

# HOTEP

Issue 77:  
May 2023

## Remembering Alan Fisk

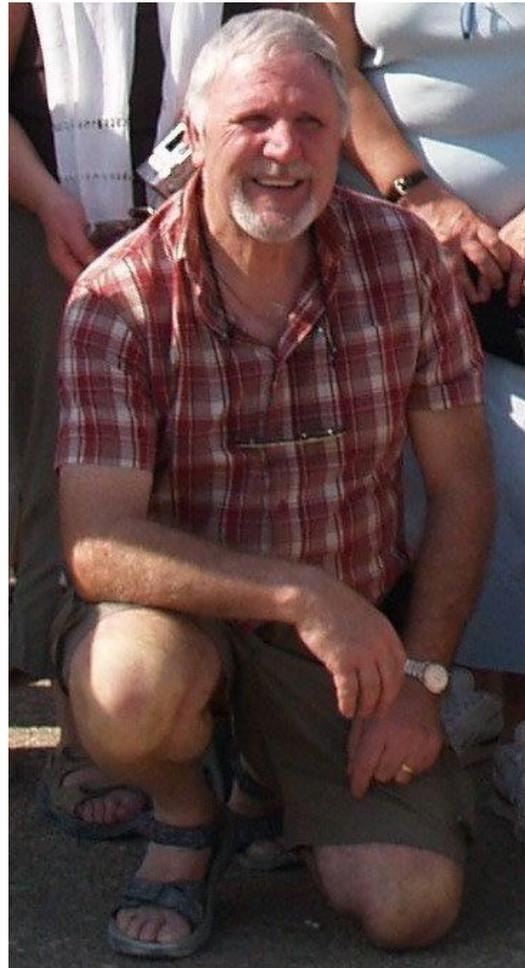
It is with great sadness that we have to report the death on 5 June 2023 of Alan Fisk who, with his wife Sarah, were amongst our earliest members and may even be considered 'originals.' Sarah was once on the Committee and our Members will remember her welcoming smile behind the refreshments table, where she was ably assisted by Alan.

Alan was, by profession, a master baker and gave us an early 'members talk' on ancient bread and baking in the Resources Room at the University. It was a talk that any of our professional speakers would have been proud to give. Unfortunately, Alan could not be persuaded to repeat the experience, in spite of his being a stalwart member of the *Maskers Theatre Company*.

Alan and Sarah were very keen participants in our trips, including the excursions abroad. They were extremely cheerful and always willing to exchange greetings and a friendly word or two. Unfortunately, the Society only saw them infrequently in more recent times. The last occasion when Alan joined us at a meeting was at Hillier's Gardens in August 2022, when a number of former members of the Society met face-to-face for the first time in more than two years, for Mark Walker's successful *'Egypt in Hollywood'* Study Day. Alan was very keen on Ancient Egypt and was very encouraging to me personally. He will be sadly missed.

**David Marriott**

The newsletter of  
The  
**Southampton  
Ancient Egypt  
Society**



This photo of Alan was taken on our SAES trip to Egypt in 2007. I will always remember Alan practising his lines for 'allo 'allo on the balcony of the hotel in Aswan.

**Sue Marriott**

## Review of May Meeting

The May meeting was given by **Dr Chris Elliott** and had the title **'The Elderly Lady's Elephant. The Biography of Cleopatra's Needle'**. Chris is the author of *'Egypt in England'*, a study of Egyptian influences on British architecture and design, as well as many articles on the cultural influence of ancient Egypt. He has a website [www.egyptinengland.co.uk](http://www.egyptinengland.co.uk)

Chris Elliott  
(from his website)

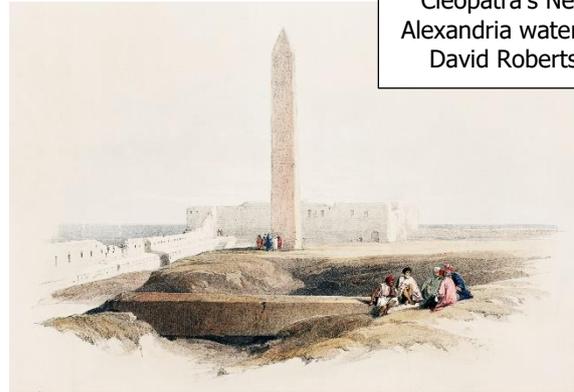


His talk described the convoluted history of how the obelisk known as Cleopatra's Needle came to be set up on the embankment in London. The title of the talk is a quote from *Fraser's Magazine* of 1846, 'England appears from her apparent bewilderment about the matter, to be in the position of the elderly lady who won an elephant in a lottery.' The lady's problem was how she might take possession of her prize and what to do with it once she had claimed it. The 'elephant' in question, of course, referred to the obelisk.

Chris briefly outlined the history of the obelisk and its twin up to 1801 when it was given to Britain. Both had originally been erected by Thutmose III in front of a pylon of the temple of Ra at Heliopolis. From there, in 10 BC, they were moved to Alexandria by the Emperor Augustus to adorn the Caesaron, the temple of the deified Julius Caesar. At some time, one of the obelisks had fallen, probably in one of the earthquakes which were recorded in 345 and 1301 AD.

After the British defeat of the French at the Battle of Alexandria, the Agha of the Ottoman forces in Egypt agreed to the fallen obelisk going to Britain as a commemoration of the victory. This gift presented the new owners of the obelisk with considerable logistical and engineering difficulties.

Cleopatra's Needles at Alexandria watercolour by David Roberts 1830s



Following the ancient precedent, the original plan was to float the obelisk out on a barge. This scheme was ruined by a storm which washed away the jetty built for the purpose of loading the barge, which had been paid for by voluntary donations totalling £7000, the equivalent of a quarter of a million today. This failure combined with the waste of money, paused efforts to retrieve the obelisk.

Throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century there were various schemes to bring the obelisk to England and this is the basis of the quote given above, basically no one knew what to do with it. In 1820, Mohammed Ali, the modernising Ottoman ruler of Egypt, suggested the obelisk as a coronation gift for George IV. But the gift came with the stipulation that the recipient should arrange and pay for its delivery. The offer was renewed in 1831 for the coronation of William IV. At one point it was offered to the French but they chose to take the obelisk from the Luxor Temple because it was better preserved. That is the obelisk now to be seen in Paris, in the Place de la Concorde.

Eventually in 1877 Sir Erasmus Wilson stepped up to sponsor the transport of the fallen obelisk to London. He agreed to pay £10,000 if and only if the obelisk was brought to England and erected in London by the Thames. A unique method was adopted which was an iron cylinder which was made in England and transported in sections to Alexandria to be reassembled with watertight compartments around the

thought that arrangement was more aesthetically pleasing.



This was a fascinating talk which highlighted the torturous efforts to bring the obelisk to London, its twin now stands in Central Park New York.

**Glenn Worthington**



The Cleopatra adrift, Bay of Biscay

obelisk. This created a barge which was provided cramped quarters for a crew of seven. The barge named the *Cleopatra*, hence the name Cleopatra's Needle, set out for London from Alexandria in September 1877, towed by a grain cargo vessel, the *Olga*. However, during a storm in the Bay of Biscay the tow parted, and the *Cleopatra* drifted. A rescue boat from the *Olga* was lost with six crew and the barge was eventually salvaged. The obelisk, encased in the cylinder, arrived in the Thames in January 1878.

This is an image of the King's Wife Senisenb, a secondary wife of Thutmose I and mother of Thutmose II. It is from the decoration of the Deir el-Bahri Temple. This watercolour painting was part of the official record of the excavation of the temple where Howard Carter was employed as chief artist to the expedition. If you would like to find out more about this aspect of Carter's work in Egypt, see below for details of our next face-to-face meeting at **Itchen College \*** on **Saturday 1 July**, when **Lee Young** will be talking about **'Howard Carter: an alternative look at the man through his art'**.



Chris went thought the various suggestions that were put forward as to where the obelisk should be erected. These included Parliament Square and the forecourt of the British Museum. However, the agreement with Erasmus Wilson stipulated that it was to be placed by or near the Thames, which is why it is on the Embankment today. He also explained why the sphinxes which were meant to face outwards from the obelisk, like the lions of the horizon, were placed facing inwards because the architect

You can book your place for this event by contacting the Secretary: [saesinfo55@gmail.com](mailto:saesinfo55@gmail.com)

**\*Please note the venue. Access details and map can be found on the website.**

**We are pleased to announce another face-to-face meeting**

**Saturday 1 July** (1:30 for a 2 pm start)

**Please note the venue:**

**Itchen College, Southampton**



***'Howard Carter: An alternative look at the man through his art.'***

**by Lee Young**

Prior to his rise to fame as the discoverer of Tutankhamun's tomb, Howard Carter was, first and foremost, an artist. Before colour photography, watercolour painting was the most accurate means of recording tomb and temple decoration. The talented son of an artistic family, at the age of seventeen Carter joined Newberry's Beni Hasan expedition in 1891, recommended by the Amherst family in his native Norfolk. Later he became principal artist to the excavations at Deir el-Bahri, the temple of Queen Hatshepsut, providing paintings and drawings for the publication of the site.

Lee Young is an independent researcher specialising in the artists and epigraphers who have recorded Egyptological sites over the last 150 years. She has been involved with the cataloguing and conservation of the hundreds of Carter's watercolours now housed in the Griffith Institute, Oxford, and in the Egypt Exploration Society archive.

Places are limited as this is a **face-to-face only** meeting

**Booking in advance for this meeting is essential.**

**Bookings will be confirmed on receipt of the meeting fee £5.**

**To reserve a place for this talk, please contact the Secretary**  
[saesinfo55@gmail.com](mailto:saesinfo55@gmail.com).

Payments may be made by PayPal, Bank Transfer or cheque. Payment details are available on the website

[www.SouthamptonAncientEgyptSociety.co.uk](http://www.SouthamptonAncientEgyptSociety.co.uk)

**Please note that on Saturday the main entrance to Itchen College is closed so access to the carpark is from Whites Road.**

Access details and map are also available on the SAES web



**Yes!** it really is nearly twenty-five years since the Southampton Ancient Egypt Society came into being. We are planning a silver-themed talk to start off our next season and would like to hear from our Membership how we might otherwise celebrate our success. One suggestion is that we should make donations to some of the Egyptological causes supported by speakers who have entertained us during our quarter century. If you have a particular cause which you think is worthy of such support, please let us know through the usual channels. Decisions about the Silver Jubilee share-out will be made at the AGM in September.

**Still time to register for:  
July Study Weekend – by Zoom**



**Over two afternoons, Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> and Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> July 2023, we will be hosting a fund-raising event for the newly-launched Friends of Silsila.**



Project leaders **John Ward** and **Maria Nilsson** have lined up 12 speakers in total - 6 on each day – covering various areas of expertise from pottery to osteology, quarrying and building to burial customs. The Zoom meeting will be opened at 12:30 (London time GMT+1) for a start at 13:00. With each speaker giving a 25-minute presentation plus 5-10 mins for questions, each afternoon will finish by 17:00.

**As this event will be publicised by the Friends of Silsila & is likely to be popular, Registration in advance will be essential, using the link below:**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZIkde2gpj8uHdDXJZmNQz37gxeuUaMVTy5k>

**The joining link, which will be the same for both days, will be sent on confirmation of payment.**

**Study Day Fees:**

**SAES Member £20 Guest £25**

Payments may be made by PayPal, Bank Transfer or cheque. Payment details are available on the SAES website:

[www.SouthamptonAncientEgyptSociety.co.uk](http://www.SouthamptonAncientEgyptSociety.co.uk)

The whole fee, covering both days, will be a donation to the **Friends of Silsila**. SAES will make a supplementary donation from funds on behalf of each SAES Member who participates. You may wish to make your own additional donation.

**For details of any SAES event, please contact the Secretary:**

[saesinfo55@gmail.com](mailto:saesinfo55@gmail.com)

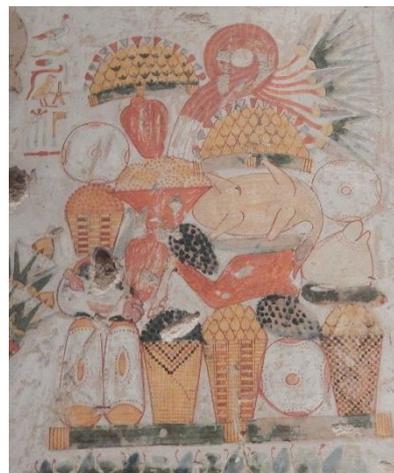
or see the website

[www.SouthamptonAncientEgyptSociety.co.uk](http://www.SouthamptonAncientEgyptSociety.co.uk)

Please note, the SAES emails are not monitored 24/7 so instant response to messages cannot be expected. We recommend registration and payment no later than 48 hours before the start of the meeting.

**June Quiz**

In honour of Alan Fisk, where might you see this array of ancient Egyptian food, including several varieties of bread?



Answers in the next Hotep

