



# The Rundle Foundation for Egyptian Archaeology

NEWSLETTER NO. 55

January 1996



PALERMO - A TYPICAL SICILIAN CART

## TOUR OF SOUTHERN ITALY & SICILY

The tour commenced with an excellent guided visit to Ostia, the port of ancient Rome, and to Naples, Pompeii and Herculaneum before sailing to Palermo, the capital of Sicily. With perfect weather, excellent guides, a skillful driver and an interested group of people, this tour was all set to be successful. And a success it proved to be. The Sicilian itinerary included sites dated from the Paleolithic, through Greek, Carthaginian, Roman, Norman and Islamic periods. Our guide, Giovanni, was a mine of information, not only in his knowledge of the history and botany of his country, but we soon discovered he knew all the best restaurants where he arranged delicious meals for us at reduced prices!

During our tour of Palermo, we visited palaces, museums and churches and the gruesome catacombs where the bodies of hundreds of men, women and children were hanging in niches around the walls. I'm pleased to say that none of us suffered nightmares after this experience! We tramped

through the forest outside the city to visit the Addura caves where Palaeolithic paintings, dated back over 11,000 years have been found and preserved. These contrasted with the magnificent mosaics we were to see in the churches and in the Roman Villa at Casale where mosaics cover more than 3,500 square metres of floor space.

Giovanni introduced us to the Greek city of Salinunte by an evening drive past a flood-lit temple and a visit the next morning to the quarries where the stone had been cut for the temples and walls. The city of Salinunte was founded in c.650 B.C. by Greek colonists and became very powerful, but continual fighting between the Greek cities led to its downfall and it was finally destroyed by the Carthaginians. The ruins are very impressive. The city was laid on a grid plan and streets, houses, temples and walls are clearly recognisable. Because of the constant fear of attack, massive walls and fortifications were built around the cities. The most impressive were those at Cape Soprano at Gela and the Euryalus fort at Syracuse where the walls and ditches and underground passages completely surround the acropolis.

At Agrigento we were given our own "Light & Sound" performance. Our driver, Vito, played classical music as he drove us slowly past the flood-lit temples. Then he switched to Sicilian folk music and 'danced' the coach for us. An unforgettable experience.

Most of us had read the novel *The Leopard* so Giovanni suggested we visit the palace at Donnafugata where the film was shot. The palace and gardens were most interesting but very dilapidated and would require millions of dollars to restore.

In Syracuse we visited the quarries where in 415 B.C. 7,000 Athenian soldiers were held prisoners for eight months with no shelter and little food or water. Those who survived were sold into slavery. In this quarry an immense cavern was carved, called the 'Ear of Dionysios', the acoustics of which are superb as was demonstrated when Giovanni sang for us. Also at Syracuse we saw the huge altar on which as many as 400 oxen were sacrificed to the gods. Giovanni told us that the meat was distributed to the people and the gods received the blood!

We climbed hundreds of stairs and cobbled streets in the Medieval towns, flattening ourselves against the walls as cars and motor bikes whizzed past. We visited museums in which the exhibits were wonderfully presented and where Giovanni seemed to know every important artefact and art object. We visited ceramic workshops and were tempted to purchase plates, candlesticks and other delightful items. In every town our photographers had a field-day, snapping doors, balconies, narrow, cobbled streets, churches and palaces.

Mt Etna remained hidden under cloud during our visit and refused to perform. This was disappointing but we spent two glorious days exploring the fascinating town of Taormina at the base of the mountain before driving to Milasso to board the ferry to the Lipiri and Vulcano islands for two days exploring the Neolithic and volcanic sites. We refrained from bathing in the mud pool but were interested to see that the sea was boiling at one of the beaches.

I do not think that any of us will every forget our stay in Sicily which was made so interesting by Giovanni and Vito.

On returning to Italy we spent four days visiting the Etruscan sites north of Rome and concluded the tour with a visit to the beautiful Lante Gardens and 'The Monster Park'.

The five weeks passed so swiftly and it was now time to say goodbye and to go our separate ways.

### CHANGE OF COURSES - 1996

Due to an oversight, the Continuing Education Program has not included some of our courses in their brochure for the First Semester of 1996. We therefore have to re-schedule these courses for the Second Semester.

### COURSES FOR FIRST SEMESTER

*AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL TOUR OF ANCIENT EGYPT.* Mr Michael Birrell will conduct a 10-weeks course from 7-9 pm each MONDAY, commencing 4 March.

Cost: ~~300~~. \$ 120

*EGYPTIAN CURIOSITIES.* Ms Rodna Siebels will conduct an 8-weeks course from 7-9 pm each WEDNESDAY, commencing 1 May.

Cost: \$70 (members \$65).

Please complete the enclosed forms and forward them to Joan Beck.

### COURSES FOR SECOND SEMESTER

The following courses are planned:

*An Introduction to Egyptian Hieroglyphs* - Prof. N. Kanawati  
*Ancient Egyptian Lives* - Ms Rodna Siebels

A larger 2-days weekend CONFERENCE is being planned. This Conference will include lectures planned for *A DAY ON AN EGYPTIAN DIG* plus other lectures.

Details for this Conference and the courses for the Second Semester will be given in the April Newsletter.

### **ACTIVITIES IN QUEENSLAND**

Professor Kanawati will be visiting Brisbane during April 1996. He will offer a course on Introduction to Egyptian Hieroglyphs for the interested general public starting on SATURDAY, 13 April for one week and a public lecture on funerary beliefs in ancient Egypt. These will be held at the University of Queensland, Department of Classics & Ancient History.

Enquiries: Phone Lorraine Millard on (07) 369 0860.

### **THE A.C.E. DIGS IN EGYPT - 1995**

The A.C.E. Digs at Saqqara and Luxor were very rewarding and reports will be given in the April Newsletter.

### **STUDY TOUR OF EGYPT - JANUARY 1997**

The cost of this tour of \$6,300 is calculated on expected prices for 1997. In the unlikely case of unforeseeable price rise, the cost may have to be slightly adjusted.

The Itinerary includes some of the traditional sites in Egypt as well as a Nile Cruise between Luxor and Aswan and a Cruise on Lake Nasser visiting some very interesting sites. The tour will be led by Dr Boyo Ockinga.

### **MEMBERSHIP FEES - 1996**

Membership fees for 1996 are now due. Enclosed please find a renewal form. We hope you will be renewing your membership and thank you for your continued interest and support.

**ALL ENQUIRIES: MISS JOAN BECK - (02) 850 8848**