



Issue 7: April 2016

### News from Amarna

The last report on the work of the Amarna expedition took us to early December 2015. Later in the month the Ministry of Antiquities notified us that the national security agency was withholding the security permit for 2016 which, along with the agreement of the Ministry of Antiquities to the specified programme of work, is needed before the expedition can take up residence at Amarna and begin. Several other foreign expeditions had received similar notifications. In early January the opinion was given during a telephone call to the Ministry that the delay in issuing the permit might last until the end of May, or even beyond that. At the same time, it was being commonly said that the reason was fears that the fifth anniversary of the start of the 2011 revolution (January 25th) might be marked by disturbances but that, if the occasion passed peacefully (as it did), within a short time permission to begin would be granted. This has so far not happened. No reason has been given, and we can only speculate as to the thinking behind the refusal.

There appears to be no threat within the locality of Amarna, but the improved road system in the area has made the site



more easily accessible to outsiders. The result has been the cancellation of fieldwork planned from February to May, first at the Great Aten Temple (see above) and then at the North Tombs Cemetery, along with various post-excavation projects scheduled to have taken place within the expedition house.



On a more positive note, we wish to thank the Aurelius Trust for their recent grant in support of the ongoing project to conserve the coffins (left) from the South Tombs Cemetery, work that we hope will now take place

## The newsletter of The Southampton Ancient Egypt Society

later in the year. The delay to fieldwork has, at the same time, opened opportunities for advancing the writing up of extended reports on fieldwork already completed.

Amongst them are the long-promised report on the North Palace (below), based on the records of



the Egypt Exploration Society's campaigns of 1923 and 1924, supplemented by further investigations from 1990 onwards; and a full report on the South Tombs Cemetery excavation which ran between 2006 and 2013.

We would all like to thank our supporters who make the work at Amarna possible and ask for their patience in these uncertain times.

**Barry Kemp 7 March 2016**

### Answers to March Quiz

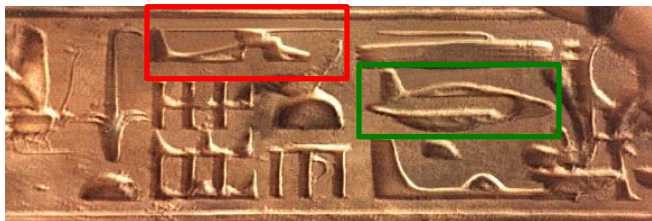
**1)** Djoser (Zoser) of Dynasty III is portrayed in the galleries beneath his Step Pyramid.

**2)** Nephthys and Isis are shown as kites as in this painting from Queen Nefertari's tomb.



**3)** The texts on the Rosetta Stone represent two languages. The top two registers are written in hieroglyphic and demotic Egyptian, the bottom register is written in Koine Greek.

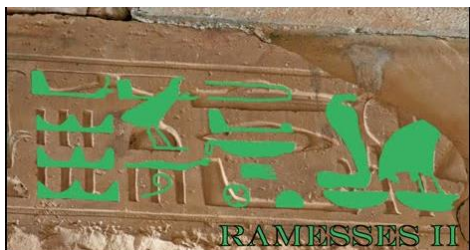
In her talk in January, **Sonia Zakrzewski** mentioned the famous, or infamous, 'helicopter' hieroglyph at Abydos, outlined in red below. Bob Partridge, late Editor of ***Ancient Egypt*** Magazine, also pointed out that Thunderbird 2 appears in the same inscription, outlined in green.



Speculation about the origin and significance of these symbols is rife in the blogosphere with all manner of weird and wonderful suggestions as to how the ancient Egyptians came to have such advanced technology at such an early period. This sort of discussion is akin to the rubbish promulgated by the followers of Pyramidiocy, as introduced to us by David Marriott in his Members Evening talk last year.

These discussions, some very heated, continue despite the fact that there is a simple explanation for the apparently anachronistic images. I recently found such an explanation at:

<http://raincool.blogspot.co.uk/2010/05/helicopter-hieroglyphs-explained.html>

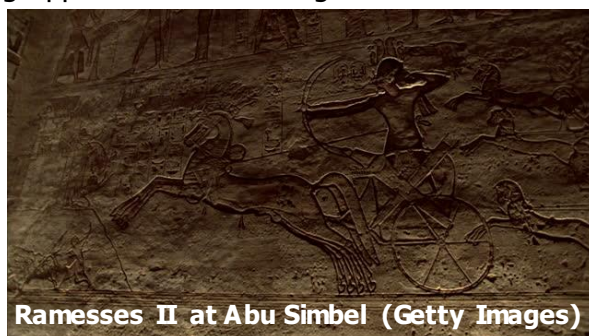


By means of some excellent photos, the anonymous author shows how Egyptian kings commonly over-wrote the inscriptions of their predecessors in order to claim ownership of their monuments. Sonia used this as an example of an expression of identity; for instance, a statue of a person was not considered to be a proper portrait unless it was inscribed with a name so if the all-important name was changed the statue became a portrait of the new owner.

Nebty names of Seti I (L) & Ramesses II (R)



Alteration of deeply cut inscriptions, like those at Abydos where Ramesses II replaced his father, Seti I's, names and titles with his own, required substantial re-cutting of the stone and filling in parts of the original carving with plaster. This process was also applied where an artist changed his mind after some serious carving had already been done. Over the centuries the ancient equivalent of Polyfilla, gypsum plaster mixed with stone dust to match the colour of the wall, has fallen away revealing the older symbols and figures beneath their replacements. A good example of this can be seen at Abu Simbel where, in the image of Ramesses II in his chariot, the King appears to be shooting from two bows.



Ramesses II at Abu Simbel (Getty Images)

What I found most refreshing about this particular blog (23 May 2010) was the final paragraph, given below:

'I know this is a lot of blah blah to New-Age/UFO/Atlantis enthusiasts but I get really irritated at gullibility and sloppy thinking. What looks like one thing to modern man looked like something else to the ancient Egyptians. What

we see as the tail of an airplane, *they* automatically saw as an upper arm! I also get angry that the people who actually built these things aren't given the credit for intelligence and ingenuity that they deserve. Aliens had to be involved or disembodied 'spiritual masters' had to whisper in someone's ear. Say that to Ramesses II, Leonardo Da Vinci or Albert Einstein and then get ready to run. That isn't to say there aren't any mysteries out there, but most of them are explainable given enough information, and that is fascinating in its own right.'

To that I say, 'Three cheers for common sense!'  
**Hilary Wilson**

Since writing, an article on this topic has appeared in the Spring 2015 issue of ***Kmt*** magazine identifying the author as **Dr Joshua Aaron Robertson**, of the **Institute of Art & Archaeology, University of Memphis, USA.**

## Review of March Meeting

In March we welcomed **Carl Graves**, Education and Events Co-ordinator from the Egypt Exploration Society, who has been working on material in the EES archive relating to the Nubian fortress of Buhen. This talk provided a fascinating insight into the huge mudbrick structures of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Cataract region in modern Sudan. Carl has access to the photographic record and dig diaries of Professor Brian Emery, who worked at Buhen during the 1960s before the building of the Aswan High Dam. It was a privilege to see the pictures and plans from the excavation of a site which has now disappeared beneath the waters of Lake Nasser. Carl even included, as a 'filler' for the refreshments interval, a tourist video from the period showing how things were as well as what has been irrevocably lost. This was a highly entertaining talk by a well-informed speaker.

**The Osiris Story: a 5-week evening class, starting Friday 29 April 2016, 7.30-9 p.m.**

This provides an introduction to the mythology of one of Egypt's most popular deities. Many of the rituals associated with death and burial, and Egyptian concepts of the afterlife and kingship, were based on the stories surrounding the divine family of Osiris, Isis and Horus and the rivalry between the god and his brother Seth.



The aim of this course is to enhance Members' understanding of some of the ancient customs and beliefs which are regularly encountered in our lectures. The course fee is £20 and places are still available.

## Quiz Time

**1:** What is the name of the ancient board game, played for about 4000 years in Egypt, which is played on a board divided into 30 squares ?

**2:** What was the ancient Egyptian name of the new capital city built by Tutankhamun's father, Akhenaten?



**3:** Meretseger was a cobra-goddess, worshipped by the inhabitants of Deir el-Medina. What does her name mean?

## Change to Programme

The speaker for next month, **21 May**, will be our own **Glenn Worthington** whose subject is '**Piercing the sky: the obelisks of Egypt**'. This talk will cover the purpose and significance of obelisks in ancient Egypt and will look at how and why Egyptian obelisks have been moved to countries throughout the world. This is a change to our published programme. Kris Strutt, who was scheduled to speak at this time, will now be visiting us in June.



Obelisks in Istanbul (L) and Paris (R)

## Upcoming Events

The **Spring Informal** on **Friday 22 April** will be a talk by **Christine Bucket** comparing the two warrior pharaohs, Ramesses II and Taharqa. You are invited to decide **Who was the Greatest?** We meet at 7.30 p.m. in the Meeting Room, upstairs from the Agora. Admission of £2 includes light refreshments.



or



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## Calling all budding journalists Hotep needs you!

If you would like to provide a review of a book or magazine article, a TV programme or film, a museum exhibition, or even one of our lectures please let us know. We have pages to fill!

