support to achieve ma'at, a harmony in their lives.

Written by: Tom Clarke



Upcoming...

Egypt Everywhere

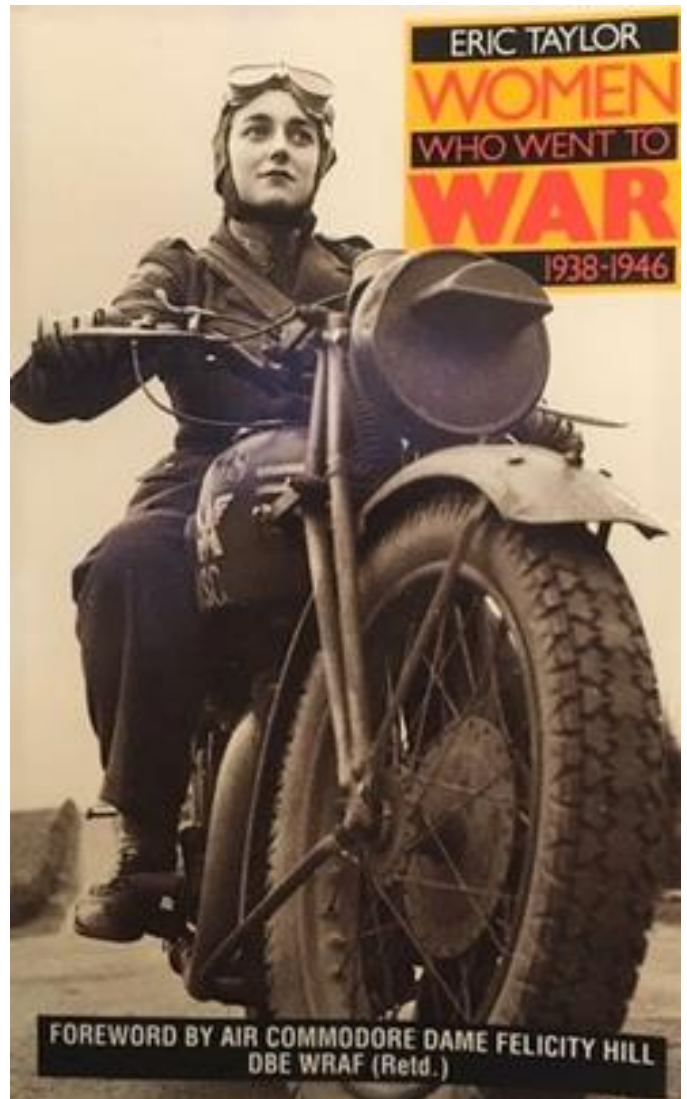
Further Links to Ancient Egypt in a Variety of Diverse Books

Following on from last issue's article on Cecil Torr it now appears that whichever book I read, Egypt appears in some form or another. The most recent example being *'Women Who Went To War 1938-1946'* by **Eric Taylor**, which is an excellent book crammed full of first-hand accounts of women who served in the forces during World War Two. Pages 270 through 272 detail the adventures of **Doris Whitehead** who was serving at the Air Ministry in London. Following a V1 bomb hit on her accommodation in South Kensington which totally devastated the property she was evacuated to the shelters deep below the *British Museum*. Doris relates:

"After a short sleep we were awakened and provided with soap and towels and then, after a wash and brush up, but still in our pyjamas, for we had nothing else, we went up the wide staircase to the Egyptian Room for breakfast. The hissing tea urns and smell of reconstituted powdered egg had never been more welcome. High above us Pharaoh, with his bodyguard of spear-carrying fighting men and retinue of slaves, proceeded majestically along a cobalt-blue frieze, sublimely indifferent to the plight of the present warriors below,"

This took place in June 1944 and serves as an interesting glimpse of the uses of the British Museum during the war.

Written by: Syd Howells



And I Quote...

"When I first came through the doors of the British Museum at the age of eight, I began with the mummies, and I think that's still where most people begin when they first visit. What fascinated me then were the mummies themselves, the thrilling, gruesome thought of the dead bodies...Now I am much more interested in the mummy cases...mummies and their cases remain some of the Museum's most potent artefacts."

Neil McGregor, 2012



Egyptology in The News



"Cachettes: Hidden Treasures"

To celebrate the 118th anniversary of the opening of the *Egyptian Museum* in **Tahrir (Cairo)**, a new permanent exhibition of sarcophagi has been inaugurated in space freed up by the removal of royal mummies to the *Museum of Egyptian Civilisation* in **Fustat** (see below). 50 colourful wooden coffins are on display, including two from recent excavations at **Saqqara**, and many from **Thebes**, previously housed in other parts of the museum. This follows a project documenting and evaluating all 626 coffins held in the museum.

Esna: written in the stars

German and Egyptian archaeologists working on the restoration of the temple at **Esna** have discovered previously unknown constellations carved on the walls, which had been hidden by layers of soot. They have deciphered the Ancient Egyptian names of these constellations, but do not yet know to which stars they refer.

First analysis of First Book of Breathing

The 'Books of Breathing' constitute a collection of funerary literature from the Greco-Roman period, concerned with survival in the afterlife. For the very first time, the papyrus of the First Book, which came to the *Field Museum* in **Chicago** in 1894, has been researched and published by archivist Professor **Foy Scalf** of the *University of Chicago*.

Scandalous photo shoot at Step Pyramid

Dancer **Salma al-Shimi** has posted photos of herself on Instagram, posing at the base of the pyramid, wearing a skimpy version of Ancient Egyptian costume. The photographer was arrested, and according to rumour, the dancer was also detained for 'betraying Egypt's heritage' by wearing such an outfit.

Isaac Newton and the pyramids

Sothebys is auctioning unpublished notes by scientist Sir **Isaac Newton** (1643-1727), famous for discovering the law of gravity. In these notes, he attempts to unlock codes from the Bible and secrets from the Egyptian pyramids, to determine the timing of the apocalypse and other weighty matters.

Long lost pyramid artefact found in cigar box

The unassuming cigar box was found in a review of *Aberdeen University Museum's* collection by staff member, **Abeer Eladany** (SEE INTERVIEW). It turned out to contain a fragment of cedar wood, believed to

be part of a ruler used in the construction of the Great Pyramid; and discovered in 1872 by **Waynman Dixon** in the pyramid's Queen's Chamber. It was donated to the university in 1946, and subsequently lost.

Saqqara discoveries make top ten; and more finds announced in January!

For the third year in a row, the amazing finds at Saqqara have made the grade in American 'Archaeology' magazine's top ten archaeological discoveries of 2020. Furthermore, Egyptian archaeologist Dr **Zahi Hawass** announced in January 2021 that more has been uncovered: the funerary temple of Queen **Nearit** (wife of **Teti**), 52 burial shafts containing, among other items, New Kingdom wooden coffins, a mud shrine, fragments of a 4m long Book of the Dead scroll, and a well-preserved limestone stela.

Preparations for Cairo procession of royal mummies

A spectacular procession of mummies is being planned: from the Egyptian Museum in Tahrir Square to a new permanent home at the National Museum of Egyptian Civilisation in Fustat. 22 royal mummies and 17 royal coffins will be transported on specially prepared carriages. This procession has been postponed several times.

Study of mummified baboons indicates location of Punt

Ancient **Punt** was a major trading partner for Egypt, and a source of luxury goods, including baboons. Its exact geographic location has been a source of speculation. Now, researchers have compared isotopes in ancient baboon mummies with those of modern day baboons across southern Arabia and eastern Africa. The results suggest that Punt was located in an area covering what is now **Ethiopia, Eritrea, Djibouti, Somalia, and Yemen**.

Non-destructive analysis of bitumen in mummy bandages

French researchers have used a non-destructive technique called *electron paramagnetic resonance* to detect the components of the bitumen in Ancient Egyptian embalming materials.

Aswan: Isis Temple restoration completed, plus new discoveries...

Floors and columns have been restored, walls and inscriptions have been cleaned, and the temple built by **Ptolemy III** should be re-opened soon. Also in **Aswan**, the remains of a Roman fort have been discovered, and within it, those of a Ptolemaic temple and a Coptic church.



Travelling exhibition 'Ramses and the Pharaohs' Gold' planned

From November 2021 to January 2025, this exhibition will travel from Egypt to five cities in the US (**Houston, San Francisco, Boston**) and Europe (**London, Paris**).

Luxor: new year sees more restoration work

The tomb of **Ramses I** in the **Valley of the Kings** has been re-opened after restoration work, and the first phase of the restoration project of Ram statues located behind the temple of **Amun-Ra** in **Karnak** temple has been inaugurated.

GEM: World's first hanging obelisk installed

The entrance hall to the *Grand Egyptian Museum (GEM)* in Cairo now boasts a unique construction. Visitors will stand on a glass plate between the base and the body of the obelisk and will be able to look up and see a rare cartouche of **Ramses II** inside the obelisk.

Digital imaging reveals animal depictions on tomb walls

Researchers from Australia have used the D-stretch technique to reveal faint images at the Middle Kingdom cemetery of **Beni Hassan**. Their findings include rare depictions of pigs and bats, an unusual image of someone carrying a pig, and a vulture carrying an ankh-sign.

Now online: Preserving Egypt's Layered History

This project has been launched on the Google Arts & Culture platform, in English and Arabic.

Queen Bee: creating a buzz around iconic Egyptian bust

Dutch artist **Tomás-Libertine** spent two years building a 3D model of **Nefertiti's** famous bust before 60,000 bees were installed to complete the sculpture by colonising the framework. The bees were then removed, leaving the beeswax model.

Manuscripts from Washington to Cairo

Nearly 5000 manuscripts and papyrus fragments have been repatriated to Egypt from the *Holy Bible Museum* in **Washington DC**, after long negotiations on these illegally smuggled artefacts. Most of the documents are Coptic, but there are also texts in the hieratic and demotic scripts, and in Greek and Arabic. There are also a number of cartonnage funerary masks, parts of coffins, heads of stone statues and a group of portraits of the deceased. The items will be placed in the *Coptic Museum* in Egypt.

The man with the golden tongue

The Egyptian-Dominican mission of the *University of Santo Domingo*, headed by Dr. **Kathleen Martinez**, has discovered 16 burials in rock-cut tombs at the **Taposiris Magna Temple** near **Alexandria**. They

date from the Greco-Roman era, and include a mummy with a gold foil tongue amulet placed in the mouth to allow speech in the afterlife. Another important discovery was that of 8 highly crafted marble masks.

The 'display of human remains' debate heats up in Egypt

Professor **Ahmed Karima**, of *Al-Azhar University*, sparked a heated debate recently when he said that the exhumation of graves is prohibited under Islam: "Extracting the bodies of the ancient Pharaohs and putting them on display in return for dollars from visitors is forbidden". He believes that digging up graves violates the dignity of the dead, and that Islam forbids their desecration. His approach has been firmly rebutted by leading archaeologist, Dr Zahi Hawass. This comes at a time when Egypt is desperate to increase tourist numbers, and is fiercely promoting new archaeological discoveries and the opening of the GEM.

New 'cheap' mummification technique discovered

Researchers at *Macquarie University* in **Sydney** have examined CT scans of a C12 BCE female mummy in the *University of Sydney's Chau Chak Wing Museum*, and discovered that it was encased in a mud shell. This 'shell' was applied some decades after the original embalming, and seems to have been a repair job. A mixture of mud, sand and straw was placed between the linen wrappings and, when dry, the mud was coated in red and white pigments. It is the first time this technique has been found, but it may be more widespread, and was possibly used as a cheaper method of mummification.

Is this the world's oldest beer factory?

A joint American-Egyptian team have excavated a large beer factory at **Abydos**, dating back to the reign of King **Narmer**, at the start of the First Dynasty. The archaeologists found eight huge units, each measuring 20 metres by 2.5 metres. Each unit houses about 40 pottery basins placed in two rows. Grains and water would be heated in the basins to produce beer.

February 22nd: Solar Alignment day at Abu Simbel

Twice a year (on February 22nd and October 22nd), the sun's rays enter the Holy of Holies in the temple, lighting up three of the four statues, but leaving that of **Ptah**, god of darkness and the underworld, in shadow. A special music concert will be held at the temple this year, but without an audience due to CoViD restrictions.

Mummy murder mystery solved

The mummy of Pharaoh **Sequenre Tao II**, who ruled 3600 years ago, has been re-examined in Cairo using CT scans and 3D imagery. This analysis suggests he was killed in an execution ceremony after being taken prisoner in a battle against the Hyksos. His hands were tied behind his back, and his head injuries are consistent with the use of Hyksos weapons such as those in the Egyptian Museum.

Compiled & Summarized by: Dulcie Engel



The Amethyst Scarab

A bead bracelet in the Egypt Centre

Kate Bosse-Griffiths, the first honorary curator of the Egyptian collection in Swansea, kept a series of daybooks, or work journals, where, among other things, she described artefacts in the collection, particularly when she was planning to research them, or put them on display. During lockdown, I have transcribed quite a few of these daybooks (see *Engel 2020a*), and this entry from October 1975 is a typical one for an artefact to be placed in a case:

2nd Oct. 1975, p.61:
Case II: BEADWORK & ORNAMENTS
W 793:
‘23/734 R. Arm R. Arm
1 scarab amethyst
4 tiny cop green copper beads }
52 small amethyst garnet beads } 58
1 round a “ }
1 flat (sketch) amethyst }

This bracelet is one of my favourite artefacts in the collection, and not just mine; it features in the EC Guide to 30 Highlights, based on votes from volunteers and visitors. It is currently displayed in the Body Adornment Case in the House of Life. As we can see from Kate’s description, and the photo below, it consists of beads of copper, garnet, and amethyst. The most striking bead is the amethyst in the form of a scarab beetle:

Provenance

We have very good provenance for this bracelet. It was found in the undisturbed grave (number 734) of a wealthy female at **Qau el-Kebir** in 1923. Qau is situated on the east bank of the Nile in Upper Egypt, 45 km south of **Asyut**. Although largely destroyed, the rock-cut tombs of Qau are the largest private monuments dating from the Middle Kingdom, with decoration and equipment of the highest quality. With regards to the tomb of interest: *‘The intact tomb 734 belonged to a woman and contained a rich selection of personal adornments...The burial was found in a shaft without a chamber. Two vessels were placed there, one bowl and one bottle-like one. The woman was lying on her left side. Around her neck were three necklaces ... More strings of amethyst and garnet beads were found around the waist. Four strings of glaze, garnet, amethyst, and carnelian beads were found around the arms’* (Grajetski 2020: 166-167).

From this evidence it is possible to surmise something of the social status of the woman: *‘Burial 734 at Qau might belong to a woman of the middle class. Her burial is well equipped with personal adornments. No inscriptions survived to pinpoint her social position. She could well be the daughter or wife of a local official’* (Grajetski 2020: 203).

This is the original excavation report:

734. Adult female, extended on left side. Pot 60n in N.E. corner, with the dish 2/g vertical at north end. At the neck a string of amethyst spheroids; another of small blue glaze ring beads with a silver disk at the centre; a third of small green glaze barrels, with a dark amethyst scarab and nine hawks (two of turquoise, three of feldspar, and four of lazuli). Round the waist a string of smaller amethyst and garnet spheroids with an amethyst scarab; another of carnelian spheroids with one uzat*, one barrel, and one cylinder, all of carnelian; and a third string of green glaze finger-moulded spheroids with a green jasper barrel and a scarab with scrolls. On the arms were four strings of beads: (1) small green glaze barrels and one green and black glaze drop; (2) small garnet and two amethyst spheroids, one amethyst flattened barrel, four copper rings, and an amethyst scarab; (3) small green glaze with a green stone scaraboid; and (4) carnelian and green glaze spheroids with a ribbed carnelian barrel. Only one scarab was inscribed.

(From Brunton et al (1930): ERA 50, Qau and Badari, Vol III, p.1) (*ie wedjet eye)

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These objects were gifted to **Sir Henry Wellcome** in 1927 by Petrie, under the auspices of the *ERA* (Egyptian Research Account, the fund set up by Petrie). Indeed the distribution list in Brunton (1930: 48) notes that the contents of Tomb 734 were given to Wellcome, who received in total 81 artefacts. These five pieces came to Swansea as part of the Wellcome Loan in 1971. In her 1972 daybook (p.67), Kate refers to descriptions in the associated Petrie and Wellcome documents: *'Jewellery from an intact XIIth dynasty burial (female) from Qau, Upper Egypt 1923 tomb number 734 Comprising---58227 Bracelet (Right arm), garnet, carnelian and copper beads with an amethyst scarab. 4 inch (double)'*. However, Brunton's original excavation report (1930:1, *see above*) *describes the bracelet as consisting of 'small garnet and two amethyst spheroids, one amethyst flattened barrel, four copper rings, and an amethyst scarab'*, which reflects what is written in Kate's 1975 daybook, and what we see.

In Ancient Egypt, jewellery was worn by individuals for both aesthetic and spiritual reasons: as well as particular amulets, certain stones and colours were believed to have protective powers:

Materials in the bracelet: mining and working stones and metal

As we have noted, the **red gemstones** in the bracelet are variously referred to as garnet and carnelian, and they have similar associations. Indeed the amulet known as the girdle of Isis or 'tie' (such as W2037C/b8,

Garnets: In ancient Egypt, red-hued garnets (known as almandine garnets) were often used as protective amulets because of the colour association with blood and with the rising sun (**Bressan** 2016). Although no specific mine is known, garnets occur in metamorphic rocks in the Eastern Desert and the **Sinai** region, and also in **Nubia** by the Fourth Nile Cataract (Harrell 2012). Mining techniques would be similar to those described below.

Amethysts: Amethyst is a purple variety of quartz, and already in Ancient Egypt, purple was associated with royalty. Indeed, among **Tutankhamun's** jewellery is a stunning amethyst scarab bracelet. However amethyst beads and scarabs are very common especially in Middle Kingdom jewellery. **Wadi el-Hudi** in the Eastern Desert was the main amethyst mine (the Eastern Desert was also a rich source for other gemstones). In 2019, over 100 ancient inscriptions were found in Wadi el-Hudi, carved on rocks and stelae, and written on pottery ostraca. Amethyst is found near veins of quartz and rock crystal, and the miners probably first discovered it by following these veins on the surface, and then digging down (**Storemyr** 2016). Most of the extraction took place during the Middle Kingdom, from an open pit mine, approximately 100m long, 20m wide and 10m deep (Storemyr 2016). The stone tools discovered at the site include hammerstones weighing up to 10 kg, used to break loose the solid rock, and smaller rounded pounders and hand axes (weighing 3-400g), used to separate the amethyst from the colourless quartz. Similar tools have been found at other mines including Chephren's Quarry (see above) and gold mines in the Eastern desert (Storemyr 2016). There are also marks of metal tools: in the Middle Kingdom these would have been of copper or bronze and might have been used on softer rock (Storemyr 2016). The amethyst-bearing stones would have been sorted before transportation by donkey to gemstone workshops in the Nile valley (Storemyr 2016).

Copper: The Sinai desert region has concentrations of turquoise and copper mines, the most well known being at **Serabit el-Khadim**, primarily known to archaeologists for its temple to **Hathor** and inscribed



stelae (see Engel 2020b). As with the gemstones, the miners used stone tools and dug in horizontal tunnels at this period (Bloxam, 2010). Recent discoveries at various copper mining sites in the South Sinai have been of furnace installations using natural ventilation techniques, dating from the 5th dynasty up until the Middle Kingdom (Tallet et al, 2011). Other research has shown **Wadi el-Nasib** was the largest centre of copper smelting, and **Wadi Kharag** was also rich in copper, whereas Serabit el-Khadim was the main source of turquoise. The oldest area to have both copper and turquoise was **Wadi el-Maghara** (Megahed, 2018).

The Scarab Amulet: In Ancient Egypt, scarabs are associated with 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 (see photo). Furthermore, the observation of young beetles hatching from the dung ball led to the scarab being a symbol of rebirth and regeneration (Houser Wegner 2018). Because of these associations, the scarab form was an important amulet. Heart scarabs would be placed over the mummy's heart. They were inscribed on the back with a spell from the Book of the Dead to protect the mummy during the *Weighing of the Heart* ceremony on its journey to the afterlife. Scarabs could also be represented with open wings (known as winged scarabs). There are many examples of scarab jewellery and amulets in the Egypt Centre, including a black basalt heart scarab (EC853b) and a bead-netting winged scarab (W948a); as well representations of scarabs on cartonnage and wooden coffin covers, etc.

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Dung beetle, Egyptian gallery, Bolton Museum, photo by Dulcie Engel



Egyptian scarab in gold ring, Germany 1910, photo by M. Kirschner

In more recent times, particularly from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, rings with Egyptian scarab amulets have been one of the most popular manifestations of Egyptian Revival jewellery.

Written by: Dulcie Engel

WITH THANKS TO Ken Griffin for answering my queries, photographing the bracelet and scarab, and giving me the opportunity to transcribe Kate's daybooks; to Michal Kirschner for letting me use the photo of her grandfather's wedding ring; and to Sam Powell and Abaset Collections Ltd for the fantastic new online catalogue, which is so easy to use.





Luxor Temple

Photo by Dulcie Engel



Ancient Egyptian Gemstones Word Search

E P K Z U L A M E T H Y S T
 U F K P N C N G A R N E T F
 V X L A P I S U D H Y N O A
 B Y Z T R A U Q N F L Y O D
 X N C J O E M E R A L D I R
 Z O H N A I L E N R A C S J
 X I A F E L D S P A R V F S
 Q R L Y G G H B J A S P E R
 I T C V E I I R P M D H S Q
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AMETHYST
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 CHALCEDONY
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