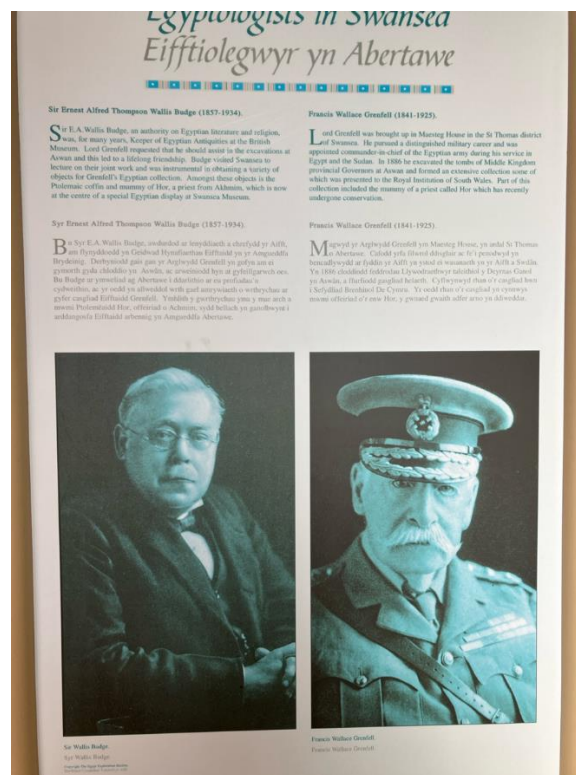


## Swansea's other mummy...\* by Dulcie Engel

### The Egypt Centre and the Swansea Museum Egyptian collections

During my years as a volunteer, I have often been asked by visitors why Swansea Museum has a human mummy on display, and shouldn't it really be in the Egypt Centre? Apart from the fact that it is EC policy not to display human remains, the mummy in Swansea Museum is a much older donation from a different source.

Just above the signing-in book on the landing, you will have noticed a set of three posters entitled 'Egyptologists in Swansea.' Next to Sir Henry Wellcome and Harold Jones, there is one featuring Lord Frances Grenfell and Sir Wallis Budge. It is they who were responsible for bringing the mummy to Swansea in 1888, and Lord Grenfell is the Swansea connection. He was born here in 1841.



EC poster (photo by DE)

We currently have five items in the EC brought from Egypt by Lord Grenfell. Two came via the Wellcome Loan: W647, a wooden footboard from a cartonnage case depicting the Apis bull; and W846, a black serpentine statue of a male wearing a kilt from Aswan. Three arrived more recently as part of the Harrogate Loan (and were previously in the Kent family collection): HARGM6010 a flint razor; HARGM9933 a light blue faience tile; and HARGM10635 a small black stone statue of the goddess Mut, most likely a modern forgery.

There is another connection between the EC and Swansea Museum: our first honorary curator, Kate Bosse-Griffiths, was also honorary Keeper of Archaeology at what is now Swansea Museum. She remained involved with it for many years, and that link predates the arrival of the Wellcome Loan at the university in 1971 (i.e. the foundation of what is now the EC). She published some of the Swansea Museum artefacts:

*'...a number of Egyptian objects was offered to the Swansea Museum (of the Royal Institution of South Wales) by Miss Annie Sprake Jones of Bryn Myrddin, Abergwili (Carmarthenshire). Among her gifts was a cardboard box with 'gold dust from the tomb of Queen Tiye,' as she described it, which aroused my curiosity. In this box, mixed up with fine gold leaf and sand I found:*

- a) a clay seal with a royal cartouche;*
- b) a fragment of white glass with a royal name in coloured glass;*
- c) some bright blue pieces of glazed ware;*
- d) two half cowrie-shells of gold.*

*The objects had been left to Miss Sprake Jones by her brother, Harold Jones, after his death in 1911. In 1907, at the time when the 'Tomb of Queen Tiye' was discovered, Harold Jones was employed by Theodore M. Davis as artist for his excavations in the Valley of the Kings' (Bosse-Griffiths 1961)*

She also published an analysis of some gold leaf from the same tomb, collected by Harold Jones (Bosse-Griffiths 1986).

Since then, some Egyptian artefacts have been loaned between the two museums. The Egypt Centre has on loan from Swansea Museum: a pot AX.121.8; a glass vessel fragment from the tomb of Amenhotep II, SM.1959.3.2 (listed as b) in 1961 article above; see also Griffin 2019); and gold leaf from KV55, the tomb of Queen Tiye, SM.1959.3.9 (discussed in 1986 article above; see also Griffin 2019). And a plaster cast from Kom Ombo (EC1960) is on loan from the EC to Swansea Museum (discussed below). More recently, our former curator, Carolyn Graves-Brown, gave a talk on the Swansea Museum Egyptian collection, and discussed the relevance of such objects to the locality:

*'This was achieved through exploring object biographies concentrating on how the objects came to Swansea and the characters involved in their collection and display' (Graves-Brown, 2020)*

## **Swansea Museum**



SWANSEA MUSEUM (photo by DE)

In his 1943 BBC radio broadcast 'Reminiscences of Childhood', Dylan Thomas describes walking through the centre of Swansea '*past the blackened monuments of civic pride and the museum, which should have been in a museum*'. And indeed, 80 years on, on my recent visit in December 2023, I overheard a visitor saying that it had not changed; and a staff member replying that museums are not supposed to change!!

Swansea Museum is the oldest museum in Wales, founded (and built) in 1841 by the Royal Institution of South Wales (RISW), an organisation which started life in 1835 as the Swansea Philosophical and Literary Society, changing its name in 1838 after it gained support from Queen Victoria. The RISW was also the name of the museum, which included a library, a laboratory, and a lecture theatre, as well as galleries. In 1991 the museum was taken over by Swansea City Council and re-named Swansea Museum. The RISW continues as a research and local history organisation and supports Swansea Museum (see RISW website for full history and information).

## The Mummy



HQR (Photo: Wikimedia Commons)

The mummified remains of the priest Hor (c. 250-200 BCE), came to the museum in 1888. They were donated by Field Marshall Lord Francis Grenfell (1841-1925). He was appointed Commander-in-Chief of the British Army in Egypt in 1885, where he was visited by his sister Mary. She encouraged his interest in Egyptian archaeology, and he went on to enlist the help of Egyptologist E.A.W. Budge in purchasing and exporting the mummy, coffin, and other smaller items. Mary Grenfell officially opened the display when they arrived in Swansea (Dalling 2019, Graves-Brown 2024, Sabine 1996, Swansea Museum).

Here is part of a letter written by Francis Grenfell from Cairo to The Cambrian newspaper in 1888, which he closes with a reflection on Hor (whom he called Taut Heru), newly arrived in Swansea:

*'And now, amidst the bustle and noise of a great seaport and manufacturing centre, lies Taut Heru, the worshipper of Isis, the Priest of Mendes, the Scribe of Panopolis – he who, 2,000 years ago, on the banks of the Nile walked, clad in priestly robes, midst all the waving banners, the ostrich feather fans, the wild music, in the possession of his God – now rests, surrounded by railways, telegraphs, and all the ever increasing wonders of modern discovery'*

(As quoted in Sabine 1996. Panopolis is the ancient Greek name for Akhmim, and the ram/he goat god Mendes was worshipped there).

Hor was a clothier priest and scribe of Atum in the Temple of Atum in Akhmim, Upper Egypt. Atum, or Atum Ra, was the supreme creator god. Hor was the son of a priest, Djed Hor, and a temple musician. X-rays taken in 1993 as part of a conservation project suggest he died around the age of 40, with no sign of disease (Sabine 1996, Swansea Museum).

For many years, the mummy stood at the top of the museum staircase, completely exposed, and local children used to rub its foot for good luck. Apparently, a toe fell off this way! (Thanks to Wendy Goodridge for this anecdote, told to her by the wonderful volunteer Merlys Gavin, who sadly passed away in 2021). The X ray revealed a metal pin near the toes, suggesting an early repair to the foot. The 1993 conservator was able to re-attach two toes which had fallen into the coffin base (Sabine 1996/ Swansea Museum). The mummy is now in a glass case in a new gallery (still at the top of the staircase), with a strengthened floor. The mummy is held above the coffin base on a Perspex cradle (Sabine 1996, Swansea Museum). The bandages are covered with cartonnage and the face with a gilded mask. The gilded breastplate is decorated with hawks' heads representing Horus; below that Isis with spread wings and the four sons of Horus are depicted. A video runs on a loop next to the case, detailing the conservation process.

Also, in the gallery there is a life-size image of the X-ray, and two cases of artefacts. Items on display include pottery from Beni Hassan, a bronze ladle with a duck-head handle, a bronze mirror, two wooden servant figures, a wooden headrest, a scribal palette, some shabtis, and a faience Hathor head. Three items have been moved to the main gallery downstairs, as part of the temporary exhibition 'A very natural history': a beautiful bronze head of a cat (7<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE); the faience ibis (see below), and an 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty faience winged scarab from Thebes. Graves-Brown (2024) gives a comprehensive inventory of the Egyptological collection.

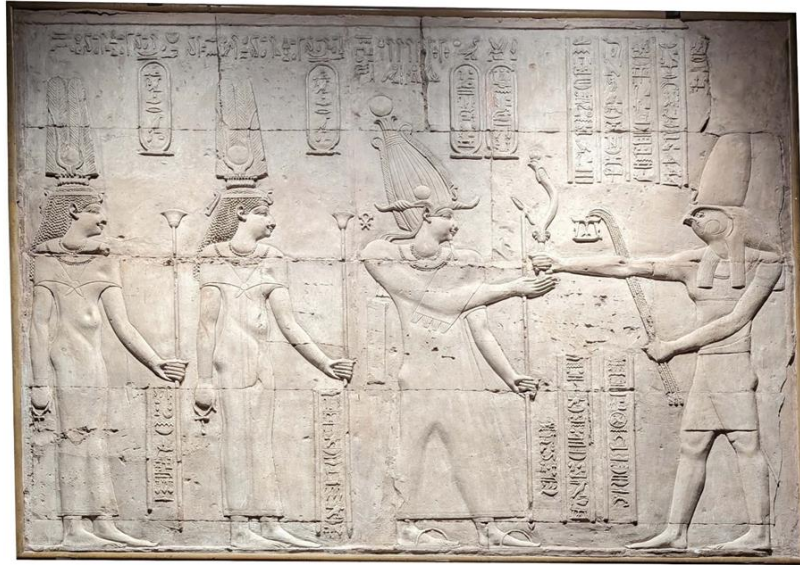
Two Egyptian items are highlighted on the Swansea Museum website:

- a faience ibis amulet from the tomb of Queen Tiye (mother of Akhenaten), from the Harold Jones donation discussed above (part of c) in Bosse-Griffiths 1961, along with a Djed pillar pendant, a bead, and a ring)
- a wooden shabti (described as a 'sepulchral figure'). It dates from the 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty and was found in Aswan by Lord Grenfell, who gifted it to the museum in 1884.

The whole gallery is shown very nicely in a 3D video (Visit Swansea Bay), including the Kom Ombo plaster cast (EC1960), which covers the back wall. It certainly looks very impressive, at 2030 mm high and 2800 mm wide. The cast was made c. 1930 and gifted to the EC by the Wellcome Trustees in 1982. It is described in Abaset as:

*'Plaster cast of a frieze from the hypostyle hall of the temple of Sobek and Horus the Elder (Haroeris) at Kom Ombo. Ptolemy VIII Euergetes II receives jubilees and the khopesh sword from Horus the Elder, who stands on the right. Behind the king stand Cleopatra II (his wife) and Cleopatra III (his sister).'*





EC1960 (photo: Abaset)

*ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS* With thanks to Ken Griffin, Wendy Goodridge and Syd Howells for additional information.

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\*'other' mummy as the EC does display a cartonnage coffin containing the mummified human remains of a foetus(W1013), as well as various animal mummies.

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Visit Swansea Bay: 'Explore the Mummy Room in 360 degrees!'  
<https://www.visitswanseabay.com/swansea-bay-at-home/at-home-with-mummy/>