



The Rundle Foundation for Egyptian Archaeology

NEWSLETTER NO. 64

April 1998



THE EXCAVATION GROUP ON SITE AT HELWAN

Excavations at the Early Dynastic Cemetery of Helwan.

The first excavation season at Helwan took place between December 1997 and January 1998 and in February was followed by a second study season at the Egyptian Museum in Cairo to record the finds from the previous excavations by Zaki Saad in the 1940s and 1950s.

Directed by Dr Christiana Köhler, seven students of Macquarie University and scholars from England and Germany conducted fieldwork on this extensive cemetery where more than 10,000 graves had formerly been excavated.

During Macquarie University's first season an area of approximately 1,000 square metres in the northwestern part of the site has been mapped while two large grave structures and two small graves have been excavated.

One of the larger structures is a tomb of a substantial size built of large monolithic limestone slabs. It consists of a main chamber and of an internally subdivided antechamber sunk in a five metre deep open pit, and can be accessed via a staircase from the north. This

tomb is of great importance as it dates to the late First or early Second Dynasty and therefore represents one of the earliest monumental stone buildings constructed in Egypt.

The other large tomb was built in a completely different way in that it is designed as a subterranean rock-cut tomb with a staircase from the south. Its chambers are neatly cut into the ground, the walls being covered with thick layers of plaster and white-washed. This tomb represents a later state in tomb development during the Early Dynastic period and dates to the late Second or early Third Dynasty.

The debris from the excavations has been carefully sifted and revealed interesting fragments of pottery, stone tools and organic material which partially assist in assessing the date of the areas under investigation.

The most important finds from the site, however, are now on display or stored in 157 boxes in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo as they had been recovered during the site's initial excavations by Zaki Saad.

Approximately 270 individual objects have been recorded, i.e. drawn, described, and photographed, the majority of which were tiny decorated ivory objects, such as inlays for furniture or boxes, clappers and bracelets. Other finds were complete copper vessels, fine stone vessels - one with the Horus name of King Semerkhet of the First Dynasty - and beautiful jewellery of various materials such as shell, limestone, schist, steatite, semiprecious stones and faience. All the objects stored in these crates - as much as it can be assessed so far - are neatly listed on inventory lists that accompany the boxes and are all labelled with their individual tomb number which enables archaeologists to allocate the finds to their tomb context and to reconstruct original tomb assemblages.

Helwan is one of the largest and hence, most important sites of the Early Dynastic Period. The project's objective is to proceed with this method of concurrent excavation and artefact recording in order to process and collect as much information about the site as possible. The ultimate goal is to provide a comprehensive database and series of publications about the graves and the culture and society of their period.

CONGRATULATIONS PROFESSOR KANAWATI

Congratulations to Professor Naguib Kanawati who has been made a Fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities, in recognition of his work for Egyptology.

SECOND STUDY TOUR OF EGYPT - JANUARY 1999

We are thrilled to inform you that the response to our study tour of Egypt has been overwhelming. As you know, the originally planned tour is full and with a number of prospective members on the waiting list.

We have now organised an identical tour to leave Sydney on Wednesday, 6 January 1999, with the same itinerary and length of stay as the first tour.

The second tour will be led by Mr Michael Birrell, an Associate Lecturer in Egyptology at Macquarie University. Mr Birrell has recently completed his Doctorate in Egyptology and has long experience in teaching both at the University and Continuing Education courses. He has participated in numerous excavations in Egypt in conjunction with Professor Kanawati, Dr Ockinga, Dr Köhler, and Dr Hope (Monash University), and is an experienced traveller in Egypt.

If you are interested, please contact Joan Beck. A non-refundable deposit of \$500.00 is required as soon as possible, but **no later than the end of March, 1998**. Please make cheques payable to: **A.C.E. TRAVEL ACCOUNT**.

LECTURE - WEDNESDAY, 22 APRIL

Professor Henry Bouillier, Emeritus Professor of the Sorbonne in Paris, will speak on *Egyptian Memories of a Young French University Man Fifty Years Ago*.

Professor Bouillier was Lecturer at the University in Heliopolis from 1950-1955, and Head of the French Department at the University of Cairo from 1964-1967.

The venue for the lecture: The Seminar Room of the Museum of Ancient Cultures, Level 3, X5B, Macquarie University, on Wednesday, 22 April at 8.00 pm.

COST: \$5.00. Please complete the enclosed form and return it with your cheque made payable to: **ACTIVITIES COMMITTEE**, to Joan Beck, School of History, Macquarie University.

PLEASE NOTE NUMBERS ARE LIMITED TO 50.

TWO LECTURES AND SUPPER - WEDNESDAY, 6 MAY

On Wednesday 6 May, Dr John Currid will give two lectures in the Seminar Room of the Museum of Ancient Cultures, X5B, commencing at 7.00 pm.

The first lecture, *Excavations at Carthage, Tunisia: The Tophet (Child Sacrificial Cemetery)* will be followed, after supper, by a second lecture, *Egyptian Setting of the Plague Account*.

Dr Currid is Associate Professor of Old Testament and Chairman of the Biblical Studies Division at the Reformed Theological Seminary in Jackson, Mississippi. He has served on supervisory staffs of numerous excavations in the Middle East, including Carthage, Tell el-Hesi and Bethsaida. He was Director of the Agricultural Project at Tell Halif in Israel.

COST: \$10.00. Please complete the enclosed form and return it with your cheque made payable to: **ACTIVITIES COMMITTEE**, to Joan Beck.

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THE DEAD DO TELL TALES:

The Interpretation of Human Remains in the Archaeological Context.

Mr Mark Spigelman, FRCS, will give a **ONE-DAY COURSE** on **SATURDAY, 23 May**, from 9.30 am to 5.30 pm. **VENUE:** The Seminar Room Museum of Ancient Cultures, X5B.

COST: \$40.00. Please complete the enclosed form and return it with your cheque made payable to the **ACTIVITIES COMMITTEE**, to Joan Beck.

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CONFERENCE - *UNEARTHING EGYPT'S PAST*

The Annual Conference, *Unearthing Egypt's Past*, will be held in X5B, Theatre 1, on SATURDAY, 17 October from 10.00 am to 5.00 pm. (Details in July Newsletter).

COST: \$35.00 (pensioners and students \$25.00).

Please complete the enclosed form and return it with your cheque made payable to: **MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY**, to Joan Beck.

MEMBERS CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Recently a number of letters have been returned to us as members have not informed us of their change of address. Considering the cost of mail it would be greatly appreciated if members would inform us of their intended new address as soon as possible.

SALE OF CARDS - MUGS - T-SHIRTS

The A.C.E. cards, mugs and T-shirts are available from Joan Beck. The cards, with wall scenes from Macquarie excavations, are suitable for all occasions, such as Easter, Birthdays, gifts, etc.

Mugs: one with scenes from a Late Period tomb at Luxor and another with a copy of a Pre-dynastic seal from Helwan.

New mugs, with a scene from Professor Kanawati's excavation at Saqqara, will be available at the Conference.

PRICES: Mugs - \$5.50 each or 2 for \$10 (postage, \$3.50 per mug); Cards - \$2 each or 12 for \$20; T-shirts - \$20.

DINNER

A Dinner will be held in the Function Room of the Macquarie University Union on FRIDAY 11 September. Details in the July Newsletter.

**ALL ENQUIRIES: JOAN BECK - (02) 9850 8848
(Mon. & Wed. 8am to 1pm)**