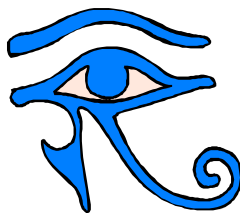


ESSEX  
EGYPTOLOGY GROUP



Newsletter 73

August/September 2011

### **DATES FOR YOUR DIARY**

- 7<sup>th</sup> August      Wearing the Landscape: Interpreting Ancient Egyptian Jewellery –  
Rebecca Bradshaw
- 4<sup>th</sup> Sept        Misadventures in Egyptology – Caroline McDonald
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Oct         The Petrie Museum through art and conservation – Gemma Aboe
- 6<sup>th</sup> Nov         Crocodile Mundi: New Kingdom Magical Spells – Dr Joanna Kyffin
- 4<sup>th</sup> Dec         Christmas party, book auction and fund raising event

### **THIS MONTH**

This month we welcome Rebecca Bradshaw, MA (Egyptology). Rebecca has worked on digs in the UK and at both the British Museum and the Fitzwilliam in Cambridge. She will shortly begin a PhD programme at University College, Oxford.

### **NEXT MONTH**

Next month we welcome Caroline McDonald, curator of the Egyptian collection at the Ipswich Museum. As you will recall, the collection was the recipient of our 2010 Christmas fund raising efforts.

### **EGYPT IN THE AGE OF THE PYRAMIDS**

A recent study day run by the EES brought together speakers on a range of topics looking at the Egyptian Old Kingdom. Dr Jaromir Krejci talked about his work at the Royal Necropolis of Abusir where the Czech's have had the concession since 1976. Following the 5th Dynasty the pyramid fields at Giza and Abusir declined and much of the work has been trying to explain why this happened. The site of Abusir itself dates mainly from the 5-6th dynasties with the oldest being the pyramid complex of Sahure.



View of the Pyramid of Sahure and causeway Abusir March 2011

Much of the discussion related to the fact that many if not all pyramid complexes were left unfinished at the time of the demise of the Pharaoh, thus it fell to his successor to complete the work. This in turn had a knock on effect and limited the time available for each successive pyramid. Much of the architecture at the site shows the early development of styles and layout of what would later become more familiar in the New Kingdom, here is to be found the earliest Hypostyle hall but it also saw the demise of the Sun temple in favour of the mortuary temples of later periods. Work is still ongoing with the emphasis on looking for the workmen's village which should be close by, much as it was found by Mark Lehner at Giza. Sadly being so near to Cairo the site was badly damaged during the recent revolution with damage to many of the magazines and the known theft of at least one false door and destruction of a late 26th dynasty coffin and mummy. The team are determined to go back in the autumn and mount a rescue operation.

Dr Richard Bussman talked us through his thoughts on Administration and material culture in the Old Kingdom raising several interesting points on the use of seals and associated inscriptions. We have got used to looking at the structure of administration by the number and variety of titles. Richard's approach is to look at the actual material such as seals and their impressions. One very thought provoking comment was 'does the use of seal impressions require literacy or could the many purely figurative seals show that a complex administration could be accomplished without the knowledge of writing'. The high level of seals and impressions that appear to have no recognisable hieroglyphs found at Elephantine would seem to indicate that at a provincial and local level administration could operate without the officials being literate. Looking at another site that of Ayn-Asil a similar large majority of seals just have figures and symbols; in fact looking at those found in both the cemetery and settlement the breakdown at both sites is just 8% of seals which display

writing, while the remaining 92% are figurative images. Does this make the growth of administration following the unification an even more amazing feat?

The day finished with Dr David Jeffreys and 'One of our cities is missing' a geological look at the possible location or locations of ancient Memphis in the Old Kingdom. This included a lively and friendly discussion on whether the location of the pyramids on the west bank were chosen by their sight lines to the capital; finishing with the intriguing thought that if the view from Memphis was important, that could be one explanation as to why the later pyramids at Abu Abusir are smaller, as they are closer when viewed from the capital they appear to be of the same height as their larger cousins at Giza.

Rosemary Ackland

## **DEATH OF CHRISTIANE DESROCHES NOBLECOURT**

It was sad to hear of the recent death of Christiane Desroches Noblecourt. Madame Desroches Noblecourt died at the grand old age of 97, what is it about French Egyptologists that allow them to live to such a late age and still be active in their field, Jean-Philippe Lauer who worked at Saqqara for over 70 years and who died in 2001 was 99. I wonder how many of us have a copy of Christiane's book Tutankhamen in our collections. Published in 1963 it was one of the first books on Egyptology that I owned. The hardback volume illustrated throughout with a wealth of colour plates is priced at 30s (£1.50p) even allowing for inflation I just wish that the books I purchased today were such good value. With chapter headings such as the twice-married queen and the vengeance of Horemheb much of the book and its views are now out of date with current findings, but in its time it was the first major work to appear on Tutankhamen since the publication of Howard Carter's own writings and it paved the way for the many books that were to follow for the exhibition of the treasures of Tutankhamen on its world tour in 1972.

Desroches Noblecourt is perhaps best known for her pioneering work to save the Nubian sites due to be lost to the Aswan High Dam and Lake Nasser. Born Nov. 17, 1913 in Paris, Desroches Noblecourt developed an early passion for Egypt after reading about the discovery of the tomb of Tutankhamen. First travelling to Egypt in the late 1930s she was the first woman to enter the male-dominated world of the French Institute of Oriental Archaeology (IFAO). I think it is fair to say that the presence of a woman was not welcome. With the plans for the Aswan High Dam in 1950s, she met with Nasser to voice her concerns for the monuments. With Nasser's blessing she approached UNESCO and helped to mobilize almost 50 countries in the project to dismantle and move the temples, most notably that of Abu Simbel. She personally felt that her finest contribution was perhaps the trickiest rescue of all, the temple of Amada, this beautiful small temple is covered with brightly-coloured, painted reliefs. And it was evident to Christiane Desroches Noblecourt that block-by-block dismantling that had been successful at other sites would destroy the reliefs at Amada. Instead the temple was encased in a superstructure then placed on railway lines, and rolled gently away to safety. Eventually, the principal treasures of the region were saved. For Christiane Desroches Noblecourt it was a personal triumph. In recognition of her work France was granted the first overseas exhibition of the treasure from tomb of Tutankhamen in 1967; one of the first blockbuster museum exhibitions it drew more than one million visitors.

Desroches must have been a quite strong personality, during World War II, she was a member of the French Resistance and was arrested and questioned on more than one occasion. Christiane Ziegler, a former curator at the Louvre's Egyptology department, called Desroches Noblecourt "very dynamic, but also very tiring: she wanted everything done in a

minute! She had a lot of charisma and spoke well, and really cared for the greater public." I think that is putting it mildly.

In later life Christiane Desroches Noblecourt lived in a richly-decorated apartment in Paris. But she never added an Egyptian object to the furnishings: "Everybody would think I'd stolen it from some tomb!" When not working in the field, she worked on one of the many books that she wrote on ancient Egypt, publishing well into her 90s. A tiny, driven woman, Christiane Desroches Noblecourt received many awards, and with her passing the world of Egyptology has surely lost one of its greats.

Rosemary Ackland

## **THE SOUTH ASASIF CONSERVATION TRUST**

Many of you will recall the excellent lecture Dr Pischikova gave us in February about the tomb of Karakhamun. Below is an update and an appeal for funds. For example a donation of £20 will support the conservation of painted limestone or fragile wood fragments, £100 would hire an Egyptian workman for a season. Donation forms will be available at the August and September meetings.

### **Urgent Appeal from Dr Elena Pischikova on behalf of the South Asasif Conservation Project**

Dear Friends,

The South Asasif Conservation Project mission has been working in Egypt since May. We found Luxor very friendly and quiet as always. Our season is developing successfully. We are finishing the clearing of debris in the Second Pillared Hall of the tomb of Karakhamun where we found two side rooms dedicated to Karakhamun's relatives. Each of them has a shaft that is yet to be explored.

The main painted burial chamber of Karakhamun is being cleared of debris as well. We have found thousands of fragments of painted plaster fallen off the ceiling and the walls. When all the painting in situ is cleaned and consolidated we will start reinstalling fallen plaster fragments to restore the chamber to its original beauty.

Our stone conservators are working on the reconstruction of the entrance to the Second Pillared Hall combining ancient carved fragments with slabs of limestone from Helwan.

All of our discoveries immediately become our responsibility. We have to restore and protect them. To close the tomb of Karakhamun at the end of the season this year we will need to install two metal doorways in the Pillared Hall and burial compartment and two metal grids to cover the shafts. We are also planning to cover the tomb from the top to protect it from floods and intruders.

As we have not received the American grant we were relying on, our season is running on private donations alone resulting in significant financial difficulties. We are very grateful to you for the help you've already provided. Sponsors like you made this season possible. We have to appeal to you for help again to install the required safety features in the tomb of Karakhamun.

We recently established a UK Trust for the Project under the directorship of John Billman. Please donate to help us protect Karakhamun.

Elena Pischikova

## **ANCIENT LIVES PROJECT**

If you are interested in puzzles this website is for you. [www.ancientlives.org](http://www.ancientlives.org)

A collaboration between the Egypt Exploration Society, University of Oxford and other parties the puzzle is to help with the translation of papyri found at Oxyrhynchus in 1896-1906. The site was a provincial centre about 160 km southwest of Cairo, and the fragments of papyri were found by Bernard Grenfell and Arthur Hunt in the town rubbish pit. The fragments date to c300BC-AD800. The website has a tutorial and you click on the appropriate Greek character. You could identify the Greek letters of a whole fragment, which will then be translated and published.

## **2012 CALENDAR**

It's that time of year again and Clare Banks will be organising our Group's 2012 calendar shortly and she is after all your latest Egyptian/Egyptianising holiday pictures to fill it. Please can you e-mail your entries to [clare@reevebanks.co.uk](mailto:clare@reevebanks.co.uk). Up to 3 images per person with a small caption for each. Images to be about 2MB each. The closing date for entries will be 15th September. If you have any questions please e-mail her.

## **CHRISTMAS FUND RAISING APPEAL**

We need to decide who will be the recipient of our Christmas fund raising appeal. Suggestions so far include the EES Film Archive and the South Asasif Conservation Trust. Please let me know of any other suggestions by end September. All members will be able to vote for their choice, or we could divide the money between two causes.

Janet Brewer

## **NOTICE OF MEETING**

### **ESSEX EGYPTOLOGY GROUP ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

The AGM will be held at 5.00pm on 4th September. Copies of the agenda and notes of the 2010 meeting will be e-mailed to members; a few paper copies will be available on the day for those members without e-mail.

The committee of five are appealing for members to join and help at meetings. For example, the AGM will be organised by two committee members (others unable to attend send their apologies). If you would like to offer your help, please speak/contact a committee member for more information

## **ESSEX EGYPTOLOGY GROUP NEWSLETTER**

The newsletter will now be produced every other month because meeting reviews and articles are from a dedicated few people - no-one else contributes any original material. If every member wrote one article, or reviewed something they had read, that would keep the newsletter alive for 50 monthly issues!

This month thanks go to Rosemary Ackland and Clare Banks.

The Essex Egyptology Group Committee comprises  
Clare Banks (Treasurer) – Janet Brewer (Secretary) – Eamonn Gray (Publicity)  
Lesley Kelly (Membership) – Alison Woollard (Programme)

The Newsletter Editor, Janet Brewer, welcomes all articles, letters, reviews and quizzes.

All articles express the views and opinions of their authors

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