



HOTEP

Issue 66: February 2022

Review of January Meeting

Sarah Griffiths' talk on *Ptolemaic Girl Power* was an opportunity to explore the complex characters and highly complicated family relationships of the Ptolemaic Dynasty, with particular emphasis, as the title suggests, on some of its powerful and influential female members. Sarah's knowledge of and enthusiasm for the period was obvious in the clarity of her delivery and the easy way in which she explained the sometimes difficult and often devious political and dynastic machinations within the House of Ptolemy.

With so many subjects to choose from over nearly three centuries of the Dynasty, Sarah gave us a quick canter through Ptolemaic history, pausing for three case studies – Arsinoë II, Berenice II and Cleopatra VII – to illustrate the problems posed by family feuds, political rivalries and sibling jealousy. Sarah was at pains to remind us of the Macedonian Greek origins of the Dynasty which was, in effect, as foreign to the native Egyptians as the Assyrian or Persian rulers of previous periods. While the Ptolemies established themselves in Egypt rather than controlling the country from a distance by means of local governors or satraps, their rule was still more Greek in character and displayed cultural and social traits more recognisable as European than Egyptian.



her husband left Egypt for Macedon, to

Arsinoë II, (left) daughter of Ptolemy I, was first married to Lysimachus, King of Thrace in northern Greece, who was killed in battle. She then married her half-brother, Ptolemy-Ceraunus, but when her full brother, Ptolemy II, was declared heir to the Egyptian throne, she and

The newsletter of The Southampton Ancient Egypt Society

escape the possibility of diplomatic murder – a standard Macedonian strategy for clearing a claimant's way to the throne. When Arsinoë's second husband was killed by invading Gauls, she returned to Egypt to become sister-wife and queen to Ptolemy II. The marriage between siblings became a feature of Ptolemaic dynastic succession and as joint rulers the couple were recognised as gods, with Arsinoë being associated with Aphrodite.



Berenice II (left) was the only child of Magas, King of Cyrene (in modern Libya), who hoped to form a marriage alliance with Egypt by marrying her to Ptolemy III. When Magas died, Berenice became Queen of Cyrenaica in his place,

but her mother, who was no friend to Egypt, reneged on the marriage agreement and suggested another alliance. When the new suitor was, allegedly, caught in bed with Berenice's own mother she had him assassinated – you really couldn't make it up!

Berenice went on to marry Ptolemy III by whom she had at least six children.



Displaying her Greek origins, she entered chariots in the Panhellenic and possibly also the Olympic Games. She, like her mother-in-law, Arsinoë II, was recognised as a divine beneficent ruler and her cult was celebrated for decades after her death, which was rumoured to have been by poisoning in the royal pogrom following the death of Ptolemy III.



After more hair-raising tales of incest, intrigue and in-fighting – the likes of *Eastenders* and *Dynasty* have nothing on the Ptolemies – Sarah finally introduced us to Cleopatra VII, (left) **the** Cleopatra. Reportedly she spoke Egyptian and respected the Egyptian gods, but she was not a queen of the Hatshepsut

mould. The last ruling queen of Egypt was very much a product of her Macedonian ancestry, looking to alliances with the rising power of the day – Rome. Her reputation down to modern times has been coloured by Classical authors and more modern dramatists, whose misogyny is apparent.

By trying to maintain her family's hold on the Egyptian throne, she bore four children through her liaisons with Julius Caesar and Mark Antony. But the Romans would never see her as anything more than a meddling woman, blaming her for the fall of two of Rome's finest, and after the disaster of the Battle of Actium, even she had to admit defeat. She died by her own hand and became immortalised in literature, art and, latterly, film as one of the world's most charismatic, enigmatic and beautiful women.



Sarah did much to restore a sense of perspective, setting Cleopatra, and her predecessors in the appropriate historical context while trying to shed the modern preconceptions of what life was like for women of the Ptolemaic era. With the very real threat of exile or even death at the hands of an ambitious sibling, hanging over them, Ptolemaic females must have lived their lives in a constant state of anxiety, not to say fear. That these three, at least, survived long enough to make their mark on history is a testament to their strength of character.

Hilary Wilson



February Quiz

Just to see if you were paying attention:

What were the names of Cleopatra's four children?



(This is the oldest of Cleopatra's children, depicted with his father, Julius Caesar (Ciaran Hinds) and Mother (Lyndsey Marshall) as portrayed in the TV mini-series *Rome*)

Solutions to New Year *Only Connect* Quiz are on Page 5

In the News



This painted but uninscribed limestone statue was found in the Giza tomb G2415, belonging to the 5th Dynasty official, Weri, and his wife, Meti. It was one of seven statues found in the serdab, or statue chamber (below). The excavation was



conducted by George Reisner on behalf of the Harvard University-Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, expedition. In 1921 the statue was

granted to the Boston Museum by the Egyptian Antiquities Authority as part of the division of finds.

In 1978, the statue was deaccessioned and put up for auction on the open market. It was bought by the British Rail Pension Fund for a little over \$250,000. In 1996, the Pension Fund sold the statue on, to a private American collector, Lewis M Dubroff, for just under \$400,000. From that time until 2021 the statue was on loan to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.

On 27 January 2022, Weri's statue was again included in Sotheby's Master Painting & Sculpture Auction, Part 1, in New York. After a 12-minute bidding frenzy, it was sold to a private collector for the eye-watering price of \$9.9 million. This is the second highest price ever paid for an Egyptian sculpture.

The most expensive Egyptian sculpture in the world to date is the seated statue of Sekhemka, (right) also 5th Dynasty, which was acquired by the Marquess of Northampton 1849-50. This hit the news headlines in 2014 when Northampton City Council sold it to finance planned extensions to their Museums & Art Gallery. The controversial sale realised £15.78 million and, despite a temporary block on an export license, the statue went to a private collector also believed to be American, though its current whereabouts are unknown. This sale led to Northampton City losing accredited museum status and access to various heritage grants.



<http://giza.fas.harvard.edu/photos/9715/full>
<http://giza.fas.harvard.edu/photos/25858/full/>
<http://giza.fas.harvard.edu/objects/26756/full/>
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Northampton_Sekhemka_statue#Auction

Forthcoming Meetings

Further details of our Zoom meetings are published on the website www.SouthamptonAncientEgyptSociety.co.uk

Registration is required for all meetings.

Registration links will be released on a meeting-by-meeting basis and priority will be given to SAES Members.

If you would like to have your personal email details added to our non-Members mailing list, please contact the Secretary at: saesinfo55@gmail.com

The joining link for any meeting is only released on confirmation of payment.

The joining link is unique to the name & email address with which you register. If you share this link, you risk being prevented from joining the meeting yourself if the person with whom you shared signs in before you.

Please note: if the Zoom system allows you to register this means a place is available and has been reserved for you. The joining link will be sent on confirmation of payment.

The joining link will also be re-confirmed the day before and/or on the morning of the meeting. Please check your junk folder if you do not see this in your inbox.

Wednesday 23 February 2022

(EVENING LECTURE: Zoom meeting opens 18.30 (GMT). Admission from the waiting room from 18.45 for a start at 19.00



Discoveries in the Desert: The North Kharga Oasis Darb Ain Amur Survey

by **Salima Ikram**

Kharga Oasis, the largest oasis in the western desert has been relatively unexplored until recently. New work has revealed a series of large Roman forts, petroglyphs, and Pharaonic inscriptions that reveal the long and rich history of exploitation of this oasis. An overview of new discoveries made by the North Kharga Oasis Darb Ain Amur Survey are presented here.



Register in advance for this meeting, using the link below.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/join/register/tZcpde2hrjIvEtBIxek4Uua3Qh2Qed8pSpYa>

Payment for this EVENING meeting is £5 for all-comers.

Please contact the Secretary saesinfo55@gmail.com

to arrange payment or check payment status.

New Year Quiz Answers

As promised, something a little more substantial to keep your brains active. There are four rounds based on the BBC2 quiz *'Only Connect'*

Round 1: Connection

- a) Sons of Horus
- b) Viziers
- c) All prefixed by Deir el-
- d) Children of Geb and Nut

Round 2: fourth in sequence

- a) **Neferneferuaten** – the fourth daughter of Akhenaten and Nefertiti.
- b) **5: Sons of Ramesses II** – Tombs in the Valley of the Kings, in reverse order of numbering
- c) **4: Seneferu** – the fourth largest pyramid by volume is Seneferu's 'Bent Pyramid' at Dashur.
- d)  - the next sign in the hieroglyphic 'alphabet'.

Round 3: The Wall

Mariette	Grébaud	Maspero	Loret
Petrie	Kemp	Pendlebury	Borchardt
Allen	Kamrin	Loprieno	Manley
Lucas	Lacau	Gardiner	Burton

Red group: Directors of the Egyptian Antiquities Service

Blue group: Excavators of Tell el-Amarna

Green group: Authors of books on the hieroglyphic script.

Purple group: Expert advisors on the excavation of Tutankhamun's tomb.

The odd one out is **Janice Kamrin**, the only female Egyptologist on the board.

Round 4: Missing Vowels

- a) THE TALE OF THE SHIPWRECKED SAILOR
- b) THE VOYAGE OF WENAMUN
- c) THE STORY OF SINUHE
- d) KING KHUFU AND THE MAGICIANS

