



# The Rundle Foundation for Egyptian Archaeology

NEWSLETTER NO. 89

July 2004



**THE HELWAN TEAM DURING A LESSON IN ANCIENT EGYPTIAN POTTERY**

## **REPORT ON THE SEVENTH SEASON OF EXCAVATIONS AT HELWAN**

The Macquarie University Helwan team completed its seventh season of excavations between November 2003 and February 2004. The season was begun by moving into and setting up the project's new Facility for Archaeological Research at Helwan (FARAH), which was much welcomed by the project's staff after having worked in small tents for over 6 years. This season also saw the inauguration of a training program for Egyptian junior inspectors who were trained in modern scientific methods of archaeological excavation and recording.

The team had the opportunity to open and clear another of Zaki Saad's storage tombs (Op.3/3), which contained more than 700 mostly complete pottery vessels. Although the majority of these

date to the Early Dynastic Period (c. 3200 – 2700 BCE) there was a small group of vessels of a much later date, that is from the Middle Kingdom (c. 2000-1650 BCE), which confirms previously made observations pertaining to the notion that the archaeological site of Helwan was in use well beyond the Early Dynastic.

Archaeological excavations continued in Operation 4, where 20 new tombs, dating between late Dynasty 1 (c. 2900 BCE) and Dynasty 4 (c. 2600-2500 BCE), were uncovered. The early tombs were mostly simple pit graves containing single contracted burials with few grave goods such as pottery and stone vessels. There were several tombs dating to Dynasty 2, a period which is still ill-understood for both its history and archaeology. Hence, the archaeological evidence that the Australian mission to Helwan has been uncovering over the last several years significantly contributes to filling the gaps in our knowledge about, and assists in defining chronological sub-phases for, this formative period prior to the Old Kingdom. One such Dynasty 2 tomb (Op.4/59) was quite substantial in size with a 5.5 meters deep descent staircase and a 6 meters long subterranean burial chamber with a sizable niche going west, in which yet another fragment of an Early Dynastic funerary stela was found. This fragment, which represents the bottom left corner of an offering scene, brings the total of such early limestone stelae from Helwan to 41.

During the excavations in Operation 4 the team was able to identify several smaller and two large tombs of the Old Kingdom, especially Dynasty 4. The two large tombs comprise rectangular mud brick mastabas, measuring 7.65 x 4.65 and 9.64 x 7.38 meters respectively, which were already partially excavated during the previous season. The larger one (Op.4/50) has an elongated chapel with two niches along its east side and a 4.6 meters deep shaft with a small burial chamber leading south-west. The other mastaba (Op.4/49) has two vertical shafts but neither of them could be completely excavated as the water table was reached after 7 meters of depth. To the east of these large mastabas several contemporary small pit graves with single contracted burials were found. These later tombs provide a unique insight into the burial customs of the early Old Kingdom in the Memphite region and outside the better known sites of Giza and Saqqara and again support the idea of a continuous occupation of the necropolis of Helwan after the Early Dynastic period.

As the new excavations continued the project was assisted by Mr. Mohammed Salah, a conservator of the Supreme Council of Antiquities, who capably looked after the conservation and reconstruction of artifacts. The human remains from this and previous seasons were expertly studied by a team of physical anthropologists headed by Chris Marshall of the Institute of Bioarchaeology in San Francisco.

In spite of the archaeological successes that the Helwan Project has again experienced during the seventh season, we were unfortunately reminded of the fact that our work is ultimately a rescue project as the archaeological site was literally invaded over night in February by local inhabitants who attempted to claim the land for future construction. It was only due to the swift reaction of the staff at Helwan Antiquities Inspectorate who alerted the police and in doing so were able to avert the serious damage to the archaeological remains. In a recent article in the *Al-Ahram* newspaper the Egyptian Minister of Culture, Mr. Faruq Hosni, and the Chair of the Supreme Council for Antiquities in Egypt, Dr. Zahi Hawass, declared that the archaeological site of Helwan was of great significance for the history of early Egypt and that it deserved utmost care and protection from further house construction.

*Christiana Köhler*

## **25<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY CONFERENCE 2004**

### *Alexandria through the Ages*

The special commemorative conference to celebrate the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Egyptology and the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Macquarie University will be held on Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> August. The theme of the conference will be the city of Alexandria, a city which has embraced Pharaonic, Greek, Roman and Coptic cultures.

Three renowned international scholars will give illustrated talks at the conference. French scholars, Dr Jean-Yves Empereur and Dr Marie-Dominique Nenna are well known for their underwater excavations in the harbour of Alexandria. Dr Empereur will talk on *Recent Excavations in*

*Alexandria Underwater: the lighthouse site and the shipwrecks.* Dr Nenna will address two topics: *Glass in Graeco-Roman Egypt* and *Alexandrian Art and Craftsmanship: New Researches*. Dr Gawdat Gabra is a leading scholar in Coptic studies with a special interest in Coptic iconography and Coptic monasticism. He will speak on *The Coptic Popes of Alexandria*.

**A Reception and Conference Launch will be held at 6.45 (for 7pm start) on Friday, 13th August in X5B Theatre 1 for those holding conference tickets.** Dr Jean-Yves Empereur will present a lecture entitled *Recent Excavations in Alexandria on land: temples, dwellings and necropoli* at 7 pm; drinks and supper will be served afterward.

The majority of tickets have already been sold so Members are reminded to pay for their places as soon as possible as we expect the event to be fully booked. All tickets must be pre-paid. Booking forms are enclosed for members who have not already reserved tickets.

### SUNDAY LECTURE

Dr. Gawdat Gabra will give a lecture on *Coptic Civilisation* on Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> August at 7pm. The venue will be St Mary and St Mercurius Coptic Orthodox Church, 2 Cavell Avenue, Rhodes.

### CONFERENCE RAFFLE

The major Raffle prize at this years conference is two return economy class tickets to any Australian capital city on the QANTAS domestic network. We thank QANTAS for their generous donation and Rundle member, Mrs Shyam Lee-Joe for her organisation of this wonderful prize.

### FREE PUBLIC LECTURE

#### *Interaction between Egypt and Sinai/Canaan during the Late Predynastic Period*

This lecture will be given by Professor Eliezer Oren, from the Department of Archaeology and Near Eastern History, Ben Gurion University of the Negev, Israel.

Date: Friday, September 10<sup>th</sup> at 8pm Venue: Building C5C, Lecture Theatre T1

### COURSES

#### *Akhenaten and the Amarna Period*

Dr Michael Birrell will conduct an eight week course which will examine the reign of the pharaoh Akhenaten and the dramatic events of the Amarna Period. It will explore this short-lived period when the king imposed the worship of the sun-god Aten and established a new capital at Amarna. The course concludes with the reign of Tutankhamen and the restoration of orthodox religion. August 5<sup>th</sup> – September 30<sup>th</sup> (no class September 2<sup>nd</sup>)

Cost: \$143 (including GST) Venue: to be advised

#### *Egyptian Arabic*

The object of this course, which will be given by Mr Ezzat Refaei, is to provide students with the basic ability to speak and understand Egyptian Arabic. It is designed for those visiting Egypt for archaeological fieldwork or as a tourist. By the end of the course students will be able to construct basic sentences in Egyptian Arabic and hold simple conversations. There will be 10 meetings beginning on Monday August 2<sup>nd</sup>

Cost: \$150 (including GST) Venue: Building X5B Room 321

*For further information regarding these courses please contact Anne Irish on (02) 9850 8833.*

### PHOTOGRAPHIC EXHIBITION

A photographic exhibition featuring the work of the Australian Centre for Egyptology at Saqqara will be launched on 15<sup>th</sup> September at Parliament House in Macquarie Street. The exhibition will be open to the general public from 15<sup>th</sup> September to 30<sup>th</sup> September.

## COPTIC STUDIES AT MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY

In response to the University's advertisement, a number of applicants applied to teach Coptic studies. A lecture series was held on Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> June in which short listed candidates gave talks and were interviewed. The University has offered the position to one of these candidates.

Coptic Studies will be available to graduate students at Macquarie University from Semester 1, 2005. The programme will be available on campus and on-line. **Applications for enrolments are to be completed in October 2004.** *Please contact:* Post Graduate Office (02) 9850 6410.

### ANNIVERSARY DINNER

An enjoyable evening was experienced on Saturday, 26<sup>th</sup> June at Ryde-Eastwood Leagues Club, to celebrate 25 years of Egyptology at Macquarie University. Congratulations were offered to Professor Kanawati on 25 years devoted to the development and expansion of the study of Egyptology and, in 1990, establishing the Australian Centre for Egyptology. Congratulations were also offered to Dr. Boyo Ockinga for 20 years, and to Dr. Christiana Köhler for 8 years, of excellent teaching at Macquarie University. Joining the celebrations and offering congratulations as well, were the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Di Yerbury, and the Dean of Humanities, Professor Christie Slade. Among the honoured guests was His Grace, Bishop Daniel of the Coptic Orthodox Church.

A history of the department's development over this time was given very entertainingly by Professor Edwin Judge. A most interesting illustrated talk on *Cinematography in Old Kingdom Art* was presented by Professor Naguib Kanawati. After a delicious dinner, the evening concluded with a light-hearted re-enactment of the "Heb-Sed Festival" in honour of Professor Kanawati.

The members and guests who attended the occasion wish to express their thanks to our efficient "Mistress" of Ceremonies, Dr. Christiana Köhler; event organisers, Leonie Donovan and the Activities Committee; and to Heb-Sed creators, Tom Lockley, Susanne Binder and Camilla de Biase-Dyson.

### CONTINUING EDUCATION COURSES 2004

The following courses are available during 2nd Semester. **Cost** is \$150 per course. Time 6.00pm. **For further information please contact Anne Irish on (02) 9850 8833.**

**AHST360 Egyptian Hieroglyphs B**                      **Dr Ockinga**                      **Monday, 10am or 6-9pm**  
This unit, which builds upon AHST260, provides further study of Middle Egyptian Grammar and the study and interpretation of Middle Kingdom Texts.

**AHST361 Ancient Egyptian Religion**                      **Dr Ockinga**                      **Tuesday 10am or 6-9pm**  
This unit will deal with such topics as the concept of God, creation accounts, cosmology, divine kingship, polytheism and monotheism, myths, temple cult, oracles and personal religion.

### RENEWAL FORMS FOR RUNDLE MEMBERSHIP

Subscription renewal forms are enclosed for the 2004/2005 year. **NB: e-mails** – we have had many returned e-mails due to incorrect addresses. If you would like to receive notifications on-line please ensure e-mail addresses are written clearly on your forms and notify us when they change.

**A recording on our answering machine will notify members of any late changes to events or functions. Please ring after 5 pm in the week before any function or event.**

All cheques should be made to MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY and all prices quoted include GST

*All mail and enquiries should be addressed to*  
The Australian Centre for Egyptology  
Division of Humanities  
Macquarie University 2109

Phone: (02) 9850 8848  
9.30am – 3 pm. Monday - Thursday  
e-mail: [egyptology@hmn.mq.edu.au](mailto:egyptology@hmn.mq.edu.au)