



# HOTEPE

Issue 6: March 2016

## Happy Easter!

### Egypt on the screen

Ancient Egypt continues to provide us with televisual entertainment. Since the beginning of the year the following have been shown on various television channels and may still be available on iPlayer or catch-up.

The film **'Exodus: Gods and Kings'**, a reworking of the Hollywood epic 'The Ten Commandments', starring **Christian Bale** as Moses.

**Joann Fletcher's** series, **'Immortal Egypt'**, a 4-part introduction to Egyptian history from Predynastic to Ptolemaic times.

The two part drama, **'Tut'**, with **Ben Kingsley** as the sinister Vizier, Ay.

The documentary **'King Tut's Tomb: the Hidden Chamber'** in which **Nicholas Reeves** discusses the potential discovery of extra rooms in KV62.

### On the radio.

You may still be able to catch **The Obliterators (Radio 4 28/02)** in which historian **Simon Schama** looked at the reasons behind the acts of iconoclasm being wrought upon ancient buildings in Iraq & Syria.

In the **Radio Times** (27 Feb - 4 Mar) Schama wrote: Of course, the deaths & mutilation of innocent civilians, who in Syria have perished in their hundreds of thousands, must have the first call on our grief & outrage more than any objects made of stone....(but) what we recognise in the gleefully boastful videos that record explosions reducing architecture & sculpture that has stood for centuries to dust & rubble, is the atrocious



Satellite images of the Temple of Bel, Palmyra, before (L) & after (R) its destruction by Isis in Sep 2015

## The newsletter of The Southampton Ancient Egypt Society

violation of our shared humanity....The fanaticism that powers Isis jackhammers & detonations, & insists that piety demands the obliteration of all other 'idoltrous' cultures before & since, has little to do with Islam. Had the caliphs who ruled mediaeval Egypt been of the same mind there would be nothing left of Karnak, Luxor & Thebes. But they regarded themselves as the custodians, not the annihilators of cultures that had gone before them. Nor is the iconoclastic urge peculiar to Islam. In the 8<sup>th</sup> and again in the 9<sup>th</sup> century, Byzantine emperors ordered the destruction of sacred images deemed idoltrous....The problem of cultural intolerance is bigger than the hurt inflicted on art....The din of demagogues demanding that we live only with people like ourselves, who speak the same language, say the same prayers, cook & dress the same way, is getting louder by the day....Isis is beyond shaming. But it is possible to raise our voices in defence of cultural pluralism against the advancing ideologies of tribal and religious sameness. Where the history of shared habitats has been left to us, with relics & treasures of that



Destruction of the winged bull of Nineveh, Feb 2015

cohabitation, we should fight as hard as we possibly can to conserve, protect & cherish it, knowing that what is at stake is not just the legacy of art, but the fate of our common humanity.

As a follow-up to this programme, from 29/02, Radio 4 aired the 10-part series **Museum of Lost Objects** examining the histories of ten antiquities or cultural sites destroyed or looted in Iraq & Syria. This is available as a podcast.

If you heard or viewed any of these broadcasts and would like to write a short review to share with SAES members we would be glad to have your contribution.

## July Study Day

On **Saturday 16 July** the subject of our annual Study Day will be

### **The Temples of Thebes**

presented by renowned Egyptologist

#### **Dr Aidan Dodson**

This informative and beautifully illustrated series of talks covers the major temples on both side of the Nile at Thebes, including the Karnak and Luxor Temples on the East bank and Deir el-Bahri, the Ramesseum and Medinet Habu on the West bank. The cost of this study day includes coffee/tea in the morning and afternoon breaks. Please make your own lunch arrangements.

**The fee for the day is £20 for Members of SAES or £25 for non-members.** To book/pay for your ticket please speak to the Secretary.



The Ramesseum

### **Review of February Meeting**

February's speaker was our very own Chairman **Hilary Wilson** who presented a fascinating talk entitled **Who was Who in Tutankhamun's Court?** This introduced us to the men and women who surrounded the boy king during his brief reign. Hilary looked at the issue of where and what did these courtiers do in the reign of Akhenaten. Many changed their names which today makes it difficult to trace a career before Tutankhamun. Horemheb is one who is invisible before Tutankhamun's accession while Ay kept his name throughout and is easier to follow. The principal female is Maia who was the king's wet nurse and whose tomb has been discovered at Saqqara. However Hilary is not convinced that Maia is to be identified as Meritaten, eldest daughter of Akhenaten and Nefertiti. This talk proved that there was more to Egypt under Tutankhamun than just the king.

**Glenn Worthington**

You might be interested in this free exhibition:  
**Death on the Nile: Uncovering the afterlife of ancient Egypt**  
at the **Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge**  
**23 Feb – 22 May**



The first major exhibition for the Fitzwilliam's 2016 bicentenary celebrations goes beyond the images of mummies, pharaohs and mystery often associated with ancient Egypt. It shows how coffin design developed over 4,000 years, reflecting significant changes both in the status of affluent ancient Egyptians and in the gods that were important to them.

Discover how these remarkable objects were constructed and what this information can reveal about the craftsmen who made coffins and the clients who commissioned and bought them. A 'live' conservation area in the exhibition will provide visitors with a unique insight into the science used to examine the objects on display.

Further details of this exhibition and the Fitzwilliam's Egyptology collection may be found at [www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk](http://www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk)

### **Answers to February Quiz**

**1:** All three numbers have been given in different sources. Mark Lehner, in *The Complete Pyramids of Egypt*, says that Khufu's pyramid contained at least 2.3 million stones, although many of them have tumbled down and lie scattered at its base.

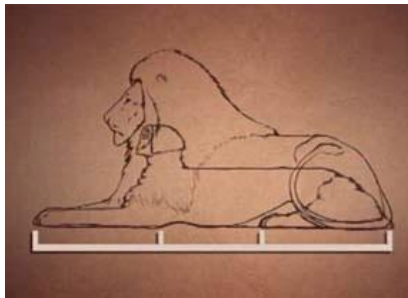
**2:** Ammit's images usually show a crocodile-like head, the hind legs of a hippo and the front legs and body of a lion or other big cat.



**3:** The island of IBIZA – Yes, really! Check it out on <http://www.ibiza4all.org/history.htm> (There are other explanations for the name of the island but this suggestion is based on the fact that Carthaginian settlers brought their god Bes with them.)

Member **Jane Brady** shares her personal highlights of recent SAES meetings.

### Is it a Sphinx or is it an Asiatic Lion?



When Hilary asked for contributions to the newsletter I thought, I can do that, so here goes. I'd like to share some of my personal highlights of SAES since I joined last year. As an 'armchair' historian and informed mainly by television and attendance at Adult Education creative writing courses, I cite *Horrible Histories* as my most recent influence. The enjoyment of studying ancient Egypt at the Oasis Academy in the company of serious academics engaged by the committee of SAES, where no exams are needed, has possibly gone to my head, because I shall never forget the moment recently when someone was talking to me about a television programme of Dr Irving Finkel's and I said, 'of course I have met him.'

'*The Wonders of India*' filmed by the BBC Natural History Unit 2015 took me by surprise when I saw the Ancient Egyptian heritage of the lion which inspired my title. This reminded me of something Hilary Wilson said in July in her talk, '*Gifts of the Nile: Water Plants in Egyptian Culture*', regarding the flowering plant used to symbolise Upper Egypt that no-one nowadays seems able to identify. She did not for a moment believe the ancient Egyptians "just made it up" when representing nature in art, after all, she maintained, they were living much closer to their natural world than we are.

Following this theme it is interesting to go and listen to research (when I have not had to do any of the hard work) of people like Sonia Zakrzewski, who has worked on several excavations in Egypt. In her January talk, '*Identity, Disability & Personhood in Egyptian Bioarchaeology*', she explained that it is a human adaptation in a warm climate for people to develop 'longer' lower leg bones but it is physically impossible for a *homo sapiens* thigh bone to be longer than a calf bone. An ancient Egyptian artist's representation of just that may be a more accurate overall 'impression' gained by an onlooker of, for example, seated

ancient Egyptians' legs than someone from a cold climate might give the artist credit for. She also touched on how tempting it is to make pronouncements on ancient art. She really wanted early period figurines showing men and women together of the same height to represent equality of the sexes rather than an accurate record of the difference in height between male and female. However, future study of skeletal remains may substantiate this in terms of lifestyle, diet or genetics.

I did not know of the 'blind' harp player until I heard David Goldsmith's thesis '*The Beauty of the Egyptian Harp: Forgotten Melodies*', in December. He discussed the question of whether this was a 'recent' ancient Egyptian myth or not. Did the harpist have his eyes closed due to concentration in the absence of sheet music, or was it a case of a poorly preserved wall painting, or a famous blind harp player at the time? Is it more scholarly to research the bald heads in depictions of harp players as belonging to a priestly class? (although this is less glamorous than the picture of the Pharaoh's daughter playing the harp who did have her eyes open.)

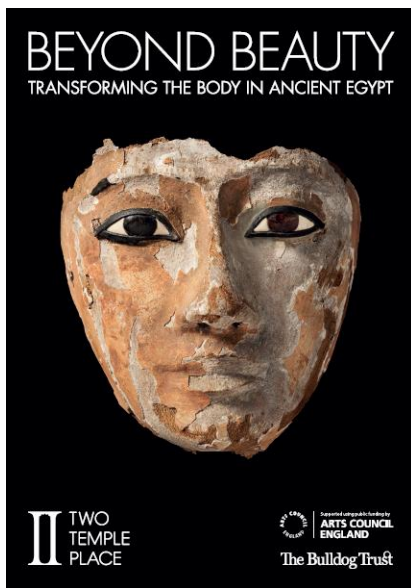
I unfortunately missed the wonderfully titled '*Pyramidots*', (millions of books sold by sensationalists cashing in on the public's gullibility), the subject of David Marriott's Members' Evening discussion in November. But I did go to '*Tomb Security from the Pre-dynastic to the Pyramid Age*', where any possible interference from outer space in building the pyramids was dispelled with a down-to-earth approach to ancient civil engineering by Reg Clark, who has a new publication due out soon. The pyramids were not pointing at any particular stars in the night sky according to archaeo-astronomy, and their iconic shape was simply the one that used the least number of bricks to cover the most ground for a tomb. Finding pyramid builders' tools left behind from subsequent break-ins, to rob tombs of their riches, gives the clue to these tomb robbers' identities. Open and shut case there then.

I am slowly learning to be more discerning in my view of Ancient Egypt and realise now that films of impressionistic sunsets over empty desert sands with an orchestral music accompaniment is the 'here and now', whereas the 'there and then' was quite different and, as Joanna Kyffin explained in her September talk, '*Reading Ancient Egyptian Magical Spells as Poetry*', often resounded with screams of "save us from the antelopes."

**Jane Brady**



**From the Editor:** I would like to draw your attention to a neo-gothic mansion in London, on the Victoria Embankment, Two Temple Place, built in the final years of the 19th century by William Waldorf Astor, the richest man in the world at the time. It is worth a visit for the sake of its magnificent interior, with collections of carvings, panels, friezes and stained glass windows, depicting fictional and mythical figures drawn from popular novels and historical sources. But of particular interest to us is the 2016 annual free exhibition '**Beyond Beauty, Transforming the Body in Ancient Egypt**'.



This from *Current World Archaeology* No 75.

The annual exhibitions, started in 2011 and arranged by the Bulldog Trust, aim to showcase publicly owned and art gallery collections from outside London, and therefore encourage people to visit and support their local museums. Egyptian expeditions in the late 18th and early 19th centuries were funded through sponsorship from collectors and museums in return for the artefacts brought back from the digs. As a result, many of these early finds were distributed amongst institutions across the globe, where they languish in storerooms, packed away through lack of display space. The exhibits at Two Temple Place include pieces from seven UK museums, including The Royal Pavilion in Brighton. The highlight is a set of canopic jars from the Rochdale Museum which have never before been seen in public.

Running in conjunction with the exhibition is a series of events with Egyptian themes: interior design, craft sessions, an Egyptian dinner, and late Egyptian music to name but a few. There are also several 'Art Deco' tours of the house. Most are free, some ask for a small fee. The exhibition is open from **30th January until 24th April 2016**. Details of opening times can be found on the website for The Bulldog Trust at Two Temple Place, (Information initially from Current World Archaeology No 75)

### Upcoming Events

**Saturday 16 April**

#### 'Radiocarbon & the Chronologies of Ancient Egypt'

**Professor Andrew Shortland** received a DPhil for work on vitreous materials from Amarna. After work as a Research Fellow and then Research Lecturer at the Research Laboratory for Archaeology in Oxford he moved on to Cranfield University in 2005, establishing the **Centre for Archaeological and Forensic Analysis**. His talk considers how the Egyptian chronology has been traditionally constructed and what type of errors might have resulted from this. It then goes on to discuss the use of new scientific and statistical dating techniques that have for the first time given independent scientific verification for the chronologies.

### Quiz Time

**1:** Who was the first Pharaoh to carve his own story on the walls of temples and tomb chambers?

**2:** Nephthys and her sister Isis, the goddesses who watched over the bodies of the dead, were sometimes depicted as birds of which species?



**3:** The Rosetta stone is written in three scripts. What are they?

