

Issue 1, 2014

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**Neal Spencer**

Keeper, Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan,  
British Museum

Ancient Egyptian objects have formed part of the British Museum's collection since 1753, and the permanent galleries remain ever-popular among the 6 million visitors each year. Behind these displays, and the website which received 14 million visits from across the globe in 2012–2013, lies a busy programme of research, documentation, collections care, conservation and analyses, from the basements of the British Museum to the deserts of Nubia. Much of this work is undertaken by curators, conservators, scientists and other specialists from across the Museum – seven of the eight curatorial departments care for objects made in, found in or depicting aspects of Egypt and Sudan, past and present. The potential of digital technologies, and increased collaboration between museums and universities – in the UK and internationally, but especially in Egypt and Sudan – is opening up new ways of learning about the people and cultures of the Nile Valley and its environs. This newsletter provides a glimpse of the extraordinary range of activity undertaken in the past 12 months, which remains possible through generous government funding, but also the support of funding bodies and patrons.

Looking ahead, this year will prove to be equally busy. A special British Museum exhibition, *Ancient lives, new discoveries* (22 May – 30 November 2014), will explore life in the Nile Valley, using the latest biomedical visualisation to analyse mummies from the collection. The Early Egypt Gallery (Room 64) will reopen in June, presenting the latest research on the earliest parts of Egyptian history, and new interpretation will be introduced in the iconic Egyptian Sculpture Gallery (Room 4). Other things are of course less predictable – the discoveries our curators and scientists (and scholars across the world) will make about objects in the collection, or the insights provided by excavation projects, from Naukratis to the Fifth Cataract. This winter our teams are excavating at Dangeil, Kurgus, Kawa and Amara West in Sudan, with projects at Naukratis, Elkab and Hagr Edfu in Egypt.

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Exhibitions and galleries  
**Developing a new gallery of Early Egypt**

**Renée Friedman**

Heagy Research Curator in Early Egypt, Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan, British Museum

The Raymond and Beverly Sackler Gallery of Early Egypt displays objects from the Predynastic and Early Dynastic periods – the formative phases of Egyptian civilisation. It opened in 1992 during a time of intensive research into Egypt's origins, which has since resulted in many new insights into developments taking place during this time. Thanks to the renewed support of the Raymond and Beverly Sackler Foundation, a new display will open in June 2014, to reflect these advances in our understanding and highlight recent discoveries with a thematically based redisplay of objects long held by the Museum, alongside some more recently acquired.

Among the most exciting recent discoveries were those made by Dr Fred Wendorf at a place called Nabta Playa located 100km into the Sahara Desert. His work has allowed us to trace the development of Egyptian civilisation back by another 4,000 years. In 2002 Dr Wendorf donated his unique collection and archives to the British Museum so that we can now tell the story of the ingenious people who made the desert their home after it had been transformed into a savannah by the warmer and wetter climate following the last Ice Age. At about 8500 BC, using some of the earliest pottery known from Africa and herding its earliest domesticated cattle, these hunting and gathering pastoralists colonised the desert after the annual summer rains. They wintered by the Nile where all traces have long since washed away, and it is to the river they returned when the monsoon rains ultimately ceased at about 4500 BC. It is no coincidence that this is exactly when the Predynastic period in Egypt begins. Climate and its impact on ancient Egypt have long been topics of discussion, but this new evidence from the deserts now lets us look at the effects of climate change from a long-term perspective.

Climate change as an impetus for less happy developments is also reflected by Dr Wendorf's even earlier discoveries at Jebel Sahaba in Nubia. Here he found a cemetery dating back to about 11,000 BC, a time when the Nile Valley was cold and dry, the river wild and high, and resources were scarce. Flint chips, the remnants of weapons, found in the bodies of 40% of the 61 men, women and children buried in this cemetery indicate that they died of inflicted wounds. These graves present what is widely considered the earliest evidence for communal violence in history. The skeletons from this important cemetery are now housed in the British Museum, and a new case is being designed to display two of the unfortunate victims and the weapons that killed them, just as they were found.

Other themes in the gallery will include visions of the afterlife, as we try to decode the symbols and images important in the preliterate world of Predynastic Upper Egypt. The case on the unification of Egypt will highlight the stunning decorated palettes in the collection – some of the most important documents of the state formation period. The new display will also reunite the Battlefield Palette with its joining piece as a long-term loan from the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford. The origins of writing and the technological developments during the first dynasties, that made the age of the pyramids possible, are some of the other themes that will be explored.

When it is completed, the new display will cover over 5,000 years of dynamic experimentation during which many of the characteristics that will come to typify Egyptian civilisation were first developed. Through the display we hope to give visitors a better understanding of how and why this occurred and the debt that the Egyptians of Dynastic times owed to their early ancestors.

The new display will open in June 2014.

*British Museum research on Early Egypt is made possible through the generosity of Mr Thomas C Heagy. The gallery of Early Egypt and its refurbishment were made possible by the Raymond and Beverly Sackler Foundation.*



Previous page:  
Burials in the cemetery at Jebel Sahaba, with pencils marking position of flint arrowheads.

The Battlefield Palette, greywacke, c. 3200 BC, EA 20791, with cast from the Ashmolean Museum 1892.1171 (upper left).

Exhibitions and galleries  
**Ancient lives exhibition:  
the process of discovery**

**John Taylor and Daniel Antoine**

Curators, Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan

Following the success of *Mummy: The Inside Story* in 2004, a new exhibition will enable the visitor to see what lies hidden beneath the wrappings and explore the bodies of eight mummies, using CT scanning and recently developed cutting-edge visualisation technology.

The scanning process captures thousands of cross-sectional images of the mummies at a thickness of 0.6mm for every digital 'slice'. These show internal features in startling detail, and by stacking all the slices together and using Volume Graphics software the mummy can be viewed on screen as a three-dimensional model. 'Segmentation' allows continuous surfaces of the same density – bone, textile, or artefacts such as amulets of faience or metal – to be visualised separately with precision, clarity and from any angle. Using digital clipping tools, the researcher can cut away any part of the data to perform a 'virtual autopsy' or to search for manmade objects within layers of wrappings.

The large files which contain this data are now being studied and interrogated, revealing new discoveries about the lives of ancient individuals. This ranges from examining brains and digestive organs in two naturally preserved mummies to scrutinising horrifyingly severe dental abscesses in temple officials' mouths. Visualising the pathway made by the embalmers through the nose in order to extract the brain has given us a new respect for their skill and precision, while complex arrangements of amulets and other trappings are being uncovered without ever disturbing the wrappings, and rotated under virtual spotlights to reveal surface decoration.

Eight mummies will be included in the exhibition – from a Predynastic man found at Gebelein to a woman from a medieval Christian community in Sudan. These bookend four artificially preserved mummies from the pharaonic period and two Roman period bodies – people from higher and lower strata of society who died at different stages of their lives (two of them as children).

The new exhibition will feature interactive displays allowing the public to discover the results for themselves. Contextual objects will support the findings and explore several themes, including ancient Egyptian medicine, diet, hair and hairstyles, and funerary practices.

*Ancient lives, new discoveries*  
will be open 22 May – 30 November 2014.

Exhibition sponsored by Julius Baer.  
Technology partner Samsung.

CT scan of the mummy of a priest's daughter named Tayesmutengebtiu. From Thebes, Egypt, 22nd Dynasty, c. 900 BC.





Exhibitions and galleries  
**Pharaoh: King of Egypt – a retrospective**



A label with a scene showing the jubilee of King Den (EA 32650).

**Margaret Maitland**  
 former Future Curator

Just as ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs developed out of images simplified for effective communication, so the image of the pharaoh was established through easily identifiable iconography and powerful poses. The label of King Den (c. 2950 BC) features some of the oldest hieroglyphs, and some of the earliest symbols that would define Egyptian kingship for millennia, such as the dual crown and the title 'King of Upper and Lower Egypt'. And yet the power of this image is such that our concept of 'pharaoh' has often been reduced to an abstract symbol rather than an understanding of the role itself or the fascinating individuals who served as king.

Since its opening in 2011, the British Museum UK touring exhibition *Pharaoh: King of Egypt*, supported by the Dorset Foundation, has sought to contrast the ideals of kingship with the more complex realities faced by Egypt's rulers. The exhibition has explored the mythologizing of the royal role, as well as the kings' lives, duties, failures, and controversies, using stunning objects from the British Museum's collection, from gilded palace tiles and exquisite gold jewellery to diplomatic letters and a papyrus account of a royal assassination. In the past two years, over 130 objects spanning over 3,000 years of ancient Egyptian history have been seen by over 300,000 people. It has been the largest ever UK tour of ancient Egyptian objects from the British Museum, some of them never before seen on display.

As described in the 'King as Sun-priest', on one of the exhibition's papyri, the pharaoh was said to have been placed on earth by the sun god Ra 'for judging men, for making gods content, for creating *ma'at* (order/truth), for destroying evil'. The chief duties of the king were in service of the gods, including building temples, giving offerings, and defending Egypt's borders, but many pharaohs were just as interested in what the gods could do for them. The god Amun-Ra, of whom a stunning gold and silver statue features in the exhibition, was invoked by everyone from the female pharaoh Hatshepsut (1479–1457 BC), who claimed to be born of a secret liaison between her mother and the god, to Alexander the Great (332–323 BC), who sought out Amun-Ra's oracle at Siwa Oasis, where the deity (or his nervous priests) acknowledged the Macedonian conqueror as his son.

The pharaohs were very selective in what they chose to communicate and often conveniently omitted any tricky details that might undermine their infallible image. King Nebhepetre Mentuhotep (2055–2004 BC) was renowned for reuniting the country after a period of civil war. Later kings revered him for this achievement, and many monuments, including several in the exhibition, were dedicated to his memory hundreds of years after his death. But while the magnificent reliefs in Mentuhotep's mortuary temple commemorate his military victories, they omit the rival Egyptian forces whose defeat gave him his fame – the only enemies depicted are foreign Asiatics, thereby avoiding the awkwardness of acknowledging this internal conflict.

*Pharaoh: King of Egypt* has brought the pharaoh to the people, as well as bringing together others in partnership. It was the first British Museum exhibition to be developed in collaboration. The contribution of lead partner Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums, particularly the Great North Museum: Hancock in Newcastle, helped ensure the exhibition's accessibility. Many subsequent partners used elements of their Egyptian architecture-inspired design, which even included a tomb-like structure to house the larger-than-life wooden tomb guardian statue of Ramesses I (1295–1294 BC).

Each venue brought its own unique approach, ensuring the exhibition's continued vitality and relevance to local audiences. The energy and enthusiasm of the staff and volunteers at Dorset County Museum led to their selection as a last-minute replacement on the tour, and they used the opportunity to improve their site infrastructure and quadrupled their visitor numbers. At Leeds City Museum, the exhibition looked stunning in their grand, circular Arena. It was the first time the space had been used for an exhibition, but the experiment paid off with their most popular temporary exhibition to date. At Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, the ancient Egyptian kings were at home in the monumental Gas Hall, *Pharaoh's* largest exhibition space at 1000 m<sup>2</sup>. The additional space allowed Birmingham to incorporate Egyptian objects from their own collection. Glasgow's Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum brought *Pharaoh* to its most northern destination, and their new design brought a fresh feel to the exhibition as it entered its final stretch. Bristol Museum and Art Gallery mounted a display of 19th-century watercolours copied from the tomb of Seti I (1294–1279 BC) in the Valley of the Kings, which complemented *Pharaoh* beautifully. For those unable to visit these venues, a freely available online catalogue continues to make the objects and their fascinating stories more accessible than ever before.

The exhibition also helped foster future museum expertise. As part of the British Museum's Future Curators programme, supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund, I had the wonderful opportunity to work on *Pharaoh*, even writing the accompanying book. This incredible learning experience introduced me to diverse aspects of museum work, from writing object labels to the practicalities of moving a 600kg statue of Ramesses II (1279–1213 BC)! I now work as the Curator of the Ancient Mediterranean at National Museums Scotland, where I curate a collection including over 6,000 ancient Egyptian objects.



Exhibition at the Dorset County Museum, Dorchester.

Head of King Mentuhotep II (EA 720) on display at Kelvingrove Museum & Art Gallery, Glasgow.

*Pharaoh: King of Egypt* finally ended its UK tour this summer, but its legacy will live on. The Egyptians believed that the death of the king, when he had 'ascended to heaven, and was united with the sun', simply marked the continuation of his journey from the living embodiment of the god Horus to the god Osiris, lord of the afterlife. The *Pharaoh* exhibition brought these kings to life again and the objects will surely continue to do so for many years to come. Their extraordinary monuments have ensured that the kings of Egypt will never be forgotten, but I hope that the exhibition has revealed that beneath their carefully constructed image of power and grandeur, they were ultimately very human.

*The UK tour was made possible with the support of the Dorset Foundation, numerous sponsors at each venue and the partner museums themselves.*



Statue of Ramesses II (EA 67) on display at the Great North Museum: Hancock, Newcastle.



Exhibitions and galleries  
**Virtual autopsy: a Predynastic murder**

**Daniel Antoine**

Curator of Physical Anthropology, Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan, British Museum

The body of a man who was buried during the late Predynastic period – in about 3500 BC – at the site of Gebelein in Upper Egypt is on display in the Early Egypt Gallery (Room 64). Known as Gebelein Man, he was placed in a crouched position in a shallow grave and the arid environment, as well as direct contact with the hot sand, naturally dried and mummified his remains. Gebelein Man has been in the British Museum's collection for over 100 years and on display for most of that time, but very little was known about him. In 2012 he was CT scanned for the first time and the high-resolution x-rays were used to create 3D visualisations so that his muscles, bones, teeth and internal organs could be carefully examined. A virtual autopsy table, an interactive tool based on medical visualisation, was used to convey the results of the research to the public in a new display next to Gebelein Man. This temporary display allowed visitors to explore for themselves true 3D visualisations (as opposed to animations) of the original CT scan data by using an interactive touchscreen. The software made it possible to separate the different tissues of the body, allowing us to virtually remove the skin, revealing the remarkably well-preserved underlying muscles, and analyse the skeleton. A virtual cutting function let visitors discover that his extraordinarily preserved brain was still present in the skull, and internal organs that were often removed when the ancient Egyptians began to artificially mummify bodies were clearly visible.

Information points at relevant locations in the 3D models were used to guide visitors, allowing them to discover the more significant findings. The morphology of his pelvis confirmed he was a male, and fusion lines on the head of the humerus and femur indicate that he was a young man – probably 18–21 years old when he died. These new scans also allowed us to visualise something more unexpected. A cut in the skin over his left shoulder blade and the apparent damage to the underlying bone had never been explained. The 3D visualisation of the CT scan shows that the cut on the shoulder blade goes beyond the skin and into the muscle tissue, and was probably caused by a sharp pointed object 1.5–2cm wide. The force of the blow was such that it also damaged the underlying scapula and shattered one of the ribs immediately below it, embedding bone fragments into his muscle tissue. The analysis of ancient human remains rarely reveals the cause of death but the cut on the shoulder blade and damage to the shoulder blade and rib are characteristic of a single penetrating wound. The weapon is likely to have pierced his left lung and may have damaged several surrounding blood vessels. There is no other evidence of trauma or defensive wounds, and the absence of any signs of healing, as well as the severity of the injuries, suggest that this can be considered the cause of death. Gebelein Man has been on display for many decades, but it is only now, through the use of science and modern technology, that we are beginning to understand more about him. Not only have we been able to discover that he was young when he died but, unexpectedly, he appears to have been stabbed in the back.

*The virtual autopsy, a collaboration with The Interactive Institute, will return to Room 64 in June 2014.*



The 3D visualisation of the CT scan of Gebelein Man (top) allowed visitors to virtually remove layers and observe the excellent preservation of the underlying muscles and skeleton, including a wound likely to have been fatal (bottom).

Exhibitions and galleries  
**Nesperennub travels to America and Asia**



Nesperennub in the ArtScience Museum installation of *Mummy: Secrets of the Tomb*.

Boat EA 35204 in the process of being packed for travel.

**Alex Garrett**

Museum Assistant, Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan, British Museum

*Mummy: Secrets of the Tomb* is a travelling exhibition from the British Museum. It has just completed a two-year world tour, displayed in Virginia, Brisbane, Mumbai and Singapore. The exhibition unlocks the 3,000-year-old secrets of the mummy of the priest Nesperennub through a 3D film exploring his body, based on CT-scan data, and an exhibition exploring priesthood and the rituals of mummification in ancient Egypt.

Getting objects to these venues can be quite a challenge. For Queensland Museum in Brisbane, we required multiple shipments by air including a cargo flight for larger crates. This was accompanied by several hours' journey by truck as both the first and second venues were not near airports that could accommodate the transport of these special objects. The longest shipment took 60 hours, accompanied by British Museum staff at all times. After acclimatisation and a customs inspection, the courier team got underway installing the objects in their new surroundings.

It was particularly exciting to be part of the project at the third venue, Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya in Mumbai. This exhibition was to be the first dedicated to ancient Egypt in India and offered a heady mix of red tape, climatic challenges and enthusiasm. Perhaps the most difficult object to install was a head of Amenhotep III, despite being a modern fibreglass replica. The replica was to be installed on a landing in between two flights of stairs, a task that took 7 hours! The crate was too large to be brought into the building, so we unpacked outside after closing, and then 20 men lifted the piece on poles, gradually raising the head up to the first floor, then step by step up the stairs.

The fourth and final venue, ArtScience Museum, Singapore, was different again. Being a purpose-built modern venue, the installation was extremely smooth. Objects were displayed against life-size graphics of Karnak and a line of colourful papyrus lined the route through one of the rooms. There were small hidden rooms, which we referred to as 'caves', where graphics of sabbats and the tomb-paintings of Nebamun covered the entire space, alluding to being inside a tomb. A delightful apple green case colour brought the calcite pieces to life, and spectacular lighting provided Nesperennub with his own tomb-like space lit by artificial stars.

Exhibitions and galleries  
**Packing a 12th Dynasty boat model for a 21st-century journey**



**Simon Prentice**, Museum Assistant

**Evan York**, Senior Museum Assistant  
 Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan, British Museum

Wooden model boats such as EA 35204, acquired in 1901, are among the most challenging objects that the British Museum lends for external exhibitions. As well as being extremely fragile, they are also shaped in a way which could almost have been devised as a means of making their safe transportation as challenging as possible. EA 35204 is composed of many separate elements, such as the mast, sails, rigging and crew, parts of which are composed of brittle textiles and slender carved wood. Additionally, the entire surface retains most of its original pigment and is vulnerable to damage from friction should the packing be either too loose or too firm.

The first step in the process of preparing such an object for travel is to have it properly assessed by a conservator, who will detect areas of vulnerability and consolidate parts which are loose or likely to become detached during travel. After conservation Museum Assistants will begin to plan the safest means of preparing the object for its journey. The crates which are most generally employed for the purpose are sturdily constructed, their exteriors designed to resist knocks, jolts and changes of climatic condition. Inside the crate, specialist foams and wrapping materials are utilised to provide the maximum protection for the object. It is an important part of the Museum Assistants' work to use their training and experience to judge which grade of foam would best suit each individual object. This primarily depends upon the weight and fragility of what is being packed. In the case of this boat, a medium-soft foam is most suitable – while a denser foam would prevent movement, it would be likely to transmit potentially damaging vibrations to the object. Every surface which is in contact with the boat is shielded with a friction-reducing barrier of a Teflon-coated wrapping material called Tyvek. The way in which the pads and layers of the packaging are arranged are intended to prevent movement of the object within the crate and to ensure that should the crate be subjected to unexpected jolts or movements its contents will be unharmed.

The most difficult challenge when packing an object such as a model boat is the lack of flat, undecorated surface space which can be used to 'brace' the object and prevent movement. The mast, rigging and crew need to be treated extremely carefully. Many of the crew, for example, wear tiny kilts which would be easily detached by any contact with the packaging material. For this reason the foam pads have to be carefully sculpted to fit between vulnerable areas. In recent years this boat has travelled to Stavanger, Tokyo, Fukuoka and Perth.







The collection  
**Safeguarding a body of evidence:  
 researching and conserving natural  
 mummies from medieval Sudan**

**Barbara Wills** (Organics Conservator, Department of Conservation and Scientific Research) and **Daniel Antoine** (Curator of Physical Anthropology, Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan)

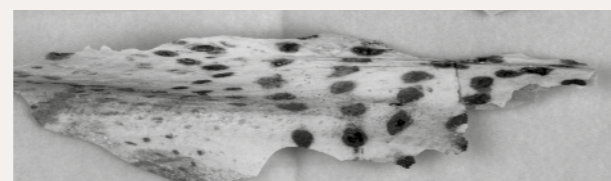
The Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan curates one of the largest and most important collections of ancient human remains in the British Museum, a large part of which was recovered during the Merowe Dam Archaeological Salvage Project. The construction of a new dam at the 4th Nile Cataract in modern Sudan resulted in a major international rescue campaign during which the Sudan Archaeological Research Society (SARS), in conjunction with the British Museum, excavated several burial sites from the Neolithic to medieval period (see previous page, excavating on Mis Island). A collection of over a thousand skeletal remains and naturally mummified bodies was generously donated to SARS by the National Corporation for Antiquities and Museums of Sudan. In turn, SARS donated the collection to the British Museum, where it is now curated. This collection is currently the focus of an extensive research programme that will allow us to gain a unique insight into the inhabitants of 4th Cataract region and should, over the coming years, reveal how changes in environment, culture, diet and living conditions may have had an impact on their biology and state of health. This remarkable collection includes over 40 mummies from three medieval Christian period sites (6th to 15th centuries AD) that were naturally preserved by the hot and arid conditions. Most of the 4th Cataract human remains are skeletonised and natural mummies are rare, with only a few bodies out of several hundred burials being preserved in such a way. The heat of the Sudanese desert and the arid burial conditions not only desiccated the bodies, it has helped preserve some of the materials and objects that were buried with them. These include some wonderful and rare examples of textiles, cordages, sheepskins (one fleece was dyed a bright indigo blue), leather amulets and simple jewellery.

Most of the mummified remains were very fragile, covered in soil and in desperate need of conservation. Too vulnerable to handle, they required further micro-excavation and stabilisation before being analysed. The mummies have, over the past two years, been the focus of an extensive conservation programme, the aim of which was to clean, stabilise and create appropriate mounts to protect the mummies for future generations. Interventive conservation materials, such as adhesives, resins or consolidants, were not used in order to avoid contaminating the remains in ways that may inhibit future analysis and research (e.g. stable isotope analysis to investigate past diet). Each mummy was carefully cleaned and placed on a stable baseboard made from lightweight Cellite 220 aluminium honeycomb panel. A 3–5cm thick sheet of Plastazote (expanded polyethylene foam, the softer LD33) was cut to fit the baseboard, wrapped with Tyvek hospital sheeting (spunbonded olefin fibre) and secured to the baseboard to provide a soft contact layer. Working from the centre outwards, the fragile human parts were stabilised by creating side and base supports using wedges of Plastazote. To support areas of great fragility, the Plastazote was covered with polyester wadding to provide cushioning and wrapped with Relic-wrap PTFE (a thin, very smooth and stable polytetrafluoroethylene film). Vulnerable detaching tissues were held in place by wrapping them with



PTFE tape. This flexible system of movable supports and pads allows for optimal support, and could be easily repositioned later if required. Boxes that can be slid beneath the baseboard were used to store any loose material. Finally, all mounted bodies were clearly labelled, recorded photographically and a detailed report written on each. The knowledge gained from developing these conservation techniques is being passed on to other conservators via publications and presentations. So far, four students and seven colleagues have had the opportunity to help investigate and stabilise the bodies. The analysis of the mummies is adding to the physical anthropology data derived from the skeletons and revealing aspects of the medieval period that do not usually survive in the archaeological record. This includes unique examples of medieval Christian tattoos and wonderful textiles. Unlike most Egyptian pharaonic and Roman mummies, the 4th Cataract mummies were preserved by chance and were not eviscerated. CT scans have shown that their internal organs, as well as the contents of their digestive tracts, are still present. By analysing their skin, hair and internal organs, we are now building a picture of the medieval period that goes beyond the data derived from skeletal remains and should provide extraordinary insights into body adornment, soft tissues pathology, diet and parasitology.

*The project was made possible through the support of the Clothworkers' Foundation*



Previous page:  
Excavations on  
Mis Island.

Carmen Vida  
Navarro, a student  
intern, working  
on one of the  
mummies.

Leather amulet on  
the leg of skeleton  
1110.

Infrared  
Reflectography of  
the tattoo from site  
4-M-142 revealing  
a dot pattern.

The collection  
**New studies of an important group  
 of bronze statues**

**John Taylor**  
 Curator, Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan

In a collaboration with the Musée du Louvre, the British Museum is engaged on a study of an important series of bronze statues dating from the early to middle 1st millennium BC, of which both museums possess examples. They are among the earliest instances of large-scale metal sculpture from Egypt made by the lost-wax process, but although the statues were brought from Egypt well over a hundred years ago it is only quite recently that their true significance has been realised. The study aims to show that these figures occupy a pivotal position in the history of early bronze casting technology, representing some of the highest achievements of Egyptian craftsmen and at the same time foreshadowing the glories of Greek and Roman metal sculpture.

The British Museum pieces include three standing female figures, representing women of very high status – probably God's Wives of Amun or members of their entourage – and two exceptionally large figures of the god Osiris. All of these appear to come from the temple of Karnak, where other statues of similar type were discovered in the early 19th century. By contrast, the remaining statue included in the study, representing a male official, is reported to have been found at Giza.

Analysis of body metals and core materials by Paul Craddock, Duncan Hook, Susan La Niece and Michela Spataro of the Department of Conservation and Scientific Research has revealed the rather varied composition of these pieces, pointing to an evolving experimental technology. At least one statue contained a very high proportion of lead in the bronze, perhaps a deliberate strategy to allow the molten metal to flow more easily in the mould. Radiography by Janet Lang and Janet Ambers has shown that constructional techniques also varied. The figures of simpler shape – the Osiris statues – were apparently cast mostly in one piece by the indirect lost-wax process, with smaller features such as sceptres added, while the more complex figures seem to be direct lost-wax castings and were made up of different parts, joined together either mechanically by mortise and tenon joints or by the technique of fusion welding. These same casting and welding techniques were adopted by Greek and later Roman metalworkers to produce the great bronze sculptures of the Classical world and, perhaps significantly, it is at about the time of the Paris and London statues' production that the technology is thought to have been transferred to Greece.

Painstaking cleaning by Fleur Shearman has also revealed new information about the original surface treatments of the British Museum statues. Surviving traces provide evidence of a variety of different techniques – gilding applied directly to the metal or hammered into channels to create 'filigree' designs, inlays of coloured glass and other materials, overlays of gesso with gilding, and polychromy by controlled patination of the body metal. On one of the female statues (EA 43372) cleaning and radiography has revealed extensive figured decoration on the surface, which was hidden under and within a thick layer of corrosion. Other imaging techniques are to be applied in an attempt to reconstruct the entire decorative scheme.

*A collaborative publication of the statues with contributions by specialists from the Musée du Louvre and the British Museum is in preparation.*



Statue of a God's  
Wife of Amun,  
22nd–25th  
Dynasties, about  
900–700 BC,  
EA 43373



## The collection

### Object in focus: a child's stripy sock from Antinoupolis (AD 200–400)



#### Elisabeth R O'Connell

Curator, Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan

Among the objects excavated at ancient Antinoupolis by John de Monins Johnson on behalf of the Egypt Exploration Fund in 1913/1914 was a child's colourful stripy sock (EA 53913). Unlike most textiles from Egypt in modern collections today, the finds from this EEF season were not from burials. Instead, they were recovered from the trash heaps of the ancient city, which was founded by the emperor Hadrian in AD 130. As such, they represent the kinds of worn-out textiles that were thrown away when they could no longer be repaired.

While Johnson's season at Antinoupolis is best known for thousands of papyrus fragments preserving an important corpus of Classical and early Christian literature together with a variety of everyday documents (such as legal texts, letters and receipts), the other objects from the same excavation have received little attention. As part of the British Museum research project *Antinoupolis at the British Museum*, almost a thousand objects distributed by the EEF have been identified in 20 international collections. In the British Museum itself, their distribution across four departments aptly demonstrates the range of Egyptian, Roman, Late Antique and early Islamic objects representing the ancient city. 75 objects have now been catalogued for publication by Amelia Dowler, Frances

Pritchard, St John Simpson, Ross Thomas, André Veldmeijer and myself, to be included in the Italian monograph series *Antinoupolis*, edited by the site's current director, Rosario Pintaudi.

In 2011, the eight British Museum textiles from Antinoupolis were studied by Frances Pritchard of the Whitworth Art Gallery, and conservators Anna Harrison and Pippa Cruickshank prepared and mounted them ahead of photography by David Agar.

Fortuitously, a project to research Roman period garments and accessories ([www.dressID.eu](http://www.dressID.eu)) provided the opportunity to radiocarbon date the stripy sock. As part of Antoine De Moor, Cécilia Fluck, Mark van Strydonck and Mathieu Boudin's study, samples were taken and sent to a Brussels laboratory, KIK-IRPA. Our stripy sock can now be dated to AD 200–400 with 95.4% probability.

Inter- and intra-institutional collaborations have paid off. Our once-discarded sock now has a second life as a well-loved (and oft-tweeted) Museum favourite. In September 2013, it had its debut on display in Bristol as a part of the touring exhibition *Roman Empire: Power and People*.

For more on *Antinoupolis at the British Museum*, search Research projects at [britishmuseum.org/antinoupolis](http://britishmuseum.org/antinoupolis)



Panorama of ancient Antinoupolis 1913/14. (Johnson negatives 8.7 and 8.8) © Griffith Institute, University of Oxford.

Child's stripy sock (EA 53913) conserved by Anna Harrison.

## The collection

### Phallic figurines: changing museum attitudes



Two phallic amulets from the Secretum, from around the 4th century BC or later (?). Height of each 4cm. EA 90380 and 90393.

#### Richard Parkinson

Professor of Egyptology, University of Oxford.  
Former Curator, Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan.

Egyptian objects have sometimes had an intriguing history within the British Museum. When the cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum were discovered in the 18th century, people were startled by their explicit depictions of sexual imagery. Soon the Italian authorities decided to keep all such 'obscene' items apart in the museum at Naples, and the same thing was done in the British Museum. In 1865, the Museum established its own centralised 'Secretum' (secret museum) after the donation of a collection of hundreds of phallic objects from various cultures by George Witt (1804–1869). Witt had made his fortune in Australia and then returned to London and collected antiquities, including these 'Symbols of the early Worship of Mankind'. Access to view such items was limited so that vulnerable members of society (women, children and the lower classes) would not be corrupted by such obscenities. This arrangement also allowed gentlemen with special permission to see them all conveniently grouped together, regardless of date or culture.

These antiquities included ancient Egyptian objects, such as small faience phallic figurines. These were later known to Egyptology as Naukratic figures, because they were first discovered at the Greek settlement of Naukratis in the western Delta. Early Egyptologists considered them to be late, decadent and unworthy of Egyptian culture, but they have been found in Egyptian contexts on numerous sites, and there is a long tradition of ithyphallic figures and phallic votive offerings in Egyptian art. The figures often have a hole for suspension at the back of the neck, and so were probably worn as amulets, perhaps to ensure potency, but probably to ward off the evil eye. The difficulties of

interpretation have been hampered by modern reluctance to display and publish such material. The provenance is often unrecorded, although examples have been discovered in the cultic areas of the necropolis at Saqqara, where they were placed as votive offerings. Many have apparently humorous aspects, with enormous phalli wrapped around the men's necks and the like. The two figures shown here still have the red label with 'W' for 'Witt' on them. Other pieces in this collection seem to be modern forgeries, suggesting that Egyptian dealers were aware of European interest in explicit representations, and catered for this market.

The Museum's Secretum no longer exists, and these Egyptian figurines were transferred to the Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan in the second half of the 20th century. The history of the Secretum shows the ways in which representations of sex in have been controlled by academic institutions, but it also shows the beginning of a tradition of studying human sexuality in a scientific cross-cultural manner, which led to the work of the German physician and sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld (1868–1935). Because of this, I included it and these figures in a book, *A Little Gay History: Desire and Diversity Across the World*, that was launched as part of a Museum-wide project on LGBT history in summer 2013.

For more information, visit [britishmuseum.org/samesexdesireandgenderidentity](http://britishmuseum.org/samesexdesireandgenderidentity)



The collection  
**Container-statues from Ancient Egypt**

**Anders Bettum**  
 Research Fellowship, Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan

Last summer, the new fellowship scheme gave me the opportunity to assess and document the British Museum's amazing collection of container-statues, also known as Ptah-Sokar-Osiris figures. The statues show a mummified god standing on an oblong, rectangular base which like the statue itself is decorated and inscribed with hieroglyphic texts. They are made of wood and usually painted in vivid colours, the finest ones often with certain details highlighted in gold foil. What sets the container-statues apart from other types of Egyptian statuary is the object hidden within. All container-statues have a cavity, either in the base or within the statue itself, where a sacred object was concealed.

Being popular collectors' items, the container-statues are common in museum and private collections all around the world. In most cases, the object within the statue is long gone, either sold off separately on the 19th-century antiquities market, or the statues were pried open and the contents destroyed by modern treasure hunters. But the 'treasures' within the statues were rarely objects of monetary value. Rather, they were ritual objects, charged with the power of the gods, a power that the Egyptians believed could awaken the dead to new life in the netherworld.

The container-statues were used for private elite burials from the 19th Dynasty (c. 1295–1186 BC) to the Greco-Roman era. For the earliest types, the object within the statue was a scroll of papyrus, containing religious texts such as portions from the Book of the Dead. These texts provided a 'road map' for the dead on the journey through the netherworld, and also contributed to the salvation of the dead by associating them with various gods. In the 22nd Dynasty (c. 945–720 BC), the papyrus was replaced by ritual items whose function still has not been fully understood.

The container-statue of Horendjitef (EA9736) is a rare example of a statue of the late type which still has its mysterious contents intact. The object, cleverly 'buried' in a cavity shaped as a mummy and covered by a lid shaped as a sarcophagus, appears to be a lump of grass, wrapped in linen and covered with black pitch like a human mummy. A disappointment to any treasure hunter, but sprouting plants played an important role in certain funerary rituals, as they were associated with Osiris, the King of the Netherworld, and

the sun-god Re, the lord of all life. This may be one clue to understand these objects, but the full significance of these so-called corn-mummies, not to mention the ritual act of producing one, still elude us.

During the three months of my fellowship, 120 container-statues were gathered from various storage rooms and display cases. In addition came 170 fragments and associated objects. Every piece has now been thoroughly documented, with images and descriptions freely available on the Museum's online collection database.

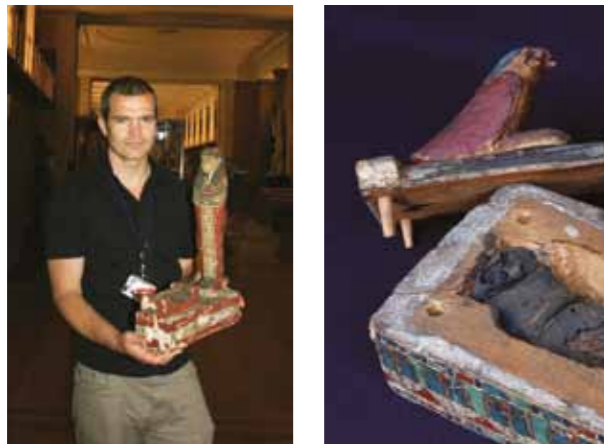
*Fellowships are made possible through the support of the Patrons of the Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan.*



Postdoctoral fellow Anders Bettum in Room 1 where the container statue of Panakht (EA 9749) is on display.

The object inside the base of Horendjitef's statue (EA 9736) appears to be a mummified lump of grass. The cavity was carved as the outline of a human mummy, and the cover shaped and decorated as the lid of a sarcophagus.

The container statue of Horendjitef (EA 9736), one of the few statues in the collection where the hidden object still is intact.



The collection  
**The textual corpus from Wadi Sarga: a new study**

**Jennifer Cromwell**  
 Research Fellowship, Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan

The British Museum collection includes almost 2,800 objects from the Coptic monastery of Apa Thomas at Wadi Sarga, a valley approximately 25km south of Asyut. The site was excavated in a single season before the First World War and no archaeological work has been undertaken at the site since. As a result, the Museum's vast holdings, which also include the original excavation notes and photographs of the excavator Reginald Campbell Thompson, are of great importance in reconstructing life in the monastery during its main period of occupation – the late 6th to 8th centuries AD.

However, less than 15% of the corpus, which includes objects made from pottery, glass, metals, wood, stone, bone and textiles, has been published. My three-month fellowship in the Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan allowed me to focus on and document the written evidence from the site. Some 385 texts written on pieces of pottery (potsherds, referred to as ostraca, which were the standard writing medium at the site), limestone stelae, papyrus (now in the British Library), and wall graffiti were published in 1922, but over 1,000 additional items bear text of some type.

I photographed the entire textual corpus from Wadi Sarga – a total of 1,441 objects now available on the British Museum collection online. The unpublished material includes texts of the same type as those published in 1922 (receipts, accounts and letters), but a range of previously unknown text types are also represented. Among the ostraca are school texts, providing evidence for the education of monks at the site. These include alphabetaries and practice letters, some of which include doodles, as the pupil grew bored of his classes.

The single largest category of unpublished texts is labels from large storage jars (amphorae), several of which bear the name of the monastery. Unlike the other ostraca, which represent the reuse of pottery at the site, the text on these amphorae was part of the original function of the vessel. This group will be studied in conjunction with Jane Faiers, who is currently preparing for publication a study of the monastery's ceramic and glass artefacts. My research forms part of the Wadi Sarga Research Project, led by Elisabeth O'Connell, which seeks to make available the unpublished evidence from the site, and in so doing will raise the profile of Wadi Sarga in the world of Egyptian monastic and early Christian studies.

*Fellowships are made possible through the support of the Patrons of the Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan. For more on Wadi Sarga, visit [britishmuseum.org/wadisarga](http://britishmuseum.org/wadisarga)*

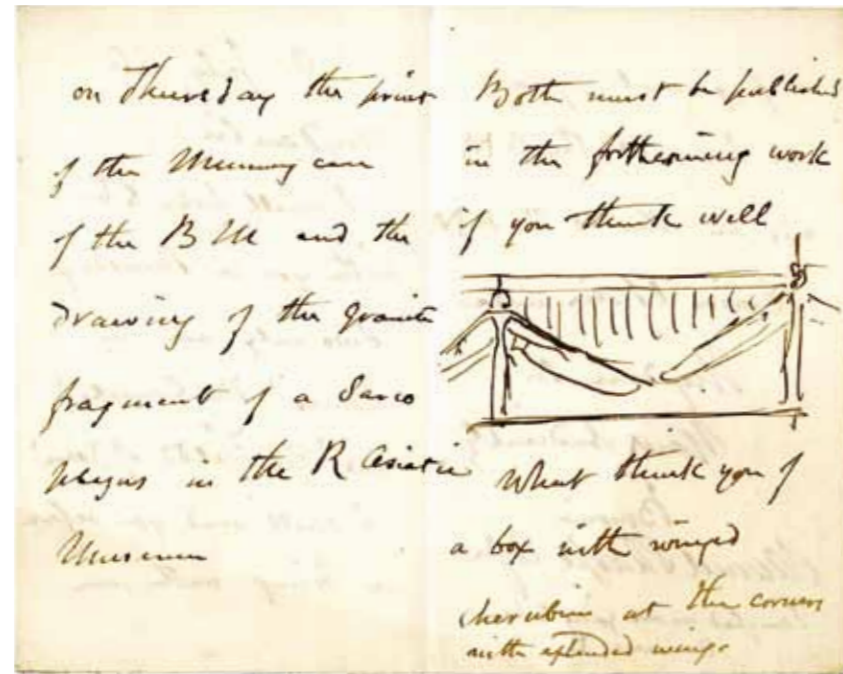


Pottery ostracon from Wadi Sarga, with doodle by a pupil. EA 70766.



The collection

## The archive of the Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan, 2012–2013: travellers, antiquarians and early curators



Letter from Joseph Bonomi to Samuel Sharpe, 31 July 1866, pages 2, 3.

### Patricia Usick

Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan

Each year the number of archival inquiries rises, and the last few years have seen a growing interest in the history of collections and the history of museum display.

Cataloguing and researching is ongoing, but new material continues to arrive. Thanks to the generosity of his son Stephen, we received the personal papers of T G H James, former Keeper of the Department. We are also occasionally able to purchase archive material which relates to Egypt or Sudan at the British Museum.

Archival inquiries often prompt further research. One such inquiry from the Archaeological Museum of Bologna concerned the late 18th-century correspondence, in Italian, between a little-known English antiquary, Thomas Ford Hill, and the Danish scholar Georg Zoëga, who published an important work on Egyptian obelisks and was interested in decipherment. Hill had sent Zoëga carefully drawn copies of some of the earliest inscribed antiquities to arrive in the British Museum from Egypt, and further research into Hill's life provided a unique view of their contemporary reception and the state of knowledge at that time. Although Hill's speculations on decipherment and ancient Egyptian religion and art remain rooted in 18th-century antiquarianism and classical literature, they mark a watershed in the future study of Egyptology, looking towards a more scientific approach based on accurate observation.

Following the Department's purchase, some years ago, of two stelae from the Pratt family of Ryston, Norfolk, we presently have on loan the journals and album of drawings made by Edward Roger Pratt on his 1834 visit to Egypt. Pratt kept a travel journal and made drawings and watercolours of the ancient monuments at sites along the Nile, and also, more unusually, took a number of squeezes (paper impressions of reliefs and inscriptions) in the tombs and temples. The journal has now been transcribed and the album of drawings photographed, and, with the permission of the family, we hope to be able to publish it in the near future.

The Museum recently acquired a fascinating collection of letters from Joseph Bonomi (1796–1878) to his friend and colleague Samuel Sharpe (1799–1881). Both men were important figures in early Egyptology with close connections to the British Museum. Their friendship and interests are reflected in this lively, scholarly, and intimate correspondence of 1857–1878. Bonomi's contribution to Egyptology and his long and productive career have not been sufficiently appreciated. Bonomi, artist and sculptor, Egyptologist curator of Sir John Soane's Museum, and Sharpe, Egyptologist and biblical scholar, first met in 1837 when Sharpe was publishing inscriptions from the British Museum. They developed a close friendship while collaborating on the Egyptian Rooms at the Crystal Palace, and numerous biblical and Egyptian publications, including the alabaster sarcophagus of Seti I, which the architect and collector John Soane had purchased when the British Museum Trustees refused it. Bonomi had spent nine years working in Egypt in the company of many of the eminent scholar-travellers of the day. On his return, he worked in the British Museum arranging exhibits, and designed the first hieroglyphic font produced in England for Samuel Birch, Keeper of Oriental Antiquities. The letters touch on many of the issues of the day – damage to Egyptian monuments, Schliemann's discovery of Troy, excavations in Egypt, and discuss new discoveries and ideas. Despite tragedy in Bonomi's private life, his humorous observations and cheerful disposition, evident in this correspondence, bring a seminal figure to life.

In June 2013, the British Museum purchased a manuscript written by Sir Wallis Budge, a former Keeper of the Department of Egyptian and Assyrian Antiquities. *The Divine Origin of the Craft of the Herbalist* was published in 1927 by the Society of Herbalists and the manuscript had remained in their strongbox ever since. The Society still exists and is now known as The Herb Society. Budge's manuscript is extensively annotated and is a remarkably comprehensive survey based on his wide knowledge of the use of herbs in the ancient world.

For more on British Museum archives relating to Egypt and Sudan, visit [britishmuseum.org/egyptarchive](http://britishmuseum.org/egyptarchive)

The collection

## An interesting fake

### Emily Taylor

Museum Assistant, Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan

The store rooms behind the scenes in the Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan hold a multitude of treasures, but possibly none as curious as the object now numbered as EA 75191. It is a codex of ten animal skin leaves bound in a wood and textile cover, onto which numerous fragmented objects have been attached. Registered in the year 2000, though no-one is entirely sure how or when it arrived in the Museum, EA 75191 is a strange composite fake – an assemblage of objects, ancient and modern. Inauthentic as an ancient Nile valley object – a fake containing ancient elements – EA 75191 represents a problem of taxonomy.

The recent discovery of a description of similar objects sold in the *medina* by a man called Hufuta at Antinoupolis in 1913–1914 by the Egypt Exploration Fund's John de Monins Johnson potentially gives us a date and a location of its production:

*'Most papyrologists are familiar with his work, fewer know the forger himself. Hufuta, an uneducated fellah of the Fayum, formerly of Hawara but now living and plying his trade in the Medina, is an amusing and not wholly unattractive character... His methods are roughly threefold. Blank sheets of papyrus from the mounds, cut into uniform pages and inscribed in red or black ink with a sequence of meaningless signs resembling somewhat pothooks and hangers, are sewn together and bound in thicker sheets of papyrus which are covered with mummy-cloth. The second method is similar but relies on skin in imitation of vellum as its medium, this being bound in skin with strips of mummy cloth or even with an elaborate arrangement of copper corners linked with wire and beads. By his third method, perhaps a more deceptive one, numerous tiny fragments of genuine inscribed papyrus, too small to find a sale, are glued together till they form a sheet, a strange literary mosaic in which the lines are discontinuous and Ptolemaic rubs shoulders with Byzantine, and this is then tightly rolled. The smell of the oil in which his productions are soaked before being buried is often a sufficient test for those who do not happen to be scholars.'*

*The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 1, pp. 168–181

While Johnson's other methods describe more well-known and documented methods of forging papyrus in Egypt, the second description includes the skin pages of EA 75191, the unusual pseudo-script, the copper corners, wire and beads and burial prior to sale. EA 75191 is certainly a more elaborate version of such an object.



The cover of the codex is decorated with a number of fragmented objects. Beneath the dirt and corrosion, closer and comparative visual analysis reveals a crude hybrid figure assembled from elements of copper-alloy statues of Osiris and Isis, a Phoenician glass bead, a faience symplegma group figure of Harpocrates and a courtesan, as well as a red and white dynastic textile and a Fatimid period bone figurine – a collection in its own right!

Recent X-ray fluorescence (XRF) testing of the bronzes and glass elements on the object concluded that the components were mostly ancient in origin. So, who would acquire such a strange assemblage? A piece of tourist art manufactured in response to the demand for late antique manuscripts at the turn of the century, or a magical book made for occult oriented travellers of the fin de siècle?



Caption caption  
caption caption

Codex (EA 75191), possibly early 20th century AD.



The collection  
**The Russegger Atlas**



A botanical plate after conservation (left) and with infrared photography (right).

Detail of a hand-coloured cross-section of Lebanon.

**Susanne Woodhouse**

Ann el-Mokadem Librarian, Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan

Between 1841 and 1849 Joseph von Russegger published his magnum opus, *Reisen in Europa, Asien und Africa, mit besonderer Rücksicht auf die naturwissenschaftlichen Verhältnisse der betreffenden Länder unternommen in den Jahren 1835 bis 1841* ('Travels in Europe, Asia and Africa undertaken between 1835 and 1841, with special regard to the natural history and geology in these countries'), which consists of four volumes and one atlas.

The two sets of this now-rare publication which were housed in the British Museum libraries are today in its sister institutions, the Natural History Museum and the British Library, and the recent donation of the atlas to the library of the Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan fills a considerable gap in the collection.

This mid-19th-century atlas, full of coloured geological maps and cross-sections, lithographs of scenic views, new species of fish, plants and insects, is a typical product of its time. It owes its existence to the industrialisation which was implemented in Egypt by Viceroy Mehmet Ali (1769–1849). The maps are either hand coloured or coloured lithographs – depending on the intricacy of the patterns, range and distinctness of colours – and they perfectly document the advancement of the process of printing colour geological maps, which had started in 1820. It was only towards the end of the 19th century that printed colour geological maps were superior to hand-coloured ones (and cheaper to produce).

Mehmet Ali instigated a survey of the economic mineral deposits in his country and an investigation into their possible exploitation. Apart from this economic aspect, the undertaking was also to survey the country's natural history and general geology.

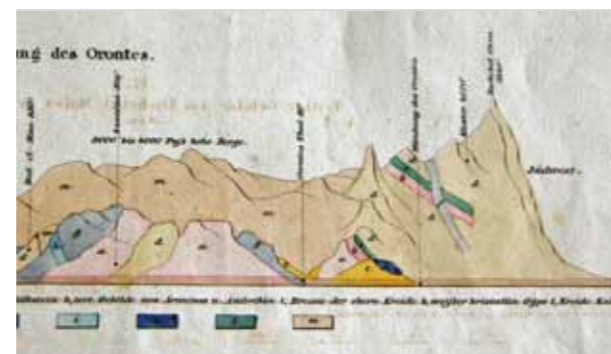
The expedition was headed by the Austrian mining authority and geologist Joseph von Russegger (1802–1863) and accompanied by Theodor Kotschy (1813–1866), who surveyed flora and fauna. Between 1836 and 1838 the resources of Cilicia, Syria, Egypt and the Sudan were prospected, and a

huge collection of plants and animals was amassed. On his way back, Russegger visited the most important mines in the Near East and Europe. After an absence of five years he arrived in Vienna in 1841 where he immediately started publishing the results of the expedition and his subsequent travels.

The Russegger Atlas Project was initiated in order to preserve this copy for future generations, as well as to make it digitally available via the British Museum website, and it is being realised through the cooperation with the Department of Conservation and Scientific Research and the Department of Photography and Imaging.

The atlas is printed on paper whose quality ranges from poor to good and in some instances the very high acid content of the paper has had adverse effects over the past 160 years. In some cases de-acidifying and other conservation methods could not significantly improve the visibility of fine lines. However, it is possible to reverse this aging effect with the help of infrared photography which will be used for the digitisation of the atlas. Once the tears and blemishes in the plates have been repaired, they will be digitally photographed. In the future, the hard copy of the atlas will be accessible for researchers visiting the Museum, while the digital version will be made accessible online.

*The atlas was donated by the Institute for Bioarchaeology. The library of the Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan is generously supported by Ahmed and Ann el-Mokadem.*



The collection  
**A new catalogue of Middle Kingdom stelae**



Stela EA 223 of the royal carpenter Gebu, probably from Abydos and datable to the mid-13th Dynasty.

**Marcel Marée**

Curator, Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan

The end of 2013 saw the publication of the first fascicle of a new two-volume catalogue of the British Museum's collection of Egyptian stelae: D Franke, ed. by M Marée, *Egyptian Stelae in the British Museum from the 13th to 17th Dynasties*, I [1]: *Descriptions*, London (British Museum Press). The Museum owns the largest such collection outside Egypt, and this publication describes the scenes and inscriptions on

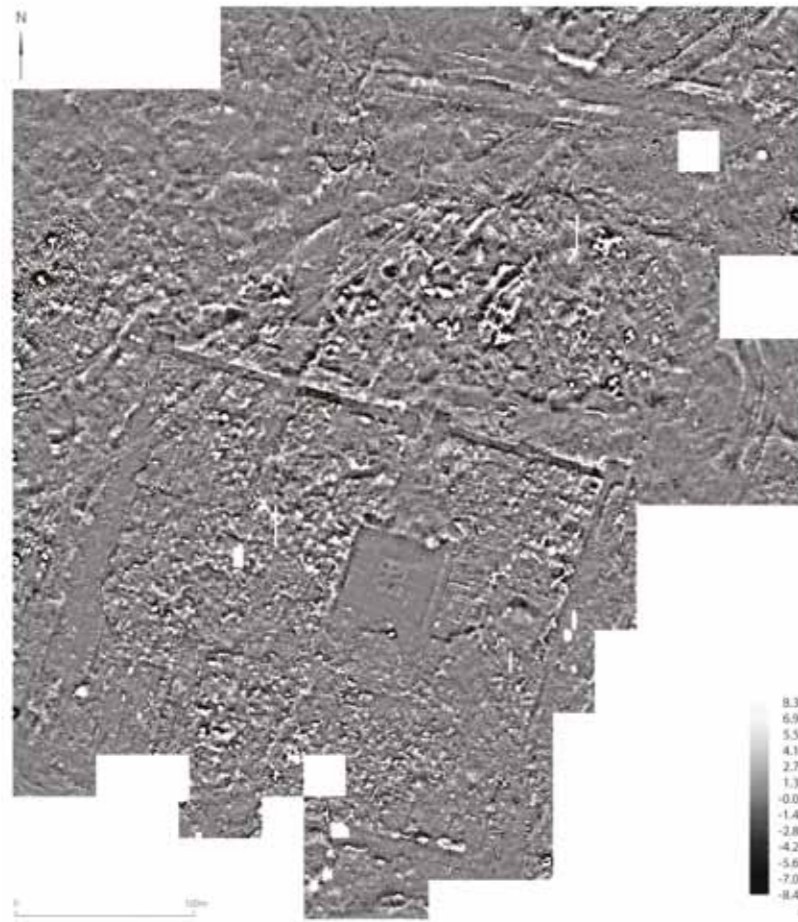
42 stelae, with full translations, textual notes and explanatory diagrams. Each catalogue entry includes a commentary on phraseology, formulae and titles, the importance of each stela in its historical and social context, and aspects of epigraphy and iconography. Each stela is illustrated with a full-page plate – in colour where their pigments are well preserved. The book stands as a lasting testament to the scholarship of Detlef Franke, whose untimely death prevented him from seeing the manuscript finished and published.







In Egypt  
Wrapping up at Kom Firin



Previous page:  
A damp, foggy  
morning excavating  
the 26th Dynasty  
town at Kom Firin.

Magnetometry  
survey of Kom  
Firin, showing the  
Ramesside fort. In  
collaboration with  
the University of  
Akron.

**Neal Spencer**  
Keeper, Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan

Mud, more mud and endless piles of ceramic sherds... Kom Firin was in many ways typical of excavation sites in the Nile Delta. In terms of our research, however, the most exciting moment happened over a flickering laptop screen back at the dig house one humid Thursday evening. Ann Donkin (University of Akron) had been undertaking a magnetometry survey of the ancient town mound. I was hoping this would help us understand the layout of the city, which now appears as a moonscape of archaeological debris, with nothing more than a scatter of column bases marking the original location of a Ramesside temple. As the computer projected the processed data, creating a fuzzy black-and-white 'map' of buried features, we realised that the temple lay within a large enclosure, embellished with corner towers and an imposing gateway. Kom Firin was one of the new foundations built in the reign of Ramesses II, to thwart the threat – or perceived threat – from Libya.

Months of further excavation and analyses ensued, across nine autumn seasons. This allowed us to confirm the chronology of the site, but also to track changes in the type of architecture and objects used by the ancient inhabitants. Kom Firin was founded around 1270 BC, but flourished for up to 2,000 years after that.

In an area of Saite housing and small-scale industry, including a pottery workshop, we could see how the introduction of a new form of domestic architecture transformed the urban landscape, with houses and other

buildings constructed as stand-alone structures set on brick platforms. Those living in the Saite town, where a vast new temple enclosure had been built, were using very different forms of pottery than earlier inhabitants, but also different objects. Gone were the small fired clay figurines of cobras, ubiquitous in the Ramesside and Third Intermediate Period levels, with horse figurines now preferred. Faience vessels seem to have become particularly fashionable in later times.

Placing the ancient town in its environmental context is important. A programme of drill cores undertaken in collaboration with Judith Bunbury at the University of Cambridge revealed the town was founded upon an island in a (now dried up) Nile branch, while zoological analyses by Louise Bertini suggest the population relied much more on pig meat than at other contemporary settlements.

The last few years have included two study seasons – processing and interpreting the mass of data – followed by writing up and inking in drawings. The final monograph is now available (Kom Firin II: The Urban Fabric and Landscape. British Museum Research Publication 192). This includes a chapter on our experiences living and working in a small village in the early 21st century, and the thoughts and attitudes of the villagers to the ancient remains in their midst. We must not forget that our research takes place within a modern, living, environment that shapes us and the project.

*The fieldwork at Kom Firin was made possible through the generous support of Ahmed el-Mokadem. For more information, visit [britishmuseum.org/komfirin](http://britishmuseum.org/komfirin)*

In Egypt  
Supporting Egypt's next generation  
of Egyptologists

**Neal Spencer**  
Keeper of Ancient Egypt and Sudan

British Museum fieldwork in Egypt, and collaboration with the Ministry of Antiquities, has continued throughout the revolutions and resulting instability since January 2011. Neil MacGregor, Director of the British Museum, and I visited Egypt in late October, to mark eight years of supporting young curators and archaeologists from across Egypt through the International Training Programme, at a reception generously hosted by the British Ambassador, James Watt. We took the opportunity to view the impressive Conservation Centre at the Grand Egyptian Museum, and the National Museum of Egyptian Civilisation, and to discuss future collaborations. Our short stay concluded with a visit to the Bibliotheca Alexandrina to hear about their research projects and archives relating to modern Egypt.



Visiting the Grand Egyptian Museum Conservation Centre. Photo courtesy of GEM-CC.

Former International Training Programme participants (left to right) Omar Abouzaïd (MSA, Luxor), Heba Allah Ibrahim (MSA Prehistory, Cairo), Mohamed Ali Abd el-Hakim (MSA Beheira) and Moamen Saad (MSA Luxor) with His Excellency James Watt (British Ambassador to Egypt).

Conducting a geophysical survey at Naukratis.



In Egypt  
The Naukratis Fieldwork project:  
2012 and 2013



**Ross Thomas**  
Naukratis Project Curator, Department of Greece and Rome

Ancient Naukratis was an important hub for trade and cross-cultural exchange in the western Nile Delta, established in the late 7th century BC as a base for Greek and eastern Mediterranean traders, long before the foundation of Alexandria. Previous fieldwork by Petrie and Gardner (1884–1886), Hogarth (1899–1903) and Coulson and Leonard (1970s–1980s) concentrated on the central areas of the town. Their pioneering, but incomplete, work is currently being re-evaluated as part of the British Museum's Naukratis Project, led by Alexandra Villing.

New fieldwork at the site was initiated in 2012, and two seasons have been undertaken with permission from the Ministry of State for Antiquities. Our objectives were to investigate the full extent of the city and its development, its urban structures, palaeo-landscape and position in the Nile Delta's system of waterways. An extensive programme of archaeological and topographical (RTK GPS) survey, geophysical prospection (fluxgate gradiometer), geological investigation (auger drilling) and limited excavation was conducted. This showed that the ancient site once covered a size of over 52 hectares, much larger than the area excavated 130 years ago. Numerous previously unknown features were discovered, including over 70 mostly probably domestic buildings, two likely canal systems, elements of public and religious architecture, old field systems and parts of the river bank with harbour facilities and magazines. All this confirms the existence of rich, untouched archaeological remains in many parts of the site. Moreover, geophysical and geological investigations made it possible to securely locate the course of the Canopic branch of the Nile to the west of the site. This river was clearly navigable for regular sea-going ships, enabling the settlement to become a major international port, with both mercantile and ritual harbours. We were able to create a map of the site that integrates and contextualises old and new fieldwork with real-world topographic data, which can serve as a reliable basis for future research. The two field seasons clearly show that earlier assumptions of the site being archaeologically 'exhausted' are grossly exaggerated, and our collaborative project promises further discoveries concerning the Greek and Egyptian sacred and administrative precincts, urban quarters, workshop and harbour areas, through future fieldwork planned at the site.

*For more on Naukratis, visit [britishmuseum.org/naukratis](http://britishmuseum.org/naukratis). The fieldwork has been funded by the British Academy (Reckitt Fund) and the Honor Frost Foundation, supplementing core funding for the Naukratis Project from the Leverhulme Trust and The Shelby White – Leon Levy Program for Archaeological Publications, and Christian Levett and the Mougins Museum of Classical Art.*



In Egypt  
Fieldwork at Hagr Edfu and Elkab



Exploring the approach to the 'pyramid' tomb at Hagr Edfu.

**Marcel Marée**  
Curator, Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan

Each year the British Museum works in the cemeteries of Hagr Edfu and Elkab, cleaning the rock-cut tombs, documenting their architecture and decoration, and surveying their wider settings.

The epigraphic and archaeological work at Hagr Edfu is now nearing completion. The most important tomb there belonged to Sataimau, who served as a lector priest in the temple of Horus during the reign of Amenhotep I. The scenes and texts of the richly decorated offering chapel offer major insights into the cult topography and social history of Edfu at the dawn of the New Kingdom. A larger tomb lies further north, but its precise date and owner remain to be determined, because the walls of its chapel were never decorated. Over the following centuries, countless visitors scratched images and texts into these walls, as well as leaving a series of hieratic ink inscriptions of Thutmose and Ramesside date. All these have now been recorded and they reveal that the chapel became a shrine serving the cult of Horus and Hathor. The team has also explored a tomb marked by the remains of a mud-brick superstructure, perhaps a pyramid – to date no evidence has emerged to trace its history back before the Late Period. Similar uncertainty surrounds the date of a 'tomb' once entered through a pylon, with a massive rock-cut corridor descending to a room that is now flooded by ground water. In Late Antique times, the rock tombs of Hagr Edfu were reused for secondary burials and habitation, evidenced notably by Coptic inscriptions and exterior mud-brick structures. People of all times have climbed the hill that dominates the scene, leaving drawings and inscriptions at

the top. The oldest of these dates back to the Old Kingdom, but an 18th Dynasty visitor left by far the most remarkable souvenir – a block statue carved from the living rock, which faces the setting sun.

Of the decorated tombs investigated at Elkab on the East Bank, the earliest dates to the 6th Dynasty, as revealed by the painted inscription on its doorway, but the owner's identity remains to be determined. Next in line comes the tomb of Senwosret, a local governor of the early 12th Dynasty. The charming scenes in his tomb chapel, in part of unusual content, were a major source of inspiration for the decoration of the nearby tomb of the governor Sobeknakht II, almost 400 years later. The artist responsible for the latter, who is known to us by name, left his mark on various other tombs in the cemetery, and also across the Nile at Hierakonpolis. With one exception in Thebes, these are the only painted tombs from the late 16th to 17th Dynasties, and their documentation was long overdue. The tomb of Sobeknakht contains a unique historical inscription, previously missed, which recounts how a raiding coalition of Kushites and other southern peoples entered Egypt but suffered defeat at Elkab on their way back. Renseneb and Bebi, two contemporaries of Sobeknakht who belonged to the military elite, had their tombs more modestly decorated. Renseneb usurped a pillared tomb from the end of the Old Kingdom, and added an inscription that traces his wife's descent to two queens of the 13th Dynasty. Further research and documentation has been carried out in the early 18th Dynasty tombs, the most famous of which belonged to Ahmose Son-of-Ibana, who fought against the Hyksos with King Ahmose. Much of our current work focuses on the tomb of Ahmose-Pennekhet, of which the final decoration was commissioned by a descendant named 'Amenhotep



View of the tomb chapel of Sataimau at Hagr Edfu.

The cemetery of Elkab. The tombs from the 6th–17th Dynasties lie straight ahead, those of the early 18th Dynasty on the far right.



The tomb chapel of Ahmose-Pennekhet, viewed from the ancient breach through the ceiling towards the front. The rocks in the foreground include relief fragments from the offering niche. Many of the smaller fragments in the background derive from other tombs.

called Hapu', a contemporary of Amenhotep III. Part of the tomb chapel collapsed when the ceiling was breached by a shaft from an adjacent tomb, and one of our tasks is to make a full epigraphic record of the scattered fragments. In modern times, the chapel has been used as a storeroom for finds from other tombs, and these too are currently being documented.

*Fieldwork at Hagr Edfu and Elkab is made possible through the support of the Patrons of the Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan, particularly Ahmed el-Mokadem. Further support from the Yale Egyptological Institute (2008, 2009) and the American Research Center in Egypt/USAID (2010, 2012) is also gratefully acknowledged.*





## In Sudan A first look at the 5th Cataract

**Derek Welsby**  
Curator, Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan

The Merowe Dam at the 4th Nile Cataract in northern Sudan, completed in 2008, marked the start of a new programme of dam building on the Middle Nile. In this hyper-arid zone, where almost all human settlement has been focused on the banks of the river, dams pose a particular threat to the region's heritage. In response to the current threat, Sudan's National Corporation for Antiquities and Museums (NCAM) launched an appeal in 2012 at the British Museum for missions to work in the affected areas. A survey and excavation project was commenced in January 2013 at the 5th Cataract as its contribution to these efforts.

In the aftermath of the detailed surveys at the 4th Cataract between 1996 and 2008, the 5th Cataract is the least known reach of the Nile between the Blue and White Nile confluence and the Mediterranean. It is an important area, lying a little to the south of the frontier of Egypt's New Kingdom Empire at Kurgus, while in the medieval period its status is unclear. Did it lie within the Kingdom of Makuria or its southern neighbour Alodia? Certainly by the later medieval period it presumably was under the writ of the king of el-Abwab – about which we know next to nothing. A concession was made for a 20km reach of the river spanning the cataract, on both banks and on the islands in its stream, among which is the large island of el-Usheir and that of Karni. During the first season the team worked mainly on the east bank of the river recording in detail a number of cemeteries and one settlement in an attempt to gain an overview of the nature and preservation of the archaeological remains. Two settlements and a cemetery were also studied on el-Usheir. A large number of archaeological sites are known on the left bank from the survey undertaken by NCAM colleagues in 2001, while many more are visible on Google Earth throughout the concession.

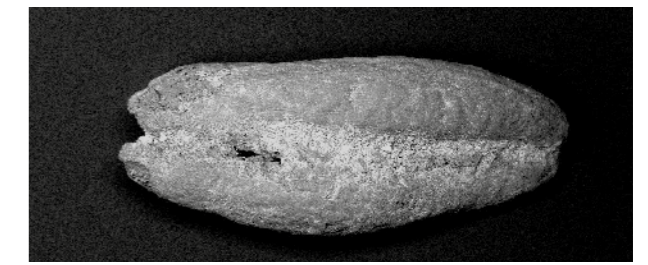
The archaeological potential of the region was highlighted by the discovery of a cemetery designated Site RB27. This consisted of approximately 60 stone tumuli occupying a prominent north-south ridge a little over a kilometre from the Nile. Although a few had been recently robbed, most of the tumuli were well preserved. Many were very similar in form to examples in the 4th Cataract which are datable to the period of the Kerma culture (2500–1450 BC). Their form, together with a few sherds of Kerma pottery, suggests the possibility of cultural links between this region and the Kingdom of Kush based at Kerma, sub-Saharan Africa's first urban civilisation, if not indicating that the borders of that kingdom extended much further upstream than hitherto considered. The status of the dam project at the 5th Cataract is currently uncertain but if it goes ahead detailed surveys and large scale excavations of a range of sites must be accorded a high priority and will contribute much to our understanding of the link between the histories of northern and central Sudan.

Survey in the Fifth Cataract region.

Barley grains from an ashy deposit in house E13.3.4 at Amara West.

*The fieldwork at the 5th Cataract is a co-operation between the British Museum and the Sudan Archaeological Research Society, with the support of the Institute for Bioarchaeology.*

## In Sudan Plant use in ancient and modern Sudan



**Philippa Ryan**  
Department of Conservation and Scientific Research

A British Museum research project has been focusing on reconstructing the lived experience of Egyptian and indigenous communities at Amara West (c. 1300–800 BC), during a period of increasing aridity in Upper Nubia, and I have been studying the charred macro-remains (seeds and fruits) and phytoliths. Charred seeds provide information about a wide range of taxa, while phytoliths (opaline silica casts of plant cells) preserve information about plant parts that rarely survive charring. Analysis is progressing on the charcoal as well as the wooden objects (Caroline Cartwright) and textile fragments, principally from the tombs (Marei Hacke).

So far, charred seed and phytolith analyses have focused on samples from a large extramural villa (E12.10), and smaller adjoining housing within the walled town (houses E13.3-N and E13.3-S). Larger houses had storage areas while, in contrast, it is possible that the smaller dwellings were provided with cereals from the large magazines found across the site, especially in the 19th Dynasty. Crops included emmer wheat (*Triticum dicoccum*), hulled six-row barley (*Hordeum vulgare*), lentils (*Lens culinaris*), melons (*Cucumis melo*) and flax (*Linum usitatissimum*). Wild fruits included the sycamore fig (*Ficus sycomorus*) and doum palm (*Hyphaene thebaica*).

Future work, as part of an Arts & Humanities Research Council-funded project *Sustainability and subsistence systems in a changing Sudan* will investigate whether there are temporal changes in plant diet at ancient Amara West, and, if so, whether they may be connected to the environmental shifts identified in local and regional geological studies. This project, started in November 2013, aims to seek a better understanding of the interaction between people and the Nile Valley ecosystem in northern Sudan, and how present-day and ancient peoples have found solutions for coping with a risky environment. Fieldwork will include ethnographic study in traditional farming villages on the island of Ernetta and in nearby Nile bank villages. This research will investigate the characteristics of traditional Nubian plant exploitation, set within the framework of other food resources (such as fish or wild plants) and in what ways these have been impacted by new farming methods, population movements, dam and road building.

The subsistence data from present-day Ernetta and ancient Amara West will be placed in a broader overview of what we know about changing crop choices over time in northern Sudan. This research hopes to create a long-term perspective of adaptive solutions and how these are relevant to the future.

*For more on Amara West, visit [britishmuseum.org/AmaraWest](http://britishmuseum.org/AmaraWest). The project has been funded by The Leverhulme Trust (2010–2013). The AHRC project is in collaboration with Katherine Homewood, Department of Anthropology at UCL.*



In Sudan  
**Dangeil 2012: sacred rams revealed**

Battered ram fleece with traces of paint and plaster remaining.

Ram statue discovered at Soba East. Originally from the Amun temple at el-Hassa and now in the gardens of the Sudan National Museum, Khartoum.

Reconstruction of colour decoration on Dangeil rams. Drawing: Claire Thorne.



**Julie Anderson**  
 Curator, Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan

Just upstream of the 5th Nile Cataract, Dangeil is approximately 350km north of Khartoum. Excavations continued within the precinct of the 1st-century AD Amun temple, constructed by the Kushite rulers Amanitore and Natakamani, where we concentrated upon the processional way leading, from the entrance into the temenos enclosure, up to the temple itself. Although the origin of the name Dangeil means 'broken red brick' in Nubian and much of the site is covered with debris, there was little visible on the surface in this area. At first, much of the excavation involved the removal of wind-laid debris with few inclusions, but remains of great interest gradually emerged.

Alongside the sandstone pavement that formed the processional route, we uncovered a rectangular red brick, white-plastered pedestal. It was set back a little over a metre from the processional axis. Statues of rams, the avatar of Amun, are usually associated with temples dedicated to this god, and this brick plinth likely supported one such sculpture in the past. A dense scatter of pieces of yellow sandstone was associated with – and overlapped – the pedestal and pavement. These had to be the remains of the figure that once sat upon the plinth.

The fragments were small and many were badly damaged, with few visible remains of the original surface, but careful examination revealed more. Several pieces of carved ram fleece were recognised, followed by the convex curves and intricacies of a ram's legs and eyes. One large piece of fleece displayed evidence of having been repeatedly struck with a blunt tool indicating that the statue had been intentionally destroyed. This is consistent with damage discovered within the temple itself, where altars had been smashed and robber pits dug through floors by individuals unknown, prior to setting the structure alight.

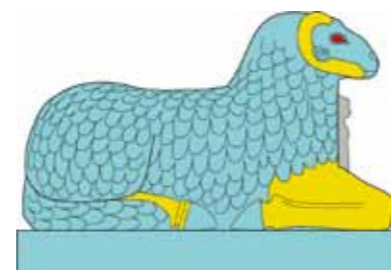
The statue had been made of sandstone covered with a layer of white lime plaster which may have served to hide imperfections in the stone. Remains of coloured pigments applied to the plaster were discovered on several fragments, and enabled us to visualise the original polychrome appearance of the statues. The colours are matte in appearance rather than glossy, suggesting the paint applied was tempera, but it is as yet uncertain as to the material

used for binding the pigments. The fleece was carved in a scale pattern, and traces of plaster and the copper-silica compound known as Egyptian blue still remained, particularly in the grooves between the scales. Red paint, likely from a haematite ochre, was preserved on the eyes – it has been suggested that the red colour depicts the reflection of light that may be seen to glint off a live animal's eyes, particularly at night. The knees were bent suggesting a couchant pose, and like the horns they were yellow, a colour again derived from an ochre, possibly goethite.

The result is somewhat surprising; these rams were very brightly coloured. They sat upon yellow plinths, had blue heads and fleece, red eyes, and yellow horns and legs. Their dramatic appearance will have contrasted sharply with the surrounding landscape.

Many details need further study, and there are more fragments still to be excavated. We can usefully compare our statue with the late Kushite rams erected at the Amun temple in el-Hassa, just upstream of Dangeil. One of these rams ended up south of Khartoum at the medieval capital of Soba East, perhaps because it so impressed the Christians of the period. It, along with another ram from el-Hassa, is now in the Sudan National Museum. The Dangeil evidence for colour is unique, and now we have the challenge of reconstructing these figures, first in digital form and then one day, hopefully, as real statues to line the processional way into the remains of the temple.

*The fieldwork at Dangeil is undertaken in collaboration with the National Corporation of Antiquities & Museums (Sudan) and with the generous support of Archaeology4All and the Institute for Bioarchaeology. Follow the excavations on Twitter #Dangeil @Amesemi and find out more at [britishmuseum.org/dangeil](http://britishmuseum.org/dangeil)*



In Sudan  
**Sketching at Kurgus**



Drawings of the Hagr el-Merwa, Kurgus (Claire Thorne)

**Claire Thorne**  
 Illustrator, Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan

At the end of the working day I stay on site at Kurgus and attempt a watercolour painting of the sweeping desert landscape. It is remote with few landmarks except for the tremendous Hagr el-Merwa, which can be seen in all directions for miles around. This outcrop was regarded as sacred by the local Nubian tribes who carved and hammered representations of animals, and when the conquering Egyptians arrived at the beginning of the 18th Dynasty, they adapted this rock as a frontier stela that marked the limit of sovereign Egyptian rule.

To make an accurate representational sketch and capture an evocative light proved to be more of a challenge than expected. The heat of the day is still enough to all but dry the watercolour on the brush before it reaches the paper and the wind starts up, causing a low level sand storm that makes the graphite pencil scratch rather than glide across the surface of the paper. In the spring of 2012, I was inspired by David Hockney's exhibition at the Royal Academy and in particular his iPad drawings, prompting me to buy a device and experiment with the app *Brushes*. It is similar to use but less comprehensive than Photoshop, with layers, a variety of brushes and a rubber tool that can be used to expose colour and details through up to six layers.

It proved great for making quick representations of the hazy overlapping colours of the landscape and sky before the sun sets. One difficulty is of too much light from the immense sky reflecting down onto the surface of the screen so there is much angling of the screen and shading with cardboard to see the results while balancing cross-legged on a rock. In the end I combined iPad, pencil and watercolours to produce an impression of the landscape to take home and work up into a more finished composition.

To give an idea of scale and remaining truthful to the scene in front of me, I could choose between the men herding their camels, the pick-up truck whizzing past in a cloud of dust, or the solitary Sudanese man in the distance with a metal detector. How up to date should I be in this instance? Thinking of the great David Roberts and his legacy of original drawings, watercolours and lithographs and their misty idealism, I opted for the camels.



It is exciting to explore and practise on an iPad because it is new and there are many possibilities. But I also enjoy getting my hands dirty with paint, ink and an old-fashioned mapping-pen as it feels more intuitive. With watercolour painting, once you have put paint to paper there is no going back, but with the iPad and computer-based artwork, the process is very different as it is possible to continually make changes and flip back and forth in 'history'. For the time being it is good to mix the new and the old.

*Fieldwork at Kurgus is directed by Vivian Davies, funded by the British Museum and Sudan Archaeological Research Society.*





In the UK  
**The Amara West Bioarchaeology  
 Field School**

**Mohamed Saad**  
 National Corporation for Antiquities and Museums (Sudan)

Bioarchaeology is very underrepresented in Sudan and has not been carried out by Sudanese researchers until very recently, as there is no formal training at universities in Sudan. At present, I am the only Sudanese specialist carrying out studies of archaeological human remains at the National Corporation for Antiquities and Museums (NCAM).

This has been made possible with the current Field School project, which commenced with a workshop for curators and archaeologists in November 2011, led by Michaela Binder (Durham University), who leads research in the cemeteries at Amara West. I was then selected as the archaeologist to receive excavation training in 2012 and 2013, particularly in how to deal with co-mingled remains and recover as much information as possible in excavation. Thereafter, I have worked on ageing and sexing skeletons, and seeking evidence of trauma and disease in each individual.

The final component of the project is training in the British Museum Bioarchaeology Laboratory, working on the assemblages from Amara West, but also receiving the support and advice of Daniel Antoine, the curator for physical anthropology. It was also an opportunity to visit the collections at the Royal College of Surgeons, and see how human remains are stored and displayed at the British Museum.

This experience has allowed me to advise NCAM colleagues on human remains excavations, and to analyse skeletal assemblages from excavations on the Blue Nile (Roseires dam concession), the Upper Atbara and the Meroitic cemetery at Berber. We are currently planning a dedicated storeroom and workspace for the skeletal collections at NCAM.

*The Amara West Bioarchaeology Field School is made possible with the support of the Institute for Bioarchaeology.*

Mohamed Saad with Afaf Wahby (human remains specialist, Ministry of State for Antiquities, Egypt) in the bioarchaeology laboratory at the British Museum.

Anna with blue-painted jar in the Manchester Museum stores (photograph S. Devine)

In the UK  
**From Bloomsbury to Manchester:  
 18 months as a trainee curator**



**Anna Garnett**  
 Future Curator

In June 2012 I moved from Liverpool to London to start an exciting new trainee curator position on the British Museum's *Future Curators* programme, in which trainees spend 6 months gaining specialist curatorial skills at the British Museum, followed by 12 months working closely with a curator in a UK partner institution. The programme combines formal training sessions on subjects such as ethics, museum outreach, and object handling, alongside on-the-job training with collections most suited to the trainee's previous experience and interests – which for me is Egypt and Sudan. Moving to London during summer 2012 meant that I was also able to enjoy the Diamond Jubilee and Olympic celebrations as an added bonus! Based in the Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan, I worked with Derek Welsby to document parts of the collection excavated in the Northern Dongola Reach Survey, including helping to prepare a new display case in the gallery of Egypt, Sudan and Africa. I also answered public enquiries as Duty Curator, helped install the *Pharaoh: King of Egypt* exhibition, and even design the Egypt-themed Christmas decorations in the Great Court!

Manchester's Egyptian and Sudanese collection comprises over 16,000 objects; many of which were excavated by W M F Petrie on behalf of the Egypt Exploration Fund. I've been working alongside Campbell Price (Curator of Egypt and Sudan) during my year-long placement at Manchester and had the opportunity to contribute to Manchester's new *Ancient Worlds* galleries – label writing, case design and object installation. This included re-planning the Egyptian pottery store (ceramics being one of my research interests), improving storage conditions and object documentation, finding time to research the collection and increase accessibility through object handling sessions, schools and families sessions, and community engagement events. The staff at Manchester Museum are a close-knit team and I was quickly made to feel welcome by the whole museum. Manchester is such a culturally vibrant city and it has been enjoyable to experience the wide range of museums and art galleries here, as well as being ideally positioned to make visits to other museum collections in the North West and beyond. The opportunity to be a 'Future Curator' allowed me to realise a lifelong ambition while gaining invaluable practical experience, colleagues and friends which I hope will form a solid basis for a future career in the museum sector.

*Future Curators is funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund's Skills for the Future programme*



In the UK  
**Egypt and Sudan on the International  
 Training Programme 2013**

Participants on the International Training Programme visiting conservation studios at the British Museum.



**Claire Messenger and Shezza Rashwan**  
 International Training Programme

The International Training Programme (ITP) has its history in a 2004 training programme developed for early-career curators in Egypt. Widely acknowledged as a success, the Museum saw an opportunity to do more and 2006 saw the first ITP which has now grown to take in participants from all over the world but is still managed and co-ordinated from the Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan.

This year the Museum, in collaboration with eight UK partner museums, hosted 21 museum and heritage professionals from 10 countries from 12 August to 21 September 2013. Five colleagues from Egypt and Sudan participated this year:

- Miral Taha Ismail Abdelrahman, Curator, Antiquities Museum, Bibliotheca Alexandrina. The Marie-Louise von Motesiczky Charitable Trust Fellow.
- Hadeer Ahmed Mohamed Belal, Curator, Coptic Museum, Cairo. Supported by the John S Cohen Foundation.
- Mohamed Ahmed Mohamed Mohamed, Curator, Museum of Islamic Art, Cairo. Supported by the Barakat Trust.
- Amani Nour Eldaim Mohamed Masoud, Senior Curator, National Corporation for Antiquities and Museums, Sudan. The Marie-Louise von Motesiczky Charitable Trust Fellow.
- Elgazafi Yousif Eshag Abdallah, Senior Curator, National Corporation for Antiquities and Museums, Sudan

For 50% of the programme, participants from all 10 countries collaborated on group sessions to explore collections management, storage and documentation, exhibitions and galleries, conservation and scientific research, national and international loans, learning, audiences and volunteers, fundraising, income generation and commercial programmes, leadership, strategy, management and communication, and archaeology in the UK.

*'Each museum was a lesson – we learnt something from it, because they all have different ways of interpreting and displaying their collections.'*  
 Miral Taha Ismail (Egypt)

The remainder of their time was dedicated to sessions in relevant curatorial departments, including behind-the-scenes tours and discussions with curators, a session on the practicalities of developing a major new exhibition on mummies, time for library research and hands-on training with museum assistants. The participants were particularly pleased by the exposure to practical solutions for storage, handling and display that they could implement at their own institutions.

The ITP aims to disseminate UK best practice to colleagues from abroad and offers the Museum an ideal opportunity to network with colleagues and explore future collaboration. Crucially though, it is the chance for participants to develop and nurture their own cross-cultural links with fellow museum professionals that makes the ITP so unique.

*'My participation in the ITP was not only useful for the amount of information which we gained from lectures, workshops and visits to other museums in UK but also it helped me to touch many cultures and civilisations all over the world, through the good relationships with my colleagues and friends from other countries.'*

Elgazafi Yousif (Sudan)

*'A highlight of the programme was the opportunity to work with the participants as they developed their final presentations, with one-on-one or small-group sessions allowing individual strengths and imaginations to emerge. It was pleasing to see the diversity of themes covered in the presentations: Egyptian water jars: quenching the thirst across eras, Music in Ancient Egypt, Ideas and people, Unite: a story of Christ on the Cross in Islamic art and Kaskara – The Sword of Ali Dinar, Last Sultan of Darfur. It was also instructive to see the perspectives that emerged from the participants' own cultural connections to a theme – from the benefits ("this exhibition should help teach tolerance") to the problems ("in my country, they would not find this interesting!") On the night of the presentations, the participants showed a great ability to engage with their audience, their enthusiasm bringing the displays to life.'*

Julie Anderson, Curator, Ancient Egypt and Sudan  
 Anna Stevens, Project Curator, Amara West, Ancient Egypt and Sudan

In the UK  
**The 2013 Annual Egyptology Colloquium**



Part of the ancient town of Amara West in Upper Nubia, under excavation by the British Museum.

***Nubia in the New Kingdom: lived experience, pharaonic control and indigenous traditions***

**Anna Stevens**

Amara West Project Curator, Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan

Over two days in July the Department hosted its annual Egyptological colloquium, which this year focused upon research on the New Kingdom Egyptian settlements in Nubia (northern Sudan). Although long known to archaeologists, there has been a burgeoning of interest in these sites in recent years, and this timely conference brought together British Museum staff with colleagues from the National Corporation of Antiquities and Museums of Sudan and other international institutions to share the results of their research. The lectures covered a number of key themes – *Landscape, resources and environmental change; The urban environment; Crossing boundaries: artefacts and people; Formal pharaonic architecture, epigraphy and literature; and Cultural expressions in the funerary sphere*. What soon emerged was the enormous scope that remains for archaeology to provide more nuanced histories of these sites, and to give greater voice to the people who were living both inside these Egyptian towns, and on their peripheries.

In addition to the public colloquium, two seminars were held within the department on the themes *Founding new settlements in Nubia: an integrated approach and Ceramic fabrics in New Kingdom Nubia*. Invited speakers gave short, informal presentations with a view to prompting group discussion and developing ideas for future research and collaboration. An important component of the ceramics workshop was the opportunity to study and share fabric samples.

The colloquium was held jointly with the 2013 Raymond and Beverly Sackler Distinguished Lecture in Egyptology, this year delivered by the former Keeper of the Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan, Vivian Davies, on the topic of *Nubia in the New Kingdom: the Egyptians at Kurgus*. Working from a series of inscriptions on a large quartzite outcrop at Kurgus, deep in Upper Nubia, Vivian explored the individuals behind Egypt's military expeditions into Kush under Tuthmosis I and III. It showcased the depth of historical data that can be teased out from the briefest of inscriptions.

*A publication of the conference proceedings is currently in preparation.*



In the UK  
**British Museum/  
 Glasgow University textile project**

Anna Harrison discussing cord EA 78737 with Glasgow student Melissa Bolin.



Facsimile of ostrakon 12216 (Egyptian Museum, Cairo), by Faten Kamel.

**Anna Harrison**  
 Conservator, Department of Conservation and Scientific Research  
**Julie Anderson**  
 Curator, Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan

As part of the ongoing conservation of objects excavated from the medieval site of Kulubnarti, Sudan, a project initiated in 2005 when the collection arrived in the Museum, we have embarked on a partnership with the Centre for Textile Conservation and Technical Art History, University of Glasgow. This project enabled conservation students to conserve 15 previously untreated archaeological textiles from Kulubnarti under the supervision of Sarah Foskett, First Year Conservation Tutor, Glasgow University, and the authors.

The purpose of the project was twofold – first, to conserve the textiles, making them accessible for study and to provide suitable storage, and second, to assist the students in developing practical conservation, observation and documentation skills.

To start the project, Anna Harrison went to Glasgow, met the students, and presented several archaeological textile projects with which she has been involved, as well a conservation treatment she had carried out specifically on a Kulubnarti textile. Each student received a cord or braid fragment and a woven piece of textile upon which to work and each piece was discussed individually with them. The textiles date to the 6th century AD and are themselves very small, and largely made of wool and cotton. The conservation treatments primarily consisted of light cleaning, opening the textile where suitable and creating supports or mounts for storage. Sarah Foskett noted that the programme ‘adds, complements and challenges what [the students] have learnt up to that point and as such is very thought provoking intellectually and beneficial practically’.

In students’ written reflections they describe how the project has highlighted the influence of ethical considerations, the benefits of planning ahead and demanded a different thought process from their previous textile conservation training experience. They also recognised that many aspects of the project will help develop and inform their future work. Second-year student Francisca Lucero from Chile was also very appreciative of the opportunity and described her project as an ‘enlightening and challenging experience’.

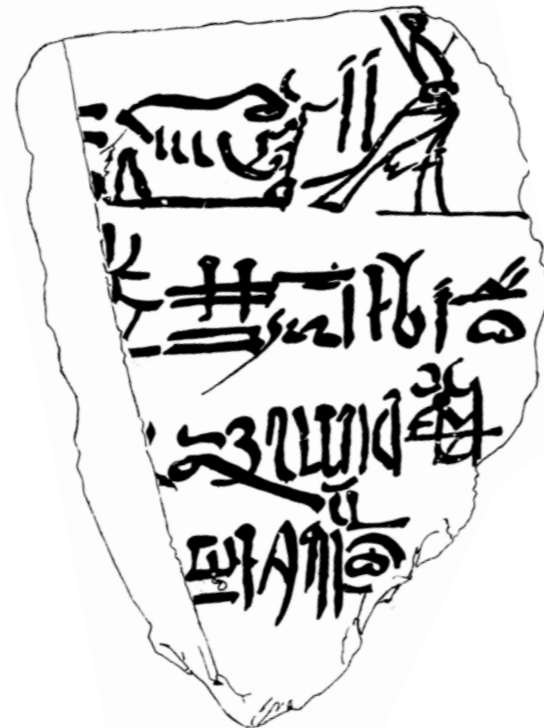
The conserved fragments were returned to the British Museum in June 2013. This was followed by an evaluation of the conserved material, the accompanying documentation and the programme itself by Sarah, Anna and Julie. The next cohort of students will work on textiles in 2014.

In the UK  
**Research fellowship:  
 studying Mond ostraca**

**Faten Kamel**  
 Curator, Egyptian Museum

I work as a curator in the Ostraca and Papyri section of the Egyptian Museum, also undertaking a Master thesis at Cairo University, on ‘A Collection of Hieratic Ostraca from Mond’s Excavation at Sheikh Abd el-Gurna in the Egyptian Museum [philological and palaeographical Study]’, supervised by Rob Demarée. This group of ostraca – limestone fragments bearing inked texts – were excavated in 1903–1905, and some feature names of known individuals from Deir el-Medina, the settlement housing those who built and decorated the royal tombs. They range in date from the 18th Dynasty through the Ramesside period, and only a few have been previously studied. The ostraca include literary texts, notably a fragment of the book of Kemit, and a copy of the Teaching of Amenemhat. Others bear a letter written from one scribe to another, a eulogy of Ramesses III and hymns to the solar god and Amun. Alongside translating the texts, I am making epigraphic copies and studying the palaeography of signs.

Obtaining a scholarship to the Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan allowed me to consult the latest publications in the excellent library, look at the collection, but especially work with curators who specialise in ancient Egyptian texts, such as Richard Parkinson, but also colleagues I met when attending *Scribbling Through History*, a conference on ancient graffiti at the University of Oxford.



Further information

**Further resources**

To search the collection database and download free high-resolution images, visit [britishmuseum.org/research](http://britishmuseum.org/research)

Information on visiting the Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan’s collection, library and archive, click on Departments under ‘About us’ at [britishmuseum.org](http://britishmuseum.org)

For *British Museum Studies in Ancient Egypt and Sudan*, the free online journal presenting latest research including fieldwork, click on Publications at [britishmuseum.org/research](http://britishmuseum.org/research)

For membership of the Sudan Archaeological Research Society, and online access to *Sudan & Nubia* journal, visit [sudarchrs.org.uk](http://sudarchrs.org.uk)

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**Dates for your diary**

**Colloquium: Recent Archaeological Fieldwork in Sudan – Sudan Archaeological Research Society**  
 19 May 2014

British Museum exhibition  
**Ancient lives, new discoveries**  
 22 May – 30 November 2014

New gallery display  
**The Raymond and Beverly Sackler Gallery of Early Egypt (Room 64)**  
 June 2014

**The Raymond and Beverly Sackler Distinguished Lecture in Egyptology and the Annual Egyptological Colloquium**  
 28–29 July 2014

**Kirwan Memorial Lecture, Sudan Archaeological Research Society**  
 29 September 2014







Front cover: Bronze statue of a high official, from Giza. 22nd Dynasty, c. 945–715 BC. EA 22784.



### On tour

In 2013, over 4,500 British Museum objects could be seen in exhibitions outside London. These are a few objects which will be seen over the next 12 months:

Limestone head of Akhenaten, Amarna Period.

*Discovering Tutankhamun*

Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, 24 July – 26 December 2014

Mummy portrait of a woman, late 1st century AD.

*Roman Empire: Power and People*

Norwich Castle Museum and Art Gallery,

1 February – 27 April 2014

The Herbert Museum and Art Gallery, Coventry,

17 May – 31 August 2014

Leeds City Museum, 20 September 2014 – 4 January 2015

Painted limestone relief from Deir el-Bersheh, 12th dynasty, c. 1850BC (left).

*Sesostris III, the conquering of pharaoh*

Museum of Fine Arts, Lille, 9 October 2014 – 26 January 2015



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