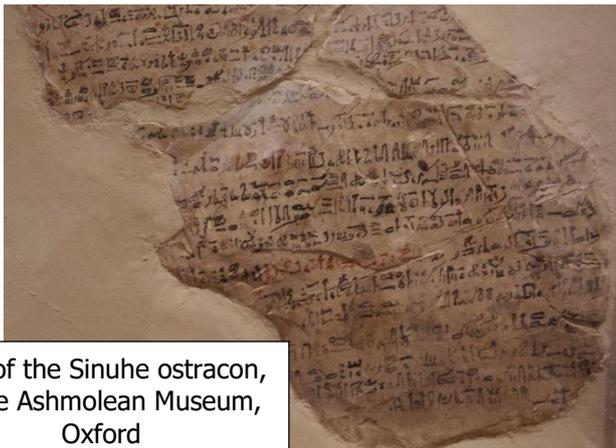


HOTEP

Issue 30: May 2018

Review of April Meeting

On Saturday 21 April **Roland Enmarch** Lecturer in Egyptology at the University of Liverpool, gave a talk entitled '*The Tale of Sinuhe: Biography & poetry in Middle Kingdom Literature*'. A specialist in the literature and poetical language of ancient Egypt, Roland shared with us his insights into one of the most enduringly popular of all Egyptian stories. Having described the various surviving copies, or partial copies of the text, he compared it with other literary works of the period, such as the Wisdom of Neferti, to show that its origins lie in the classic era of Egyptian literature.



Part of the Sinuhe ostracon, in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford

A discussion of the historical background explained how the Sinuhe story can be viewed as either a largely fictional account in a realistic historical setting, or essentially a true story dramatized for the purposes of entertainment. Picking apart cultural and linguistic elements of the story he showed how it throws light on relations between Egypt and Palestine/Syria at the start of the second millennium BC. He also highlighted themes and story-telling techniques which foreshadow some of the Biblical stories or classic fairy tales of Western culture. The whole presented us with an intriguing picture of life in Middle Kingdom times and the place of story-telling in ancient Egyptian society. A thoroughly entertaining afternoon!

The newsletter of The Southampton Ancient Egypt Society

April Quiz Answers

This quiz concerned sphinxes of various types and from different eras.

1: The 1743 engraving of the Sphinx's head emerging from the Giza sands is by **Richard Pococke**. This Southampton-born churchman spent more time travelling abroad than ministering to his congregations. This drawing comes from his 'A Description of the East and Some Other Countries, Vol I: Observations on Egypt'.

2: The picture of the Sphinx and the pyramid of Khafre comes from the massive report of Napoleon's scientific, cultural and sociological survey of Egypt, '*La Description de l'Egypte*'. It was drawn by Andre Dutertre, one of the 400 artists and engravers employed by the survey team.

3: The sphinx in the form of a ram is in the **Ashmolean Museum, Oxford**. It dates to the reign of Taharqa and was found in the Nubian city of Kawa.

4: The king presenting offerings to the Giza Sphinx is **Tuthmose IV**. This monument, known as the Dream Stela, is now in the Cairo Museum but a copy can be seen in its original location, between the paws of the Sphinx. It tells the story of how, in response to a plea received in a dream, Prince Tuthmose freed the Sphinx from the sands engulfing the statue and was rewarded by Ra by being made king.



Late 19th Century photo
Joseph Regenstein Library,
The University of Chicago

From the small screen

By chance I recently came across the TV documentary *'The Lost Mummy of Imhotep'* on Discovery History Channel. I had missed the first 15 minutes before I started recording it and have been unable to find it on catch-up but I have since found the complete programme on these video streaming sites:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c5vTNIemy8k>

<https://vimeo.com/12676952>

It starts with a review of the Hollywood representation of Imhotep as a fearsome monster intent on havoc before getting down to some more sensible analysis of what is known about the character of Imhotep, the architect and councillor of Pharaoh Djoser. There is some of the dramatic re-enactment which producers these days feel necessary to popularise their works but which at best detracts from the serious content and at worst can convey some very misleading ideas, from my point of view anyway. For example, in the acting out of the mummification process we were told that Imhotep himself, as a doctor, would have gained knowledge of the workings of the human body from his experience with embalming, which is stretching things a bit too far. Embalmers were on a completely different social scale from doctors who looked down on them and the two professions would not have shared information.

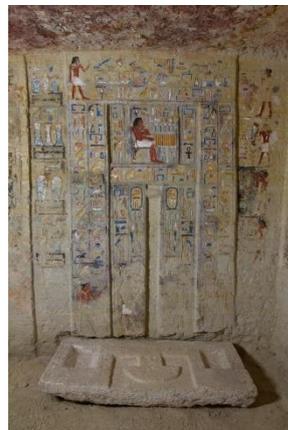
The main theme of the programme is the continuing search by archaeologists for the tomb of Djoser's first minister who was deified in later times as a demi-god of wisdom, especially associated with medical matters. The search for Imhotep was begun by Firth and Quibell in the early 20th Century. Discoveries by Arthur Evans in the 1950s and 60s suggest a large shrine to



Imhotep at Saqqara where petitioners made offerings of mummified ibises and baboons, both creatures associated with Thoth, the god of wisdom and learning. Assuming that the shrine was built close to Imhotep's own tomb, since that time many expeditions have searched in the vicinity of the Step Pyramid hoping to discover the subject of the documentary's title.

Viewers are given a rare look inside the Step Pyramid itself in the company of **Salima Ikram**. She explains the extent and complexity of the underground galleries and chambers, marvelling at the genius of Imhotep who, according to legend, was the visionary designer behind this monument, the first free-standing stone building in the world. **Zahi Hawass** is given a starring role as the discoverer of the pyramid workers' town at Giza – I think **Mark Lehner** might have something to say about that.

The narration includes some inaccurate and downright wrong interpretations of images, especially hieroglyphs, but annoying as that is, the last part of the programme makes up for the inadequacies of the rest.



False door stela,
Tomb of Nyankhnefertem

So few verifiable facts are known about Imhotep that the documentary had to rely on other finds to fill out the hour-long slot. Probably the most interesting part of the whole programme was that highlighting some comparatively recent finds within metres of

Detail from a hunting scene,
Tomb of Merefnebef.



Djoser's Step Pyramid. In particular, the on-going work of the Polish team from Warsaw University, led by Prof **Karol Mysliwiec**, started in 1987, has revealed two tombs of 6th Dynasty date, both with remarkably well-preserved and vividly coloured decoration. They belong to Merefnebef, known as Fefi, and Nyankhnefertem, known as Temi, senior court officials in the reigns of Pepi I and Merenre. Coincidentally, these tombs were included in the talk given by **Iwona Ciszewska-Woźniak**, conservator with the Polish team, at Thames Valley Ancient Egypt Society on 12 May 2018.

The programme ends with a tantalising glimpse of the discovery of a long corridor reaching back towards the Step Pyramid whose entrance the Polish archaeologists would be searching for 'next season'. A look at the expedition's website <http://saqqara.uw.edu.pl/en/> will show that Imhotep is still lost.

Hilary Wilson

July Study Day

On **Saturday 21 July** the subject of our annual Study Day will be

'Last of the Pharaohs: Incest, Intrigue & Bloodshed under the Ptolemies & Cleopatras'

presented by **Sarah Griffiths**,
Deputy Editor of Ancient Egypt Magazine.

Following the conquest of Egypt by Alexander the Great in 332 BC, a succession of kings called Ptolemy ruled Egypt for nearly 300 years, presiding over one of the most remarkable and complex periods in Egyptian history.

This was an era of unprecedented change for Egyptian culture and society as the new dynasty used religion and tradition to increase their power and wealth, and their new cosmopolitan capital, Alexandria, with its world famous library, became the cultural and economic centre of the ancient world.

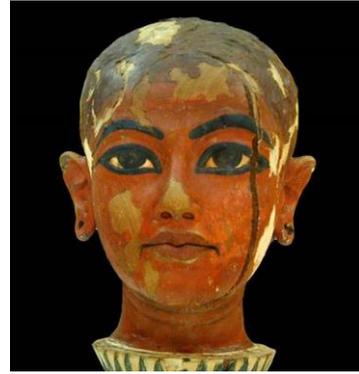
And yet the House of Ptolemy was a family at war with itself, a complex tangle of relationships based on incest, bitter sibling rivalries, corruption, intrigue and murder, set against a backdrop of foreign wars, civil unrest and the growing influence of Rome. In this study day, Sarah Griffiths will paint a vivid picture of Egypt's last ancient dynasty, from Ptolemy I to the famous Cleopatra VII, revealing the absorbing family dramas, exploring their distinctive art and architecture, daily life in Ptolemaic Egypt and the series of catastrophic events that led to the decline of the kingdom and its final annexation by Rome.

Refreshments will be provided in the morning and afternoon breaks but we ask you to make your own arrangements for lunch. Please book soon so that we can estimate our catering needs.

Fee for the day:
£20 for SAES Members
£25 for non-Members



Next Meeting



On **Saturday 16 June**, our own **Glenn Worthington** will be presenting ***'Tutankhamun's Funeral'***, looking at what the preparation of the tomb and the selection of its fabulous contents can tell us about royal funerary rituals. This should be a treat for all but especially those who were brought to Egyptology by their first introduction to Tutankhamun.

And finally

Quiz Time

What names do we now use for the following ancient Egyptian places or monuments:

- 1:  *Mer Wer*, 'the Great Tomb'?
- 2:  *Iunu*, 'Town of the Pillar'?
- 3:  *Ipet esut*, 'the Sanctuary of Thrones'?
- 4:  *Ist maat*, 'The Place of Truth'?
- 5:  *Waset*, 'The Dominatrix'?

Answers in the next issue of **Hotep**.

