

HOTEP

The newsletter of the Southampton Ancient Egypt Society

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Meeting reviews

Saturday 15th February 2025. Zoom

'Amenhotep III's Mansion of Millions of Years in Thebes', by Angus Graham

Angus is a Senior Lecturer/Associate Professor in Department of Archaeology and Ancient History at Uppsala University, Sweden. Since 2002, he has directed interdisciplinary research in the Egyptian Nile Valley combining archaeology with earth sciences and Egyptology in order to (re)construct past land- and waterscapes and interpret human-environment dynamics.



Photo Sara Arnold

The location of Amenhotep III's Mansion of Millions of Years is exceptional. Situated in the present-day Nile floodplain while all other Mansions of Millions of Years were built on the lower desert edge, the temple's position has puzzled Egyptologists and contrasting hypotheses have suggested possible architectural considerations behind the choice of this site. This talk will present the geoarchaeological survey that took place in and around the temple with the aim of understanding the rationale behind its location. The talk will also place his Mansion of Millions of Years within its wider context of Amenhotep III's huge programme of building in the Theban region in honour of 'his father' Amun-Re.

The Theban Harbours & Waters Survey (THaWS) aims include

- reconstructing the position of the Nile over the last 5000 years in the Theban region
- understanding the extent of the technological ability of the ancient Egyptians to manipulate the floodplain Through monumental building programmes and interconnecting service waterways
- understanding the religious and environmental factors that contributed to the location of temples and settlements
- considering social structures and organisation for delivering materials and monuments, and facilitating festivals, as well as the movement of people across the area

Angus firstly situated the scope of the project around the Nile and surrounding lakes and waterways (Lake Victoria to the Mediterranean) and the contributing water sources: the Blue Nile plus the Atbara River, the white Nile and monsoon rains from Lake Tanas, beginning of the Blue Nile from Tis Issat (Blue Nile Falls). The volume of Nile discharge during April/May/June is mainly from the White Nile. This is the base flow, along with a bit of the Blue Nile. Then, during the monsoonal rains there is a big discharge from the Blue Nile. There is little sediment brought down from the White Nile with most coming from the Blue Nile and Atabara. The peak flow is in the summer months and the percentage varies of the different contributions.

There has also been a lot of geophysics investigation done to fill in the gaps between coring. For example Kris Strutt from the University of Southampton has carried out electrical resistivity tomography. Once the core and geophysics data were merged this produced really useful results and built up a wedge-shaped image. However the interpretation of this is not straightforward. The flood basin is very old as is the channel and has not moved in the same way as the area closer to the modern Nile. There is not a steady migration. Instead there is a second channel, which is not a canal as originally suggested, but naturally produced by 'partial avulsion', *not* a lateral migration of the Nile. At times very large floods have broken down the banks and a new course of the channel has started, so it is more of a split from the Nile. The channel goes in front of the colossal statues and this means that it *could* have facilitated festivals and the delivery of goods and building materials.

So, is this channel represented in TT49 and was there really a T-shaped basin? Did a channel actually exist or is it an idealised image? Perhaps, rather than a T-shaped basin it was a platform. Perhaps sphinx-lined, where they could greet festival boats.

Delivery of building materials to the Ramesseum.

Ken Kitchen (1993) did work with ostraca showing details of cargoes to prove that there were 'delivery docks'. Deliveries of sandstone were actually quite modest and it would have been small vessels that delivered them.

Ken suggested plans for cargo-loading on boats and it is thought that the crews themselves would have been responsible for loading and unloading, rather than dedicated employees.

The ostraca give names of different captains and varying dimensions of blocks but loads seem to have been 20 tons or less which meant that the boats didn't need much draught. A comparison would be 19th C cargo boats which had a draught of only one metre and yet carried a lot more than those loads shown on the ostraca. If we assume that boats needed the water to be 1.5 metres above the lowest level this would prevent delivery via the secondary channel from mid-June to mid-July.

The Mansion of Millions of Years of Amenhotep III is dedicated to his father, Amun. Why did he build his temple there and what was he hoping to achieve?

All the rest of the temples are at the desert's edge but the Mansion is in the floodplain. Was it inundated or 'high and dry'? There are two hypotheses:

- 1) That the colossi represent the god Ptah Tatenen, who embodied the primeval mound so the temple represented the 'exalted earth' surrounded by the infinite expanse of water from which the earth was created
- 2) BUT surely the huge mud brick temple walls *must* have remained dry?



The New Kingdom floodplain was 3.2-3.5 metres below present day levels which means that the two statues would have been even more imposing. The colossi were delivered as a pair and if each barge carried a single statue at 720 tons they were probably delivered late July to early Nov.

Drawing together all the information from investigations the work suggests that there was a sandy mound protruding from the desert edge before the New Kingdom. By the 18th dynasty the mud had risen rapidly and by the Roman period the flood plain looked similar to the one we see today. As the floodplain has risen the base of the river will also have risen so the Memnon statues may have been surrounded by the inundation by the Roman period but *not* when they were constructed. There was marshland around the substrate so was the temple complex a T-shape or was it rectangular into the original marshland?

Ramesses also built pylons at Karnak. He demolished the existing temples to build the open air colonnade.

On the south side of his temple he built on a monumental scale. At Birket el-Hubeil early geophysics surveys suggested that there was a mirror image on the other bank, “a kind of festival showground created for great pageants of kingship” (Barry Kemp 2006:277).

Was there a huge ceremonial lake? In fact vast volumes of earth *have* been taken out to produce a lake. The dimensions are unknown but there are spoil heaps from this construction. Geophysics work in the area is unfortunately incomplete but at Malkata, at the western spoil mounds of Birket Habu, geophysics has been done and shows spoil tip lines.

What we are starting to see, and have seen since the 1930s, is that there are houses extending from the temples creating a new occupation layer.

Farmers would have needed the services of a ferryman so there were considerations for using the land.



Inundation to the east of Medinet Habu, West Bank, Thebes

Conclusions

- The identification of the channel furthers our understanding of the geomorphological processes of the Nile Valley.
- The channel would have connected the two sides of the Nile by water as a huge temple complex dedicated to the cult of Amun-Ra.
- It gives new insight into processions, delivery of building materials, access to and restriction of temple space, and the movement across the floodplain by farmers and population.

Saturday 1st March. Face-to-face

(13.30 for a start at 14.00 GMT) at Itchen College, Bitterne, Southampton

'*Ramesses III, King of Egypt*' by Aidan Dodson



Ramesses III—often dubbed the “last great pharaoh”—lived and ruled during the first half of the twelfth century BC, a tumultuous time that saw the almost complete overthrow of established order in the eastern Mediterranean. Among Ramesses’s achievements was the preservation of Egypt as a nation-state in the face of external assault. However, his reign also saw economic challenges and increasing dissatisfaction, which culminated in the king’s own assassination.

Aidan Dodson is honorary Professor of Egyptology at the University of Bristol, where he has taught since 1996. A graduate of Liverpool and Cambridge Universities, he

was awarded his PhD in 1995 and was elected a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of London in 2003. He was Chairman of the Egypt Exploration Society from 2011 to 2016, and is the author of some thirty books, including *Ramesses III, King of Egypt: his life and afterlife*, published by the American University in Cairo Press in 2019.



On a bright and sunny day in Southampton, Aidan joined 25 members of SAES and gave a fascinating talk on Ramesses III.

Ramesses III, whose throne name was Usermaatre Meriamun (meaning *The Ma'at of Ra is strong, beloved of Amun*), was the son of Setnakhte, a king with a short reign about whom little is known. Ramesses III aspired to emulate the great pharaoh Ramesses II and is believed to have originated from Heliopolis in northern Egypt.



Ramesses III in Luxor Museum.
Photo Sara Arnold

Ramesses III reigned for approximately 30 years. His most significant monuments are in Thebes, but evidence of him can also be found on cartouches in middle Egypt and reliefs at the Khonsu and Bark Temples in Karnak; although reliefs survive in the Luxor temple and the Mut complex of Karnak, they are in poor condition with much of the decoration lost. During his reign, Buhen served as administrative headquarters. This significant settlement on the west bank, just below the Second Cataract (now in Sudan), mentions Ramesses III in the burial of a viceroy of Nubia.

A fine statue of him is housed in the Luxor Museum, along with a stela showing him offering to Amun.



Stela of Ramesses III in Luxor Museum.
Photo Sara Arnold

Around 1200 BCE, there was a major movement of people. Aidan believes this was due to an invasion of Egypt by the Libyans and people of the Mediterranean. One crucial relief on the temple walls of Medinet Habu relates to the Libyan campaign and mentions the 'Sea Peoples.' These battle campaigns were described in much more detail than in the reliefs at Karnak, suggesting a second Libyan war. Although scholars are unsure how this fits in the

chronology, Ramesses III defeated the enemies and created a buffer zone between Egypt and the Mediterranean. In the 1950s, some scholars believed the depictions on the temple walls were fictitious and duplicated from elsewhere, but Aidan sees no reason to doubt that Ramesses III led these campaigns.

Medinet Habu is the site of his main mortuary temple, and emulates the nearby Ramesseum, the mortuary temple of Ramesses II. The reliefs in Medinet Habu include his family, but many have blank spaces where names would normally be expected. Some names of his sons were filled in during the reign of Ramesses VI, but the names of his daughters were never inscribed.

One of Ramesses III's wives, now known as Tiye, was identified through a fragment of papyrus found in QV52, which names her and relates her to Ramesses III. The Lee papyrus, now in Turin, details a conspiracy to kill the King. The plot is said to have centred around Tiye and her son Pentaweret. Ramesses III named his successor as Ramesses Amenherkhepshef (Ramesses IV), rather than Pentaweret, leading to what is known as 'the harem conspiracy'. The assassination fatally wounded the king, the perpetrators were arrested and found guilty. The papyrus does not detail how the king was killed, but CAT scans show his throat had been cut. Ramesses III had planned a jubilee for the 30th year of his reign, but no further information has been found about this in his tomb or on stela so it is uncertain whether this took place before the assassination attempt.

Ramesses III's mummy was found in the royal cache of KV11 at Deir el Bahri. It seems the tomb was originally cut for Setnakht, who likely died before it was finished (and whose mummy was buried in the tomb of Tawosret); reliefs on the door bear Setnakht's name and were later recut for Ramesses III. While cutting the tomb, the largest in the valley, workers broke through to a nearby tomb, KV10, causing the workers to change the direction. The burial chamber is now bare, with no wall decoration; a fissure in the rock allowed water to enter the tomb and the chamber has disintegrated. There are surviving sketches of the chamber, showing finely painted walls, so the destruction has occurred since 1883 when Eugène Lefébvre and Victor Loret were working in the tomb.

One of Ramesses' sarcophagi is in the Louvre, another in Cairo, and a lid is in the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge.



Ramesses III, from KV11. Photo Sara Arnold



Interestingly, Ramesses III was the model for Boris Karloff's character in the film *The Mummy* (1930), which I recently watched. The photo shown here is one of my favourite images from the thousands I have taken in Egypt so it makes me happy to share it with you.

It was a privilege for me to meet Aidan, and he graciously posed for photos and signed my book!

Saturday 15 March

(13.30 for a start at 14.00 (UK time) admission from virtual waiting room from 13.45)

'Goddesses in Ramesside Egypt: Investigating representations of gendered roles and agency in the divine world', by Ed Scrivens



Outline: Humans were not the only social beings in the ancient Egyptian world. If we want to fully understand gender in ancient Egypt, we must also study the roles and representations of goddesses and gods, who in Egyptian culture were just as real as humans were. This talk will consider what images of goddesses in tombs and temples of the Ramesside period (c. 1292-1069 BCE) might tell us about how gender roles were believed to operate in the divine world. Did goddesses really have a secondary status to gods? If so, might that status actually be the source of unique ways of doing things that were inaccessible to male deities?

Dr Edward Scrivens works for the Egypt Exploration Society as Development Manager and is a specialist in gender and religion in ancient Egypt. He conducted his doctoral research at The Queen's College, University of Oxford, where he held the prestigious Barns Studentship in Egyptology. Prior to joining the EES he lectured at Swansea University as Tutor in Egyptology.

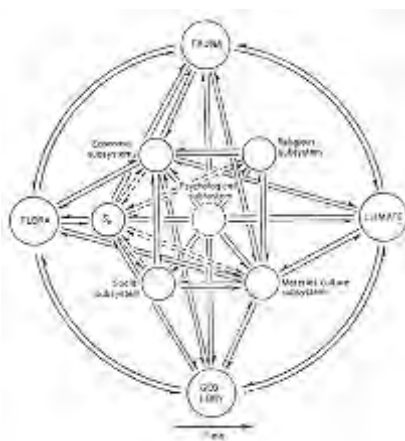


This fascinating lecture, accompanied by very helpful illustrative slides (some reproduced here with kind permission from Dr Scrivens) was partly based on the research for his Doctoral thesis.

This is available online at: <https://ora.ox.ac.uk/objects/uuid:3ab87209-0d99-45fd-a2fc-a0c4cbeca1d7/files/dkd17cs998> (thanks to Arthur Farrow for this information)

Ed started by posing a set of questions which framed his research. He then presented a typology he has developed and used it to demonstrate how the 20th Dynasty pharaohs Seti I and Ramesses II negotiated prominence and primacy in their temples particularly the ones dedicated to Goddesses at Abydos and Abu Simbel.

His first question was simply why study Goddesses? After all, some think they are imaginary, and it might be better to focus on more 'important' questions pertaining to real historical events or the economy and what they tell us about Egyptian society. Ed argued cogently that there is value in studying religion and mythology, as they are reflective of society, and are shaped by people's concerns. Looking at deities is a way of accessing what is important to the ancient Egyptians. As he said, it is a window on to 'real stuff'. Using Processual Archaeology (slide 1) which seeks to explain human culture and history by understanding how they are shaped by interrelated processes,



Ed Scrivens slide 1, Processual Archaeology

subsystems and relationships, he illustrated how religion is understood in this context as an important element in the way humans navigate and adapt to their ever-changing environment and survive. What we believe shapes how we build things (monumental buildings, temples), how we bury people (tomb architecture and decoration), and how we perceive the world around us. They make life meaningful. But why study Goddesses in particular? One reason is that the feminine principle is important in the solar cycle and funerary beliefs about rebirth. Nut's body that swallows the sun and births it in the twelfth hour needs a female form to function. More pragmatically, studying Goddesses is possible

because in Egyptian art they are visible. This is not the case for other cultures, where more androgenous beings or symbols are used to represent spiritual beings.

This leads to Ed's second question; how do we study Goddesses? First, he tells us, we need to be able to identify them. How they are depicted in 2D and 3D forms is often based on the aspects of the body that are noticeably female in humans (breasts, wide hips, long hair, vulva).

Ammit the devourer is androgenous. So perhaps we need to look at the paraphernalia they wear? Again, this is not clear cut (slide 4). Nefertari, in her tomb wears a very similar headdress to Isis. Ed suggests we look to textual identification of the Goddess, where there is text, and their agency – their ability to do things or create effects. In doing this, we need to focus on the patterns in the gendered representation of Goddesses, or rules of representation.



Ed Scrivens slide 2; ithyphallic Mut in the temple of Khonsu, Karnak



Ed Scrivens slide 4; context is key

The Egyptians represented Goddesses as gendered in their language (*nTrt*). Whilst the Egyptian language may be binary, features associated with masculinity and femininity can shift. In the temple of Khonsu, at Karnak, we find a lion headed ithyphallic Mut (slide 2). Is the phallus endowing Mut with masculine powers, virility, potency, agency? Clearly gender is linked to biology here, but is not reducible to it. What about instances where sex is not marked (slide 3).

Ed's third question focused on these patterns, or more particularly how a representation can become agentic. The Ramesside period, post Amarna, is known for its return to religious piety, so there are plenty of opportunities to observe Goddesses in action. At this time too, there are changes in the norms of decoration, which makes this an interesting period to study. For example, walls are split into registers, with lines of scenes, rather like a comic book style of decoration (slide 5).



Ed Scrivens slide 3; while gender or sex is frequently marked, it isn't always



Left: Wall decoration from the tomb of Khonsuemheb, el-Khokha (19th / 20th Dynasty)
Right: Wall scenes from the tomb of Nefertari at el-Khokha (19th Dynasty)

Ed Scrivens slide 5; registers in the tomb of Khonsu

- (A) Individual agents/recipients
- (B) Co-agents
- (C) Counterparts
- (D) Supporters
- (E) Collective agents/recipients



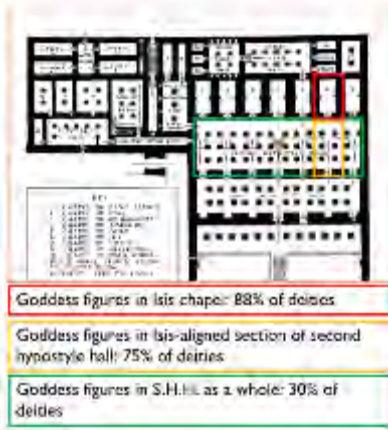
Ed Scrivens slide 6; Ed's typology

Scenes can wrap around walls, so are not confined to one space, and status can be depicted visually. Upper registers for offering to Gods (and Pharaoh), lower registers for the tomb owner and his family to receive their due. At this time, tomb decoration allowed for more (and varied) deities to be deployed in private tomb decorations, but also in public monuments.

For the last part of his lecture, Ed focussed on his own research. Having studied publications of tombs and temples from the Theban necropolis and Saqqara, Ed has developed a typology (slide 6) of what Goddesses are doing in different ritual spaces. They can act independently (Typology A); as part of a pair of deities doing something together (B); as counterparts receiving worship (C); as a support to another figure (D); and as a collective, part of a larger group (E). Applying this typology, and counting deities and what they are doing, Ed's analysis of the content of scenes revealed that depictions of Goddesses replicate the rules of representation seen for elite women. They have a secondary position to Gods, often behind them in a supportive role: Typology B). They can, however, be shown in a primary position in relation to their son, who is in a lower kinship position. There are examples of Typology A, Goddesses do have individual agency, and in both the Theban and Memphite necropoli,

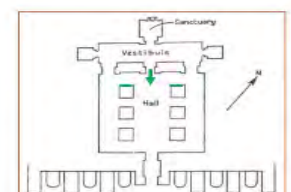
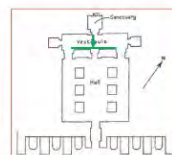
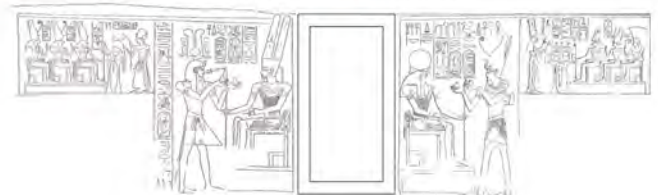
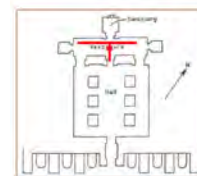
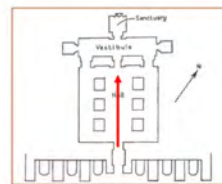
they appear by themselves receiving worship, and on their own more frequently than elite women in a tomb context. There are regional variations too. In Theban tombs Goddesses are seen with others, as co-agents (Typology B), whilst in Memphis they are seen as counterparts (Typology C), part of a pair of deities receiving offerings together. In summary, there are regional variations, and Goddesses have greater agency than elite women. Clearly then, whilst there are divine gender roles, they do not completely mirror real women and their roles.

However, as with elite women, Goddesses are in secondary positions to Gods, and are often found in less prestigious areas (e.g. lower down on walls) and in fewer number in monuments. Ed illustrated this most clearly in two case studies. The first looked at the percentage of images of female deities in the Seti I temple at Abydos (slide 7). Here one of the seven chapels is dedicated to Isis, yet even in her chapel only 88% of the deities are female. In the Isis-aligned section of the second Hypostyle Hall (outside of her chapel) this drops to 75% of deities depicted, and female deities represent only 30% of the total deities in the Hypostyle Hall as a whole. Ed's second case study focussed on the small temple at Abu Simbel (slide 8) dedicated by Ramesses II to Hathor and to his Great Royal Wife Nefertari.



Ed Scrivens slide 7; percentage of female deities in Seti I Temple of Abydos

Here Ed talked us through how the decorations negotiated prominence and primacy. As with any temple there are two perspectives, two ways of experiencing the temple: an externally-based perspective (moving from the outside to the sanctuary, the view of the Pharaoh and Priests) and the internally-based perspective, the Goddess Hathor's own view of her temple. Starting with the Facade (slide 8) Nefertari features as only two of the six colossi, the remaining four being statues of Ramesses. The lintel to a temple dedicated to Hathor, contains images of Amun Ra and Horus. Moving in to the hall, which leads to the vestibule and sanctuary, looking down its length to the sanctuary (slide 9) there are two seated Goddesses facing away from the doorway to the vestibule. The layout of pillars, however, obscures the images of Nefertari offering to Hathor on the left and Mut on the right. Rather, on the pillars in the hall we see Ramesses II looking inwards, as if he is making the offerings to the seated Goddesses and indeed to the central cult figure. Different perspectives give different views, and here the king is dominant. In the vestibule and indeed in the sanctuary, on this inwards trajectory, it is the pharaoh who dominates the scenes (slide 10). It is only when we look from the viewpoint of the statue of Hathor in her sanctuary that the feminine presence makes itself felt. In the vestibule, we see Nefertari being crowned by Hathor and Isis. But even here the king has his presence, both Ramesses (in front) and Nefertari are shown making offerings to Tawaret (slide 11) and it is only on the first of the three sets of pillars closet to the sanctuary that we see female Goddesses represented (slide 12). So in creating a temple to Hathor and his beloved royal wife, Ed shows us that Ramesses' design ensures a male-dominated space.



Ed Scrivens slides 8 - 12; case study at the small temple at Abu Simbel

As an antidote to this hypermasculinity and as a final thought in his excellent lecture, Ed suggested that there is potential to be found for Goddesses at the periphery. His premise is that Egyptian art and its representations of deities is androcentric. This dictates how Gods in particular can be depicted, but it also restricts how they can be depicted. In order to exist in a God-role, the representation has to exhibit a particular and acceptable range of ways of being and doing masculinity. This Ed describes as a 'compositional conservatism'. For Goddesses, however, who are to be found at the periphery of this androcentric representation, there is less concern about how they are represented, and therefore room to allow them to transgress, to do interesting things (slide 13). The potential for more fluid representations, more interesting ways of acting, are the subject matter for a forthcoming book. We need to watch this space.



*Ed Scrivens slide 13; Renenet and Meskenet overlapping.
From the papyrus of Ani (BM EA 10470, 19th D)*

Review by Pippa Dell

I was there... Tutankhamun exhibition, British Museum, May 1972

Arthur Farrow The day after I finished my degree finals at UCL, I rose early and by seven o'clock, I had joined the queue waiting for admission to the forecourt of the BM to join the queue! Once admitted, I shuffled back and forth for four hours in the queue, which, from the air, must have looked like a tableau vivant of the large intestine.

At the garishly, orange-coloured box office, I handed over twenty-five pence, flashed my NUS card (otherwise admission would have been fifty pence), and proceeded to the tomb. This was atmospherically constructed to give a feeling of the claustrophobic constraints of the actual tomb: particularly, I remember the ambient light being defused through the black, hessian ceiling.

To this day, I bear a small scar on my left ankle, caused by a wheelchair user who had the metal footrests projecting outwards, like the scythes of Boudica's chariot, one of which caught be a glancing blow as I was looking into the vitrine containing Meritaten's writing palette.

In the final room of the exhibition, I stood face-to-face with Tutankhamun's funerary mask, the gaze of which looked to me to be slightly esotropic; as one would expect of someone regarding you from a distance of about six feet. A fleeting moment of intimacy across the millennia.

From contemplating the Golden Face, we went straight into the small gift shop, which contained a mature post office, from which I bought a postcard bearing a three-penny commemorative stamp bearing the image of the King (more likely Nefer-Neferu-Aten, given its undoubtedly feminine anatomical attributes, poised on the back of a leopard), and had it franked and posted on the spot.

Hilary Wilson In the Easter vacation 1972, I was preparing for my finals at the University of Leicester, but from the moment the Tutankhamun Exhibition was announced I knew that a break from revision was an absolute necessity. It must have been some time in the first fortnight of the exhibition, in early April, when I persuaded

Philip, my boyfriend at the time, to go with me. I can't remember what day of the week it was, though it might have been a Saturday, unless Philip took a day off work.

I'm not sure how long we waited in that line, snaking along the BM's frontage, backwards and forwards and out on to Great Russell Street, but it must have been at least three hours. Were there loos available? We were lucky, I suppose, because the exhibition's popularity had not yet peaked, although it achieved some 30,000 visitors in the first week, and the queues would only get longer. Surprisingly, I have very little recollection of the exhibits themselves, while I can still imagine the crush of bodies within the dark confines of the exhibition rooms.

My clearest memory is of the gallery attendants whose principal job, it seemed to me, was to keep the crowds moving, allowing hardly any time at all to stop and stare. In the days before audio guides caused bunching of visitors listening to the descriptions of strategic artefacts, there was barely enough time to read the exhibit labels. Turning the last corner in the exhibition route, coming face to face with Tutankhamun's golden mask, it was as if everyone had taken an instinctive gasp of amazement that stopped us in our tracks.

Whatever the ripple effect on the visitors coming along behind us might have been, the attendants had no chance of preventing this final, involuntary logjam. And then, quite suddenly, we were out in the daylight again. It was an experience I wouldn't have missed for the world, and if I hadn't had that pressing need to return to Leicester for my last term, I would happily have queued up again, and again, but probably on my own since Philip still has only a passing interest in ancient Egypt. Looking back, his willingness to share me with Tutankhamun, my first Egyptological crush, was a mark of true devotion.

My last exam was on 6 June, the anniversary of D-Day, and that was the day Philip proposed. We were married the following year. It was fifteen years and four children later that I made it to Egypt for the first time, in the company of my father, while Philip heroically took on the childcare role. Seeing the funerary mask back home in its dusty case in the Cairo Museum finally got Tutankhamun out of my system. Philip and I celebrated our Golden Wedding in 2023.

Glenn Worthington I was 11 when Tutankhamun came to the British Museum. At school we did 'stuff' about him and ancient Egypt, and I was really taken with it, so much so that I asked to borrow a book on Tutankhamun that the teacher was using. That had not happened before.

I was obviously sufficiently interested that when we were going to London to visit friends of Mum and Dad, Mum said we could go to the museum on the way. They couldn't have known about the long queue to get in because as we were walking to the museum people coming in the opposite direction said the queue was three hours long. We didn't have time for that, so the visit was abandoned. However, we did go in a book shop, and I bought a paperback copy of Christiane Desroches-Noblecourt's 'Tutankhamen' for 75p. I still have it although battered and some of the plates stuck in with Sellotape.

However, this was not the end of it, later someone Dad knew was going to London with his son and offered to take the two of us. Dad probably enjoyed this more than the exhibition because it was in an E Type Jaguar, me and the son squashed in the back. This time was a success, and we queued for about three hours, the lines snaking back and forth in front of the museum. I persuaded Dad to let me buy the exhibition guide a massive 50p and I do still have it. Of the exhibition I remember the crowds and that the objects were spot lit, and the rest of the space was dark. The high light was of course the last object the gold mask.

My lifelong obsession with ancient Egypt is the result of this exhibition, the curse of Tutankhamun if you will.



Cover of the souvenir book of the Tutankhamun exhibition, British Museum, 1972

Exhibitions/places to visit in the South of England

'Ancient Sudan: enduring heritage'

Portsmouth Museum & Art Gallery, (Saturday 1 February – Saturday 19 April 2025)

The Kingdom of Kush, modern Sudan, was one of the largest empires of the ancient world. This touring exhibition of objects loaned from the British Museum, explores the kingdom which, at its height in the 7th century BCE, extended from the Blue Nile, south of Khartoum, to the Levant. After colonial occupation of the Fourth Cataract region by the Egyptians during the Middle and New Kingdoms, the Kushite empire developed a rich and powerful culture. The 25th Kushite Dynasty ruled Egypt as pharaohs until they were expelled by the conquering Assyrians. Though initially heavily influenced by Egyptian art and religion, the Kushites developed distinctive features of their material culture including ceramic wares and iron-working; women were held in particular regard. Until the 4th century AD, the empire centred on the site of Meroe, was actively involved in trade with Greece and Rome.

This exhibition, supported by the British Museum and its partners, celebrates Kush as part of Sudan's rich cultural history, and helps to ensure the preservation of Sudanese heritage and tradition.

The exhibition is at Portsmouth's Museum & Art Gallery from February to April 2025, and thereafter at Bristol Museum & Art Gallery (May-July 2025) and Stirling Smith Art Gallery & Museum (August-November 2025). Each museum will incorporate its own collections within the display.

<https://portsmouthmuseum.co.uk/what-to-see-do/special-displays/ancient-sudan-enduring-heritage/>

The Tutankhamun Exhibition

High West Street, Dorchester DT1 1UW

This permanent exhibition features a stunning recreation of Tutankhamun's tomb, offering visitors a unique glimpse into the ancient world of the young pharaoh. This immersive experience is not only educational but also captivating, making it a must-visit for history enthusiasts and curious minds alike. It's a fantastic way to spend your time and keep your interest piqued.

Tutankhamun Treasure Hunt, 28th May to 5th June 2025. A special event for children.

<https://www.tutankhamun-exhibition.co.uk/>

Brighton & Hove Museum, Egyptian collection

The museum's collection ranks among the largest in any regional UK museum. This impressive assembly is partly due to the influence of Professor Francis Llewellyn Griffith, a prominent Egyptologist born in Brighton in 1862. Griffith's fascination with ancient Egypt began in his youth and led him to a distinguished career, including significant contributions to the Egypt Exploration Fund. His early career received significant support from Henry Willett, a wealthy Brighton brewer and avid collector. Willett, one of the museum's founders, was known for his extensive collections of ceramics, paintings, and fossils, which he generously donated to the museum. This collaboration between Griffith and Willett helped shape the museum's remarkable collection.

<https://brightonmuseums.org.uk/brighton-museum-art-gallery/what-to-see/ancient-egypt/>

Tutankhamun: The Immersive Exhibition

28 March - 29 June 2025, Immerse LDN at Excel, Royal Victoria Dock, 1 Western Gateway, London E16 1XL

Bringing Ancient Egypt to life, offering a cutting-edge 90-minute journey back in time. Featuring video projections, VR experiences, a world-premiere hologram, and artefacts, plus much more, the exhibition promises an educational and immersive exploration of Pharaoh Tutankhamun's world. [I'm not sure how good or bad this is, but there appears to be a number of these 'experiences' happening in London at the moment, so sceptical me says 'cash cow', but if any of you are planning to go, a review would be welcome – Sara]

<https://tutankhamunexperience.com/london/>

Petrie Museum, Malet Place, London WC1E 6BT

Seeing and Unseeing the Pyramids: Lee Miller in Egypt

30th Oct 2024 - 28th Jun 2025. Free, no booking required.

<https://www.ucl.ac.uk/culture/whats-on/lee-miller-egypt>

Kingston Lacy

Nick Tomlinson

My visit to the National Trust property at Kingston Lacy was my first physical encounter with ancient Egyptian since getting into the subject around twelve months ago.

The artefacts themselves were amazing, and quite moving (I confess to the hairs on my neck standing on end when I touched the obelisk, thinking about how long ago it was carved, and how far back ancient Egypt existed before then!) but I was surprised at the relatively low nature of the interpretation, especially for the items in the grounds. The obelisk had some text at its base, mostly telling of its transport to Kingston Lacy, but a sarcophagus nearby had none at all. Of course, I was there with a very specific reason, and the focus of the National Trust is not ancient Egypt, but the limited interpretation was still surprising.

William Bankes, whose family owned Kingston Lacy at the time, had brought the obelisk back in 1827 (assisted by the Duke of Wellington and Giovanni Belzoni!), after 'discovering' it at Philae, and his drawing of the cartouche of Cleopatra on the obelisk played a (small) part in 'cracking the hieroglyphs'. I also understand both his clearing of the temple of Osiris at Abydos (with the subsequent exposure of the King List of Seti I) and the meticulous capturing of detail of the carvings at Abu Simbel by a team of artists and engineers funded by him, both helped in building and developing our understanding of hieroglyphs, yet, while there is some interpretation on Bankes travels to Egypt, these things are not really mentioned.



*Kingston Lacy obelisk and house.
Origin: Temple of Isis, Philae
Photo Nick Tomlinson*



*Stela in Kingston Lacy House. Unknown date or provenance, but possibly Temple of Isis, Philae.
Photo Nick Tomlinson*

The Egyptian room in the house was very interesting, albeit it small. It contained a range of artefacts, including shabtis, statues and stela. There were paintings as well but, at the time of my visit, they were away being restored. Most of the displays had some 'basic' notes, so you could learn a little about the items, although I would (of course!) have liked more detail and background. They also had a lithographic plate of the inscriptions on the obelisk, which was amazing. It would have been even more amazing to have had a print of that, to take to the obelisk, as reading the carvings was challenging, even when in full sunlight they were difficult to read.

It's £20 to get in, although, of course, you have the whole house and garden to explore for that, but was it worth it? As someone newly into ancient Egypt, definitely! I got to touch artefacts from ancient Egypt, seeing them first hand, rather than in a book (and take loads of photos!). Having read a little about shabti and stela, to see them first hand was amazing, and the obelisk, as noted above, was wonderful to see and touch, 'feeling' its history, a real WOW moment, with ancient Egypt 'coming to life'.

A good readable book about William Bankes and the Philae obelisk is *'The Obelisk and the Englishman: The pioneering discoveries of Egyptologist William Bankes'* (2015) by Dorothy U Seyler, published by Prometheus Books.

Since Nick's visit, he has contacted the curators, who are organising interpretations of pieces in the collection and they are aiming add an interpretation for the obelisk soon.

They are also looking at potentially redeveloping the Egyptian room and have been working with an Egypt researcher from the University of Edinburgh so they hope that this room will be improved in the coming years.

<https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/visit/dorset/kingston-lacy/the-treasures-at-kingston-lacy>

News from Amarna

Members will be interested to read this communication from Kristin Thompson, relating to the status of the Amarna Project:

'No doubt you know about the death of Barry Kemp last May. Until recently our team had been dangling, waiting for news from the Ministry about the Amarna Project. The autumn season was cancelled, and until about two weeks ago we weren't sure whether there would be a spring one. Fortunately, the permission finally came through, and Anna Stevens, who has taken over as director, has scheduled a season for about six weeks from early April to mid-May. That will involve going ahead with some projects already started, notably a survey of some of the houses in the city, with records and conservation involved. Also the work on the Great Aten Temple continues. Apart from that, the team will be making plans for the future to get the Project back on track.'

Phrase of the month

'Mansion of Millions of Years'

New Kingdom mortuary temples, often referred to as 'Mansions of Millions of Years' or 'House of Millions of Years', were designed to ensure the King's eternal life. These temples were typically constructed near royal tombs. They also served as resting places for the boat of Amun during the Beautiful Festival of the Valley, when the deity's cult statue visited the west bank of Thebes. Known as 'Holy of Holies', these temples were sites for offerings and rituals, and they frequently displayed the achievements of the Pharaoh they honoured.

These temples also served as a means for pharaohs to legitimise their rule and demonstrate their piety. By associating themselves with the gods and their illustrious predecessors, pharaohs sought to ensure their legacy and secure their place in the afterlife. The inscriptions and reliefs found in these temples provide valuable insights into the achievements and aspirations of the pharaohs, as well as the religious and political landscape of their reigns.

The New Kingdom period (circa 1550-1070 BCE) was a time of great prosperity and power in ancient Egypt. This era saw the construction of many grand temples and monuments, reflecting the wealth and religious devotion of the time. Mortuary temples played a crucial role in the religious and cultural life of the New Kingdom. They were not only places of worship but also centres of economic activity, often surrounded by bustling communities of priests, workers, and artisans.

The Beautiful Festival of the Valley was one of the most important religious celebrations in Thebes. During this festival, the cult statue of Amun, the chief deity of Thebes, was transported across the Nile to visit the mortuary temples on the west bank. This journey symbolised the connection between the living and the dead, reinforcing the belief in the eternal life of the pharaohs.

For future interest, Dr Joanne Backhouse is planning to do a series of online lectures on Temples of Millions of Years. Although this has not yet been confirmed, keep an eye on the SAES Facebook page or follow Jo here:

<https://www.facebook.com/p/Dr-Joanne-Backhouse-Online-Egyptology-Courses-100057655441348/>

Tales from your travels

Visiting the GEM, Emily Hale

I visited the newly opened and highly anticipated Grand Egyptian Museum in Cairo at the beginning of March during its trial phase ahead of its official opening in July. All areas apart from the Tutankhamun galleries and Khufu's solar boat gallery were open and I easily spent two half days there. The entrance is impressive where you are greeted by a colossal statue of Ramesses II which has been in situ on the site since 2019! The entrance area includes the main GEM shop, and other (quite pricy!) shops along with a few food outlets including a reasonably priced Starbucks.

To get to the main galleries you go up the grand staircase which features numerous statues from Egyptian history, there is also an escalator to the side but I would walk up see the statues then take the escalator down. From the top of the staircase there is a great view out to the Giza pyramids.

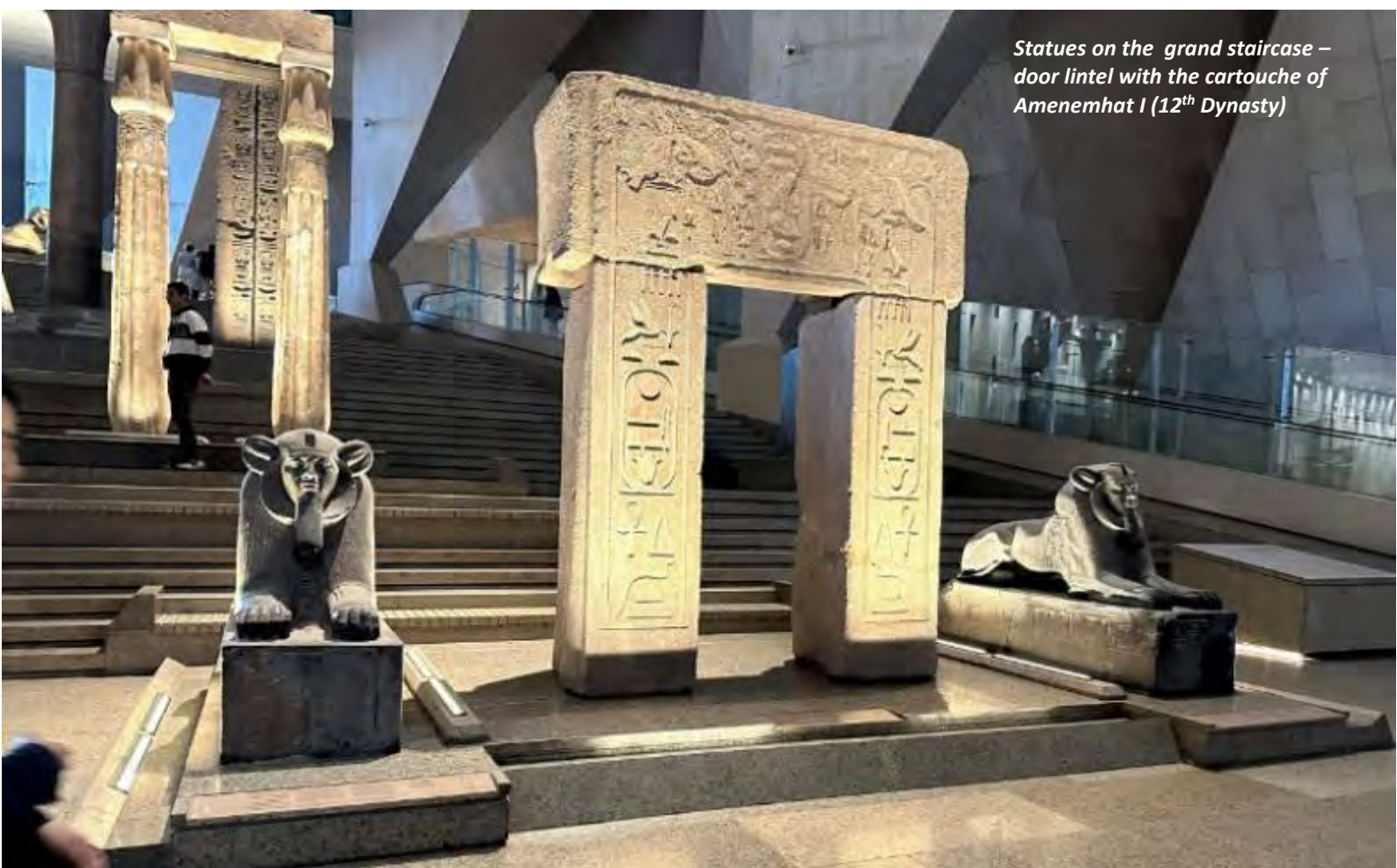
The main galleries are split into four different sections representing different periods of Egyptian history – Predynastic to the end of the First Intermediate period, Middle Kingdom and Second Intermediate Period, New Kingdom and Third Intermediate Period to the end of the Graeco-Roman Period. Each area has three rooms dedicated to Society, Kingship and Beliefs.



Entrance to the GEM



The grand staircase



Statues on the grand staircase – door lintel with the cartouche of Amenemhat I (12th Dynasty)



Ramesses II



View from the museum towards the pyramids



Menkara

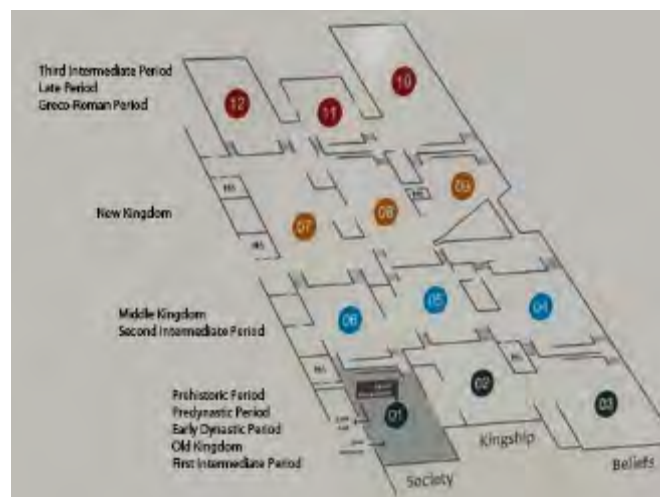


Senwosret I

The display of the larger statues was also impressive, including Menkara, Senwosret I and Hatshepsut.



Hatshepsut

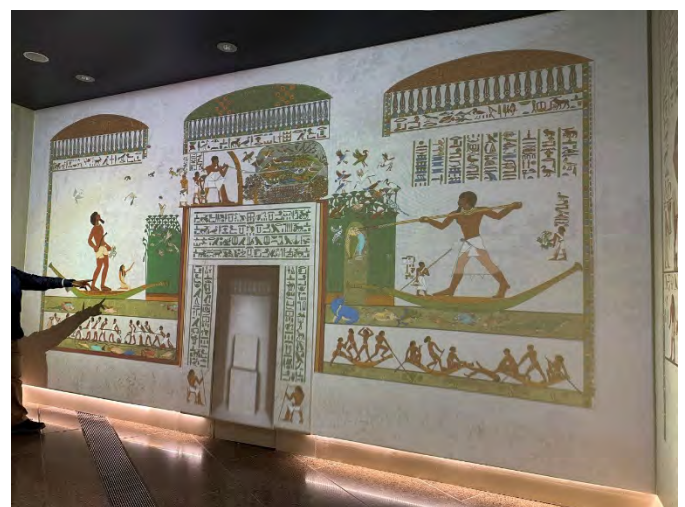


Gallery plan



One of the highlights for me was seeing the artefacts from Queen Hetepheres of the 4th Dynasty (above).

There was also some great interactive displays including the tomb of Khnumhotep II at Beni Hassan, the figures on the walls came to life doing the activities they depicted on the tomb wall which I thought was a good way to engage the younger visitors.



There's already so much to see and will be brilliant to revisit once the Tutankhamun and Solar Boat galleries are open later this year!

All photos in this article courtesy of and copyright Emily Hale.

Your SAES Committee

Committee: Hilary Wilson (Chair and Programme Secretary), Glenn Worthington (Treasurer), Annette Winter and Emily Hale (Joint Secretaries), David Marriott (Minutes Secretary and Web Master), Keith Rider (Librarian), Sara Arnold and Pippa Dell (Hotep Editors), Robert Brown.

Your committee got together on Thursday, 13th February over Zoom. It was a productive meeting where we talked about how your fees are being put to good use.

- After Mark Lehner's brilliant talk, at the joint fundraiser with TVAES, a substantial donation was made to the Ancient Egypt Research Associates (AERA) in support of the training of Egyptian field archaeologists. As in previous years, another donation for similar purposes was made to the EES education fund. We also set aside £250 for an Amarna donation, which we bumped up to £300 in memory of Barry Kemp. We're holding on to this cash until the leadership of the Amarna expedition is confirmed and the permissions situation resolved. (see the message from Kristin Thompson above)
- Glenn Godenho is a hero and didn't take a fee; instead he asked for a prize to be given to a student. An anonymous donor chipped in, so we now have £200 for a one-time award. Glenn is making sure this prize goes to an Egyptology student and not just into the general fund.
- Angus Graham's fee is heading to WaterAid.

We're also planning for next season and looking at options for fees to go either to the speaker or to an 'Egyptian-themed good cause' of their choice.

Hilary's plans as Programme Secretary for the upcoming year are shaping up nicely, with some exciting and intriguing speakers lined up. Stepping into Anna Welch's shoes has been quite a challenge for her, and the committee expressed their gratitude for her efforts.

Books

The book library has closed and nearly all the books have been rehomed. Any remaining after the March face-to-face meeting will be donated to a museum.

Anna has heard from Angela Dennett who used to run the former Wessex Society. Angela is downsizing and wishes to dispose of her books. There are a lot of novels and general interest items, but there are some more academic books. Angela will send photographs of the books she has and when we receive this, it can be decided if it is worth an expedition. Angela lives near Bournemouth University.

Diana Keen has a run of Ancient Egypt Magazine from Issue 1. There have been no takers so far.

Items for Hotep

We are always happy to receive your items of interest for inclusion in Hotep. If you could provide a review of a talk, book or article, or even a picture or puzzle which you think might entertain our readers, please contact us through the usual channels or contact Emily directly.

Web site: <https://www.southamptonancientegyptsociety.co.uk/index.php>

Facebook and Instagram: The Southampton Ancient Egypt Society

Email: saesinfo55@gmail.com

For payment or to check your membership or lecture payment status, please contact the Secretary on the email address above.

Next meeting

Saturday 26th April 2025

'Who Ate All the Fish in Ancient Egypt?', Hilary Wilson

(13.30 for a start at 14.00 (UK time) admission from virtual waiting room from 13.45)

Please note: This is a week later than usual to avoid the Easter weekend



Herodotus's anecdotal evidence (c.400 BCE) of a priestly taboo on the eating of fish was exaggerated by later writers who interpreted this as a tradition pertaining to the whole Egyptian population. That the Egyptians of any era should have ignored such a ready abundance of animal protein as that provided by the Nile, seems perverse and is certainly contrary to the vivid images of fishing which appear in private tombs from the Old Kingdom onwards. This talk presents a realistic picture of the ancient Egyptians' relationship with fish by comparing the practices of the main consumer groups, namely the gods and royalty, the living and the dead. Archaeological, artistic and textual evidence from the Predynastic to the Third Intermediate Period is used to assess the significance of fish in the Egyptian diet, the methods of preparation for consumption and preservation, and the contribution of fish to the ancient Egyptian economy. By examining which species were available to different communities and which were thought appropriate for certain occasions, Hilary will also consider how the size and species of fish relate to social and economic status.

Hilary Wilson is Chair of the Southampton Ancient Egypt Society and regular contributor to Ancient Egypt Magazine. For more than thirty years she worked in Adult Continuing Education, teaching courses on the History of Mathematics and World Archaeology for the Open University, and creating and lecturing on Egyptology courses for the University of Southampton and various WEA and local community education groups throughout Hampshire and Dorset. Since her retirement from teaching Mathematics to A-Level, Hilary has indulged her personal passion for Lifelong Learning by completing the University of Manchester's Certificate in Egyptology and was awarded Manchester's MA in Egyptology in 2023.

Register in advance for this meeting through the link below:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/VZfpBnbmQdGaxLJkoz4aUg>

Registration will be approved & the joining link released on confirmation of payment. Meeting fee: SAES Member £3, Overseas Member £4, Guest £6

For payment and Membership details or to check your payment status, please contact the Secretary saesinfo55@gmail.com



Next issue

The next issue of Hotep will be published in May and will include reviews of Hilary's talk on 'Who ate all the fish?' on April 26th and Chris Elliott's talk on 'The Lighthouse, the Laser and the Stone' on May 17th. Registration for Hilary's talk is above and Emily and Annette will send out reminders nearer the time, so make sure you are registered. Both will be on Zoom.

Hilary will share her insights from her recent visit to the Turin Museum, offering a glimpse into its extensive collection for those who haven't yet had the chance to visit.

To complement Emily's review of the GEM in this issue, Pippa will contribute a piece focusing on the building's architecture. Pippa is travelling extensively in Egypt at the moment, and we can look forward to reviews from the Sphinx enclosure, and some exciting and rarely visited tombs.

The amazing architecture of the GEM – a teaser below to show the colossal scale of it!

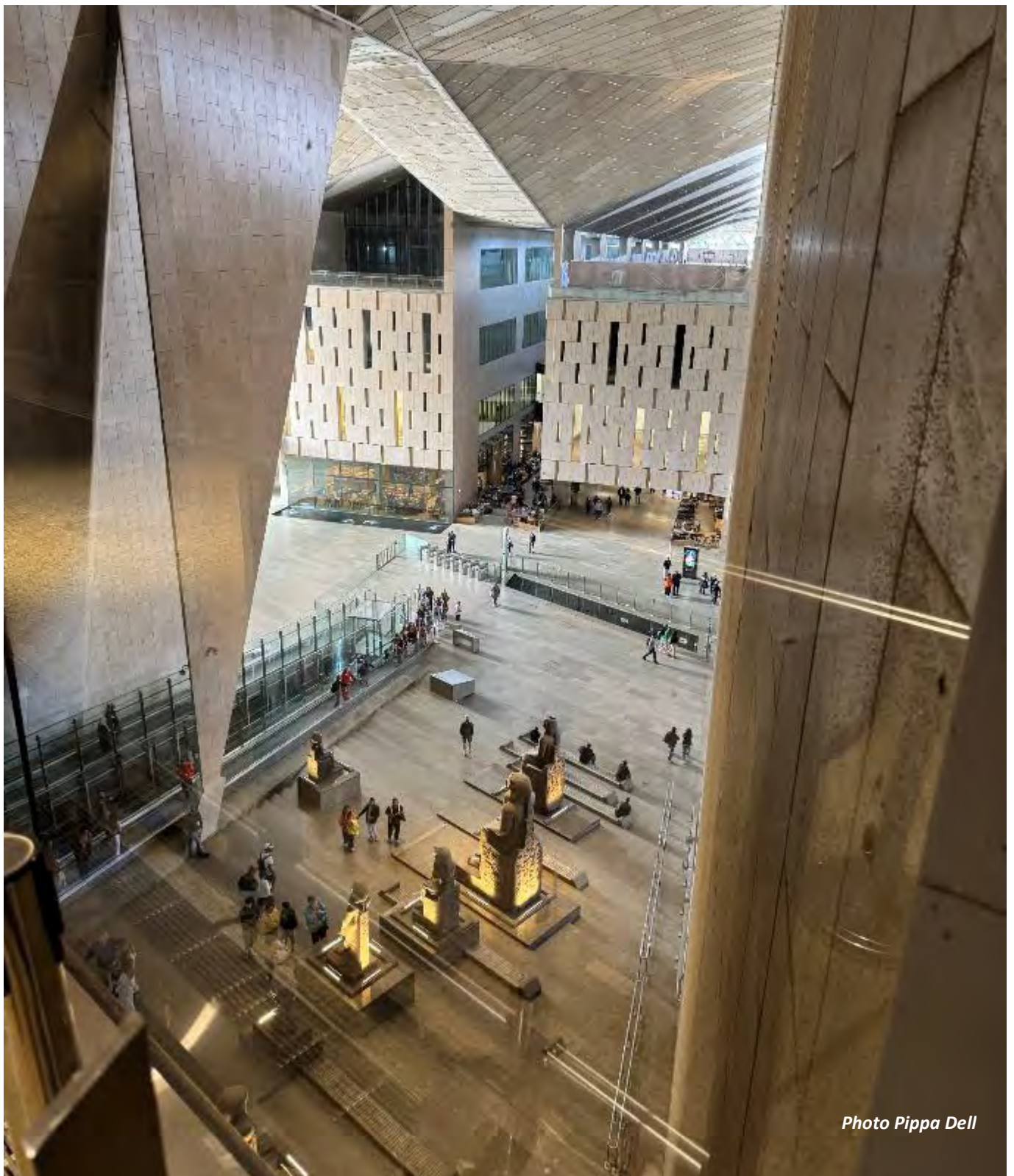


Photo Pippa Dell