



# HOTEP

Issue 15: January 2017

**HAPPY NEW YEAR!**

## Review of our December meeting

On Saturday 10 December we held our Christmas meeting which started with **Glenn Worthington's** talk *'Theban Holidays'* in which he described the two great festivals of Thebes – the Beautiful Festival of the Valley and the Feast of Opet. He traced their development from their origins, thought to be in the reign of Hatshepsut, to the elaborate celebrations of the late New Kingdom. Glenn's presentation included striking images from the works of the Chicago House epigraphers who record the reliefs and inscriptions in the Theban temples and he reminded us that these are available to download from the Internet. You can find them at <https://oi.uchicago.edu/research/projects/epigraphic-survey>

The ancient festivities, celebrated over many days, involved processions of the sacred barques of the Theban deities Amen, Mut and Khonsu, accompanied by military parades, music and dancing and vast quantities of food and drink. However, apart from their popular appeal, these festivals served a serious religious purpose. The Festival of the Valley was especially significant for the workmen of Deir el-Medina as the sacred statues were progressed around the temples and tombs of western Thebes. The Feast of Opet promoted the continuation of royal authority by associating the King with the regenerative powers of Amen-Ra and had such significance for the people of Thebes that it is still commemorated today, albeit in another form. Just as Christian festivals were superimposed on their pagan precursors, so the Muslim saint Abu el-Haggag, whose mosque occupies a



## The newsletter of The Southampton Ancient Egypt Society

substantial corner of the Luxor Temple, is celebrated with a carnival parade of boats on wheels.

Glenn's talk was followed by a social gathering including fun and games with an Egyptian theme. Though several people entered into the festive spirit by trying out a game of **Hounds & Jackals**, a sort of cross between Ludo and Snakes & Ladders we were still not able to award the **SAES Hounds & Jackals trophy**. Perhaps next year! Other activities included spotting similarities and differences, unravelling anagrams to identify the odd one out amongst British Egyptologists and a puzzle wall à la *Only Connect*. If you were not there perhaps you would like to have a go at spotting the 12 differences between the images below, (answers at the end of this newsletter). A good time was had by all!



## December Quiz Answers:

The festive Santas were:

- (A) Lucia Gahlin (B) Irving Finkel  
(C) Aidan Dodson (D) Charlotte Booth

## From Avril Poppitt



Illuminating news from the astro-chronology section of the University of Oxford. This developing branch of astro-science is involved in recording the timing of solar flaring caused by eruptions on the surface of our sun. When these rare storms occur on the side of the sun facing the earth, they leave a mark on every tree growing at the same time, everywhere on earth.

Hmm, Interesting. 'So what?' I hear you say. Here's what :  
By combining the dating of the solar flares from the tree ring samples, radio-carbon dating of same, and known historical facts, we can pinpoint calendar years extremely accurately. (There is a slight problem with RCD tending to be accurate only within 50-100 years)

The real use of this dating technique is in checking the dates of the gaps which occur in the "floating chronologies" of civilisations that appear to be otherwise well documented, such as the sequence and lengths of reign of Egyptian Kings in the Old Kingdom, which of course would be of enormous help and interest to us "Ancient Egyptoneers", and also to those interested in the Mayan civilisations and Chinese History. We await further developments.

Condensed from **'World Archaeology Magazine' December 2016.**

**Hilary** found several related articles from August **2016**. This is an extract from **The Guardian:**

Archaeologists believe they have identified a new way of putting accurate dates to great events of prehistory. Rare and spectacular storms on the sun appear to have left their mark in forests and fields around the planet over the past 5,000 years.

Michael Dee, of Oxford University's research laboratory for archaeology and the history of art, thinks evidence of such solar storms could help put precise years to some

of the great uncertainties of history: the construction of Egypt's Great Pyramid of Giza, the collapse of the ancient Mayan civilisation in Central America, and perhaps even the arrival of the Vikings in the Americas.

Every tree maintains its own almanac in the form of annual growth rings. For decades dendrochronologists have been using tree-ring evidence and radiocarbon dating to build a timetable of events that confirm historical accounts, even those predating the If the researchers do identify another spike, they expect it to be duplicated in surviving plant tissue everywhere in the world from that year: in the reeds that became papyrus, in the flax that was preserved as linen, in the timbers that shore up ancient graves. Spikes in tree rings from 775AD have been found in Germany, Russia, the US and New Zealand. The astrochronologists have a potential record far more accurate than a human scribe.

<https://www.theguardian.com/science/2016/auq/17/traces-of-sun-storms-locked-in-tree-rings-could-confirm-ancient-historical-dates-astrochronology>

The following is from the Oxford University news website:

### **'Clocks' in tree-rings that could reset chronologies across the ancient world**

Oxford University researchers say that trees which grew during intense radiation bursts in the past have 'time-markers' in their tree-rings that could help archaeologists date events from thousands of years ago. In a new paper, the authors explain how harvesting such data could revolutionise the study of ancient civilisations such as the Egyptian and Mayan worlds.

The paper, '[Anchoring historical sequences using a new source of astro-chronological tie-points](#)', is published in the journal, *Proceedings of the Royal Society A*.

<http://www.ox.ac.uk/news/2016-08-17-clocks-tree-rings-could-reset-chronologies-across-ancient-world>



## Upcoming Events

We are pleased to announce that the **Study Day 15 July 2017** will be:

### An Introduction to Egyptian Astronomy

presented by **Dr Bernadette Brady** from the **University of Wales Trinity Saint David** School of Archaeology, History and Anthropology.

The material evidence of Egypt leaves us with many tantalising clues concerning the astronomy of the Egyptians and its role in Egyptian culture. The Pyramid Text of the Old Kingdom reveals an astronomy which blended naked-eye observations of the heavens with religious beliefs and aspirations of the individuals and links the stars to the ascent of the soul. Evidence of the Coffin Text and diagonal star calendars reveals that this cultural astronomy and theology moved into the Middle Kingdom. By the New Kingdom the shifting Egyptian approach to astronomy shows innovations through the Ramesside star clocks and great astronomical ceilings of that period. By the Hellenistic period, however, the Dendera Zodiac reveals an Egyptian sky mixed with and finally consumed by the Hellenistic view of the heavens.

This Study Day is designed to introduce you to the Egyptian sky with its mythic, religious, and civic role in Egyptian society. It will begin with the pyramids of the Old Kingdom and carry through to the Hellenistic period.

By the end of the day you should be able to look at a piece of Egyptian astronomical art or design and recognise its probable intentions and major themes. Handouts will be provided to aid your own study after the event.'

**Fee for the day: £20 for SAES Members**

**£25 for non-Members**

**Book your place now.**

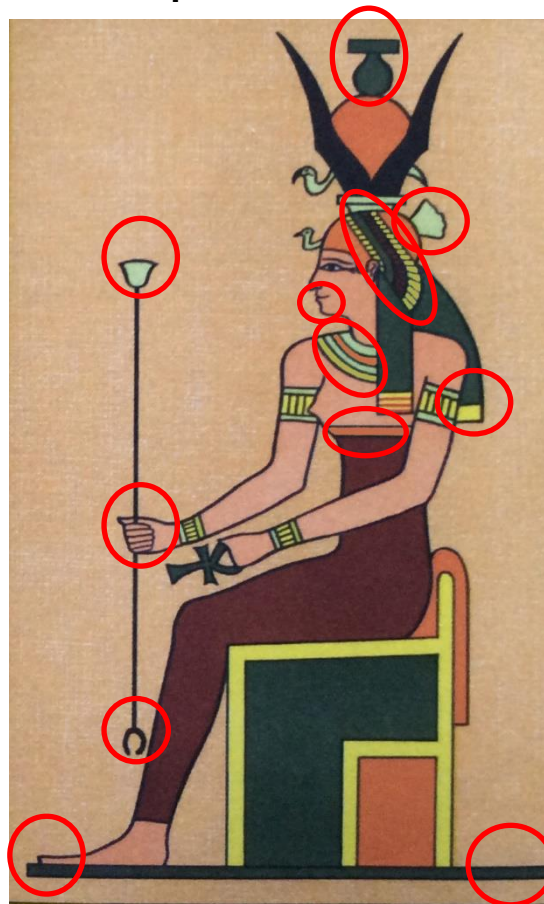


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## Next Meeting: Saturday 18 February

**Dr Paul Collins**, Curator of the Ancient Near East at the **Ashmolean Museum, Oxford**, will be talking to us about **Egypt and the Assyrian Empire**. The relations between Egypt and the kingdom of Assyria can be traced in some detail between c.1300 - 600 BC. The splendour of Egypt's New Kingdom helped shape Assyria's identity as its armies expanded across the Near East, ultimately invading Egypt to confront the rulers of the picture of interaction between these two great powers.

### Christmas 'Spot the Difference' solution



### Now it's Quiz Time

- 1) What is the name of the goddess represented above?
- 2) What is the name of her husband?
- 3) What were the names of their four children?

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

