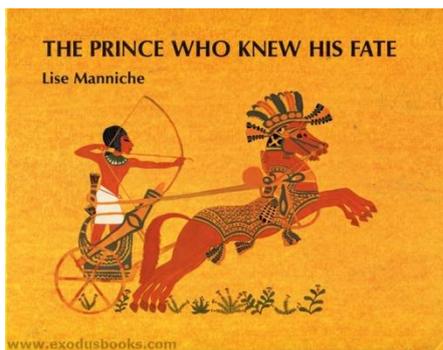




Issue 24: November 2017

Review of the October meeting

We are always eager to encourage speakers who are just embarking on their Egyptological journey so we were glad to accept SAES member **David Goldsmith's** offer of a talk entitled '**Tales from Ancient Egyptian Literature**'. This talk was based on one of the assignments David wrote for Manchester University's Certificate in Egyptology. He concentrated on four well known tales to illustrate the range of literature that the ancient Egyptians produced. The four were, 'The Tale of the Eloquent Peasant', 'King Khufu and the Magicians', 'The Doomed Prince' and 'The Tale of Wenamun'.



He demonstrated how often recognisable fairy story themes pop up again and again in all cultures in all periods of history. He explained how the tales, as we know them now, have been stitched together from extracts contained on several different papyri and also highlighted the unfortunate fact that the endings of all these tales are missing. We can only hope the endings to these stories may be discovered in the future. David's presentation was well illustrated and had plenty of detail and, in spite of a degree of repetition and hesitancy of delivery, was a promising first attempt at a full lecture meeting (after his Christmas talk on 'Harps' a couple of years ago).

The newsletter of The Southampton Ancient Egypt Society

New MOOC



For those of you who enjoy taking part in **Mass Open Online Courses**, MOOCs, you might be interested in a course which started on 31 October on the Coursera platform.

Wonders of Ancient Egypt is a follow-up to the 'Introduction to Ancient Egypt' presented by Dr David Silverman of the **University of Pennsylvania** and based on the extensive Egyptian collection of the Penn Museum. Topics covered include the Principles of Egyptian Art, Egyptian Magic, Akhenaten and the Religion of the Aten, and the burial of Tutankhamen. The course can be accessed for free at www.coursera.org/learn/



October Quiz Answers

The Egyptologists in anagram form were:

- 1:** GEOFFREY MARTIN
- 2:** PENNY WILSON
- 3:** CAMPBELL PRICE
- 4:** PAUL COLLINS

In the News

Last month's *Hotep* contained an article from *el-Ahram* on the latest announcement of a new tomb found in Luxor. This year seems to have been very fruitful in terms of new Egyptian discoveries, some of which we have reported here. Interesting as these are to us die-hard Egyptophiles the quality of the finds and the way in which they are presented through the press leaves a lot to be desired. Here are some examples. The first comes from a fairly standard infill item in the Daily Telegraph, with a couple of good pictures but little solid information. Most interesting is the reappearance of a familiar face.

4 April: New pyramid discovered in Egypt at Saqqara



The 4,300-year-old monument most likely belonged to the queen mother of the founder of Egypt's Sixth Dynasty, several hundred years after the building of the famed Great Pyramid of Giza. The pyramid is the 118th discovered so far in Egypt. 'To find a new pyramid is always exciting,' said Hawass, 'and this one is magical. It belonged to a queen.'

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/picturegalleries/worldnews/3446461/New-pyramid-discovered-in-Egypt-at-Saqqara.html>



On **3 April** the *Huffington Post* announced:

New Ancient Pyramid, Older than Giza, Discovered in Egypt.

'An Egyptian excavation team has discovered the remains of a pyramid that dates to the 13th dynasty, some 3,700 years ago, according to one of that country's top officials in antiquities, or ancient objects.'

This first paragraph is enough to give you the tone of the article and confirm the validity of the headline statement. A 13th Dynasty pyramid cannot be older than one built in Dynasty 4. The article goes on to describe Seneferu's Bent Pyramid at Dashur, where the discovery was made, and the wording confuses the 'new' pyramid with the old, giving rise to a very misleading sub-heading, which was picked up in other articles, implying that the new discovery was 'the first attempt to build a smooth-sided pyramid'. The final paragraph flatly contradicts the eye-catching headline:

'The pyramid is not as old as others in the area. The Dahshur pyramids are said to have been built between 2613 B.C. and 2589 B.C.'



An alabaster block is engraved with vertical hieroglyphic lines was part of the new pyramid. (Egyptian Ministry of Antiquities). The same news item based on an *Egypt Independent* report appeared in various news media, each of which tended to pick out different aspects of the story. The Smithsonian report is more authoritative:

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/new-pyramid-discovered-egypt-180962813/>

Pyramids are always a source of fascination, Khufu's Pyramid most of all. I leave you to make up your own mind about this:

7 August: Secret Room Discovered in the Great Pyramid

<http://www.newsweek.com/ancient-egypt-secret-room-discovered-great-pyramid-archaeologists-armed-lasers-647372>

Like pyramids, mummies are seen as the epitome of ancient Egypt and make good press, as shown by the following:

13 May: many news outlets reported an Egyptian Antiquities Service announcement about the discovery of more than 30 well-preserved human bodies in the Late Period/Ptolemaic catacombs discovered at Tuna el-Gebel, Minya province, Middle Egypt.

16 August: In an article in *el-Ahram* the Ministry announced the discovery at El-Kamin El-Sahrawi (about 125 miles south of Cairo) of three rock-cut tombs. The *National Geographic* described the tombs as being more than 2,000 years old and containing multiple sarcophagi of various sizes, as well as clay fragments. The tombs appear to date to the 27th Dynasty (525 - 404 BC), when Egypt was under Persian rule.

<https://news.nationalgeographic.com/2017/08/ancient-tombs-uncovered-egypt-achaemenid-archaeology-history-spd/>

24 March: *Nile Magazine* reported that the Spanish Archaeological Mission working at Qubbet el-Hawa near Aswan, had uncovered a new tomb. Believed to be that of Shemai, the brother of the 12th Dynasty regional Governor, Sarenput II, the tomb is intact and contains a range of goods including two cedarwood coffins and wooden tomb models. The well-preserved mummy of the tomb owner was covered with polychrome cartonnage, collars, and a mask.



<https://www.nilemagazine.com.au/2017-march/2017/3/24/intact-middle-kingdom-tomb-discovered-in-aswan>

If it's not pyramids, mummies or Tutankhamen, the next best headline-grabber is Ramesses. This year two previously unknown temples dating to the reign of Ramesses II have come to light, the first, at Abusir, reported by Fox News, **16 October:**

<http://www.foxnews.com/science/2017/10/17/desert-discovery-lost-temple-ramses-ii-uncovered-by-archaeologists.html>



Ramesses II temple, Abusir, uncovered by a joint Czech-Egyptian team

The second temple is one of a group found on the ancient military road through Sinai, known as the Way of Horus. At Qantana, 4 km east of the Suez Canal, four temples have been identified within a large fortified enclosure, surrounded by mudbrick walls. One grand brick-built temple, 70 x 80 metres in area with walls 3 metres thick, contains colorful inscriptions commemorating Ramses I and II. Egyptian authorities suggest this 'could have been used to impress armies and visiting foreign delegations as they arrived in Egypt'.

<http://abcnews.go.com/Technology/story?id=7400005>

The apparent increase in frequency of 'new discoveries' is due not so much to an increase in archaeological activity as to a deliberate policy adopted by Egypt's Ministry of Antiquities. The news seems to have been released a little at a time, sometimes months or even years after the original discovery. In announcing the Minya catacombs, the Minister of Antiquities, Khaled Anani, said: 'News of antiquities are things that attract the world to Egypt', with the implication that Egypt seeks to reassure the world that its heritage sites are safe in the hands of its authorities. Anani also said that while monuments are looted and destroyed in other Middle Eastern countries, Egypt is restoring and excavating its heritage. 'I believe and trust that the most interesting things which will bring the entire world's attention to Egypt and improve its image is any news related to antiquities. Let everyone talk about Egypt. This is what we need.' What is not said is how accessible to the ordinary tourist these new discoveries will be, nor how soon.

One thing is certain; most of these discoveries are well off the established tourist trail and even if some intrepid travellers found their way to the sites there and were able to overcome the inevitable difficulties in gaining entry, there would be very little to see. Much as the Antiquities Ministry is to be applauded for its continued efforts we must accept that it would take another Tutankhamen to restore Egypt's all-important tourist trade.

A Recent Scientific Discovery

The oldest solar eclipse yet recorded.

Researchers led by Professor Sir Colin Humphreys from the University of Cambridge's Department of Materials Science & Metallurgy, have pinpointed the date of what could be the oldest solar eclipse yet recorded. The event is mentioned in the Old Testament Book of Joshua and could have consequences for the chronology of the ancient world. Evidence for the Israelites in Canaan between 1500 and 1050 BC can be found in the Merneptah Stele, an Egyptian text dating from the reign of the Pharaoh Merneptah, son of Ramesses II. The stela, held in the Egyptian Museum, Cairo, was carved in the fifth year of Merneptah's reign and mentions a campaign in Canaan in which he defeated the people of Israel.

Earlier historians have used these two texts to try to date the possible eclipse, but were not successful as they were only looking at total eclipses. They failed to consider that it was instead an annular eclipse, in which the moon passes directly in front of the sun, but is too far away to cover the disc completely, leading to the characteristic 'ring of fire' appearance. In the ancient world, the same word was used for both total and annular eclipses.



Annular eclipse seen from Iceland, 31/05/03

The researchers developed a new eclipse code, which takes into account variations in the Earth's rotation over time and their calculations determined that the only annular eclipse visible from Canaan between 1500 and 1050 BC was on 30 October 1207 BC, in the afternoon. If their arguments are accepted, it would not only be the oldest solar eclipse yet recorded, it would also enable researchers to date the accession dates of Ramesses II and Merneptah to within a year as 1210/9 BC and 1276 respectively.

The precise dates of the pharaohs have been subject to some uncertainty among Egyptologists, but this new calculation, if accepted, could lead to an adjustment in the dates of several of their reigns and enable us to date them precisely.

The results are published in the Royal Astronomical Society journal *Astronomy & Geophysics*. Colin Humphreys and Graeme Waddington. '[Solar eclipse of 1207 BC helps to date pharaohs.](#)' *Astronomy & Geophysics* (2017). DOI: 10.1093/astrogeo/atx178.

<https://www.cam.ac.uk/research/news/oldest-recorded-solar-eclipse-helps-date-the-egyptian-pharaohs>

One more headline for you to follow up – if you dare!

Mystery of 24 alien black-boxes discovered near Egypt's Pyramids of Giza. They weigh more than 100 tons, they are solid Aswan granite, and they are precision engineered to tolerances which would be deemed remarkable today.

<http://www.express.co.uk/news/weird/748884/mystery-alien-boxes-discovered-egypt-great-pyramids-giza>

Next Meeting 9 December 2017:

Ian Trumble, Curator of the Bolton Museum, will give a talk on the on-going refurbishment and redisplay of this significant British Egyptology collection. The talk will be followed by the usual **Christmas Social**.

And Finally - Quiz Time

1: WHAT is this artefact made of?



2: WHO owned it?

3: WHERE can it now be seen?

Answers in the next edition of Hotep

