

Issue 10: July 2016

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

Review of our June meeting

Our speaker on Saturday 18 June was **Kristian Strutt**, from the Archaeology Section of the **University of Southampton**. He talked about his work with **THAWS**, the **Theban Harbours & Waterscapes Survey**. Kris has worked on this project since 2010, exploring the ancient landscape around Thebes, modern Luxor, using a variety of geophysical and other techniques to plot the ancient course of the Nile and the artificial harbours and channels built to give access to sites on the West bank of the river, such as the Ramesseum.



Most recently he has been working around the Colossi of Memnon (above) which stand in front of the massive mortuary temple of Amenhotep III at Kom el-Hitan. Kris described the scientific principles behind magnetometry, GPR (ground-penetrating radar) and resistivity surveys, familiar words for those of us who are followers of *Time Team*. These modern methods of investigating archaeological sites are non-invasive and can reveal structures and geological features at great depths making them cheaper and much less time-consuming than traditional digging.

Kris also showed how a colleague employed an AUV (autonomous unmanned vehicle better known these days as a drone) to do an aerial survey of the enigmatic mounds bordering the harbour of Birket Habu. He recounted how further surveying by this method has since been prohibited by the Egyptian authorities because of the universal suspicion of such drones. Though he was full of praise for the dedication and hard work of his local team he described how not all land-owners or farmers in the area are prepared to give access to their property even for this sort of non-destructive survey.

Kris hopes to be returning to the THAWS project in November this year. Though some of his talk was necessarily quite technical in its scientific detail, it was fascinating to hear of work going on in Egypt now, especially when other long-term expeditions like Barry Kemp's at Amarna have been halted by security concerns and changes in official oversight by the Egyptian Antiquities Authority.

Answers to June's Quiz

1) Djoser's Step Pyramid was reputedly designed by the King's chief minister **Imhotep**, who was later recognised as a demi-god, son of Ptah.

2) The alabaster sarcophagus of Seti I is the star exhibit in the **Sir John Soane Museum**, Lincoln's Inn Fields.

3) Tutankhamun's Treasure, including the golden mask, came to London in **1972** as part of the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the discovery of his tomb.



Anna Welch reports on her visit to Liverpool's World Museum

Last September I spent a few days on a coach trip visiting the north-west. One afternoon I found myself in Liverpool with a bit of time to spare having made a last minute decision to abandon the Beatles tour in favour of visiting the World Museum. I planned to have a look at their Egyptian Collection but arrived to find it had closed down the day before for refurbishment! This is an excellent museum and there was plenty more to see but I did find, and was intrigued by, a couple of Egyptian statues that had clearly been burned at some stage. On further inspection I found out that these were victims of the Liverpool Blitz. They had also been vandalised in the past – or is it “embellished” – by one Belzoni whose name could clearly be seen!



The 'burnt' Sakhmet statues, Liverpool



Liverpool's Main Egyptian Gallery 1932. Note the Sakhmet statues flanking the staircase at the far end.

The World Museum has dedicated an area on its website to telling the story of the dreadful destruction that the museum and collections suffered. Find out about it at: <http://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/wml/collections/blitz/> There are some amazing and poignant before-and-after pictures of the museum and eye witness accounts of the raids and the aftermath, (see bottom left and below).



The aftermath of the blitz, Main Egyptian Gallery, 3 Mar 1941

It is hard viewing in many ways but a keen reminder, especially now, of the vulnerability of cultural assets. If you persevere you will also find out about the objects that survived and that you can still see today.

The **Ancient Worlds** gallery is still closed but the great news is that the museum has been awarded £300,000 in grants to improve the Egyptian display. When it re-opens in early 2017 there will be a number of changes including a new 'Mummy Room' displaying 12 mummies. The room will be housed in a restored gallery space that closed to visitors 35 years ago. Star objects will be highlighted and there will be a recreation of the original pre-Second World War display. They will use animation to bring to life a Book of the Dead - a papyrus roll four metres long from the tomb of Djed-Hor. New research is being done on the museums' mummies and

there will be 4,000 objects to be seen – some of which have never been on public display before. In addition the museum is investing in new and advanced equipment for regulating environmental conditions for the collections.

As yet there is no definite re-opening date but, in the meantime you might like to read their blog:

<http://blog.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/2015/02/exciting-plans-for-world-museums-ancient-egypt-galleries/>

You can also follow them on Twitter: https://twitter.com/world_museum

and Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/worldmuseum>

The following is an edited extract from the Liverpool World Museum's website

Many of World Museum's most important objects were presented in 1867 by the Liverpool goldsmith Joseph Mayer (1803-1886). Before his donation Mayer had opened his own museum in Colquitt Street in 1852 and one of its most impressive rooms was devoted to Ancient Egypt. The Rameses girdle (below) was one of many remarkable objects in his collection later given to the museum.



The girdle was discovered in Thebes and collected by the Reverend Henry Stobart during the winter of 1854-55. The girdle owes its name to an inscription naming King Rameses III with the date of the second year of his reign. This belt, made from a rare surviving piece of woven linen, caused a great deal of interest in the 1920s and 1930s.

Experts tried to recreate the belt, in an attempt to understand how it was made and how long it would have taken to weave something of such length.

With the outbreak of war in 1939 the girdle was taken to St Martin's Bank where it stayed in the vaults until after the war, a decision which would save its life. On the 3 May 1941, the museum's Director Douglas Allen recorded the aftermath of the Blitz, listing "...the most serious losses...including some Egyptian antiquities." In fact, the Blitz cost the Egyptology department a third of its Joseph Mayer Collection.

A visit for the school holidays?

Our roving correspondent, **Susanne Cooke** sent in this information about a local Egyptological exhibition entitled:

Out of Egypt.

I'm sure you already know, but just a reminder about the exhibition at the **Winchester Discovery Centre**, Jewry Street, **16 Jul – 8 Sep** in the City Space (at the front of the library) – **admission free.**

According to the Hampshire CC website:

<http://www3.hants.gov.uk/hampshirenw/events/searcheventslisting/eventsdetail.htm?id=311415> the **Out of Egypt** exhibition is "a family friendly display of genuine Ancient Egyptian artefacts many of which were brought back to Hampshire by local people. Discover how Ancient Egyptians treated their dead and see many of the objects placed in the tomb for the afterlife including scarabs and mummified animals, mummy masks and wrappings, shabti figures and jewellery. There are lots of activities, games and puzzles to try. Write your name in hieroglyphics, count like an Egyptian, or hunt for creepy crawlies."

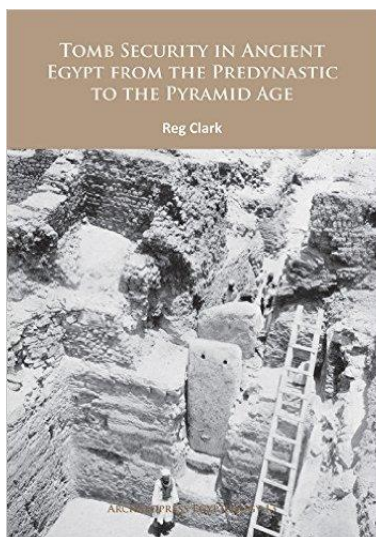
As part of the 'Out of Egypt' exhibition you are invited to drop in and handle genuine Ancient Egyptian artefacts from the collections with a museum curator. The activities described suggest that this exhibition might be an ideal school holiday outing for budding Egyptologists.

If anyone visits this exhibition, especially if you do so in the company of children, we would love to have a review for **Hotep.**

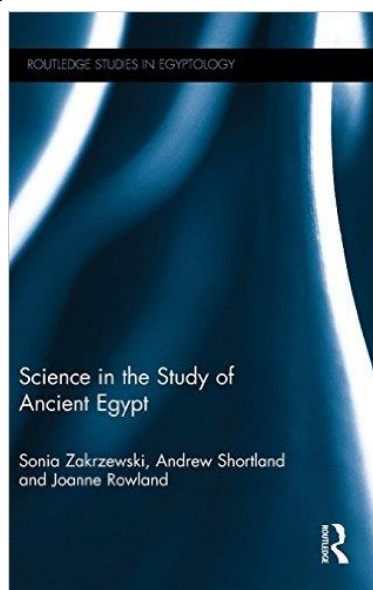
Promised Publications

Several of our speakers during the last few months mentioned their forthcoming publications which have since materialised.

Reg Clark's 'Tomb Security in Ancient Egypt from the Predynastic to the Pyramid Age' (the same title as his talk to us in October 2015) was published in March by Archaeopress Egyptology. It is a paperback but still has the eye-watering price of £99.18 (on Amazon).



Sonia Zakrzewski (January 2016) and **Andrew Shortland** (April 2016) are two of the joint authors of **'Science in the Study of Ancient Egypt'**, in the *Routledge Studies in Egyptology Series*, which came out in December. The hardback version is also expensive at £71.99 but there is a Kindle edition priced at £34.99.



Upcoming events

After our customary August break we meet again for the start of the new season on **Saturday 10 September**.

Please note that to avoid a conference at Oasis we have had to move this to the second Saturday of the month, a week earlier than you might be expecting.

This meeting will start with our AGM (kept as short as possible) before we hear from **Lee Young** about artists and epigraphers in Egypt.



View of Abu Simbel, Belzoni

And finally.....**Quiz time**.

- 1) Which **season** of the Egyptian calendar started around 19 July by modern reckoning?
- 2) Which god was thought to control the flow of the Nile from caverns beneath Elephantine Island?



- 3) How many gods heard the statements of the deceased, known as the **Negative Confession**, to assess their worthiness to enter the next world?

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

**Have a good Summer break.
See you in September.**

