



The Rundle Foundation for Egyptian Archaeology Newsletter

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WÂDÎ 'ARABA 2008-2011:

A SUMMARY OF THE IFAO ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY



FIG. 1: THE NORTHERN PART OF THE WÂDÎ 'ARABA

Wâdî 'Araba is a dry valley that extends approximately 160km from Za'farana, on the Red Sea Coast, to the Nile Valley, north of Beni Suef (fig. 2). Visited by the geologists and scholars during the 19th Century (Brunton, Schweinfurth, Figari, Fourtau, Ball), the region however, was never systematically investigated and remains an almost totally unknown territory. Wâdî 'Araba is significantly one of the only communication routes that connect Middle Egypt to the Gulf of Suez. Nevertheless it is sadly the case that there are a limited amount of documents attesting to the unique archaeological and historical potential. The aim of the new archaeological survey conducted by the author since 2008 on behalf of the Institut français d'archéologie orientale (IFAO, Cairo) is to provide new studies with regard to the use of desert tracks between the Nile Valley and the Sinai, a region in the Eastern Desert that had been exploited since prehistory for its stone, gold and copper resources.

The methodology of this project is to systematically investigate the northern part of Wâdî 'Araba (fig. 1) by following the foothills of the Gebel Galala North's axis and the secondary wâdîs that draw transverse roads to circulate inside the Galala massif. The main goal is to record all wells, occupation sites (settlements, cemeteries, mining sites, relays), rock inscriptions and archaeological, historical and geographical documents concerning this circulation valley. The interest of the project concerns its diachronic aspects from the Prehistory until modern times.

The team already surveyed 200 archaeological sites/features including Palaeolithic sites, Neolithic/Predynastic sites, Old and Middle Kingdom camps linked with mining activity (copper), Roman/Byzantine settlements and cemeteries, a Coptic hermitage, rock art stations, cairns and unidentified stone features. Topography of the area was carefully studied in order to highlight the most characteristic elements of the milieu and to understand travelling practices of nomadic or semi-nomadic populations who frequented the Wâdî 'Araba in the various periods of prehistory and antiquity.

Discoveries made since the beginning of the project cover all periods from prehistory to the present. The earliest remains discovered in the area are Paleolithic tools collected on small surface stations. More important is the discovery of a Neolithic site at Bir Buerat. Technological analysis makes it possible to interpret the flint assemblage both chronologically and functionally and to identify two different cultural groups on that site. The first one includes components such as blade arrowheads with tangs (fig. 3), one of them partially bifacial with notches (Helwan point); rough bladelets; and baked-bladelets which could clearly be identified as PPNB elements (Pre-Pottery Neolithic B, ca. 8th millennium BC). The second group is dominated by elements made of thick blades and debitage (waste material) scraps which

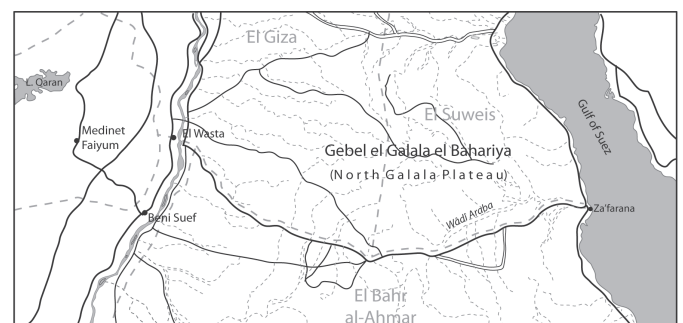


FIGURE 2: MAP SHOWING THE LOCATION OF THE WÂDÎ 'ARABA

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FIG. 3: OLD KINGDOM MINING CAMP IN THE AREA OF GIRGIS



FIG. 4: GALLERY, MIDDLE KINGDOM MINING CAMP, WADĪ ABŪ EL-MAYSA



FIG. 5: CEMETERY, EASTERN RIDGE OF WADĪ ABU QASUA



FIG. 6: COPTIC HERMITAGE

indicate more recent industries: a scraper with a thick regular blade, the proximal part of a thick and regular blade, a straight blade and a portion of a bifacial tool. This group belongs to the Naqada III period or the beginning of the Old Kingdom.

Two Old Kingdom mining camps have been identified in the area of Qasr Girgis. Stone comb-like buildings are still preserved (fig. 3). The largest one measures 27m in length with a maximum width of 15m, with 7 compartments on each side of the central axis. Walls are preserved on an average height of 50cm, and up to 1.2m on its eastern side. Another is 25m long and 20m wide, with a total of 18 compartments around a central axis. Pottery and flint elements belong to the Old Kingdom. Stone hammers, open mine shafts and malachite fragments all over the site provide information concerning a local mining activity, the extraction of malachite.

At the foothill of North Galala, 8 km north of Qasr Girgis, Wadī Abū el-Maysa is a major Middle Kingdom mining camp. The settlement consists of several small huts built with stones. Middle Kingdom pottery sherds were scattered around the features as well as stone hammers. The settlement is situated on a small mound at the entrance of a wadī. On both sides of the wadī are a dozen galleries dug in the rock for a length of 10–15m (fig. 4). Malachite fragments and copper scoria are still present in the spoil heaps in front of the galleries. A 25km long pharaonic track links Ayn Barda, Bir Bikheit and Wadī Abū el-Maysa at the foot of North Galala. The track is marked regularly with stone tumuli (diameter c. 1–2m; height c. 40cm to 1m). We identified and tracked around 62 landmarks along the pharaonic track still visible in the environment. Along the track are also large concentrations of ceramic remains that include primarily Middle

Kingdom pottery but also a few Old Kingdom sherds.

A very large cemetery was discovered on the eastern ridge of Wadī Abu Qasua, at the western part of the survey area. More than 150 graves were identified on the site (fig. 5). All of them were plundered recently as shown by the car tracks still visible near the tombs. This cemetery is the largest site discovered during the Wadī 'Araba Survey and should be considered as one of the most important archaeological sites in that area. Inside and around the tombs a large amount of pottery sherds that could be dated to the Late Roman period were found.

On the Galala North foothill, halfway up the slope, Bir Bikheit is a natural well on a high platform difficult to reach. Built against a large rock is a Coptic hermitage (fig. 6) consisting of three rooms, the largest 2m by 2.5m. Since the visit made in the 1960's by French scholars, it has been disturbed by thief-holes but still preserves parts of its architecture and of its interior plastered walls. This site deserves a more detailed study and a complete topographic survey, which will be carried out by Dr Victor Ghica in January 2012.

The first three seasons of Wadī 'Araba Project have shown that this dry valley is a very important archaeological region which has never been properly investigated. In a small area like Qasr Girgis and Wadī Bikheit, sites are numerous and sufficiently preserved to bring new information. Next season, planned for January–February 2012, will be focused on a complete topographic and archaeological survey of the Coptic hermitage in Wadī Bikheit and the Middle Kingdom camp in Wadī Abū el-Maysa. We will also continue our survey at the eastern edge of the Wadī Araba.

Yann Tristant

YOUNG EGYPTOLOGY FORUM NO. 1: A NEW OPPORTUNITY FOR YOUNG SCHOLARSHIP



L-R CONVENOR DR YANN TRISTANT WITH YEF STUDENT PRESENTERS : MATTHEW GEORGE, AGIE OSER, DR LUIS SIDDALL, ALICE MCCLYMONT, SUSAN TURNER, SAMANTHA DUNNICLIFF, EVAN JEWELL, BONNIE CLARK, EMMA MAGRO, ALEX THOMPSON AND CLAIRE HAINEY, TOGETHER WITH A/PROF. BOYO OCKINGA AND PROF. NAGUIB KANAWATI. (PHOTO: LEONIE DONOVAN)

For students of Egyptology at Macquarie University, it is one of the highlights of the year to attend the conferences presented by the Australian Centre for Egyptology, to hear our lecturers and mentors discuss their research topics and to familiarise ourselves with their work in Egyptology outside the classroom. This year, however, it was the students themselves who were put in the spotlight.

The inaugural Young Egyptology Forum was held on 11th September 2011 at Ryde Eastwood Leagues Club. Developed and organised by Leonie Donovan and Dr. Susanne Binder, this event was established out of a desire to give both undergraduate and postgraduate students at Macquarie University the opportunity to introduce themselves to the A.C.E. community and to present their own research in a conference-style setting. As student coordinator, it was my happy task to promote this event to my peers who, like myself, were eager for this experience.

We were fortunate to receive a range of offers, diverse in content, in the stage of research and in the academic background of the speaker, providing an excellent cross-section of the nature of new research at Macquarie University.

The Forum, convened by Dr. Yann Tristant, consisted of ten speakers separated into three sessions. In Session One, 'Archaeology and Funerary Art', the first to take to the podium was Agie Oser, MA student, presenting on the Old Kingdom tomb of Niankhkhnum and Khnumhotep. She was followed by BA (Hons) candidate Emma Magro, who spoke on the false door panel of the Fifth and Sixth Dynasties and lastly Bonnie Clark, who completed her BAnchHis (Hons) in 2010, on Unknown Man E from the royal mummy cache of Deir el Bahri.

Session Two, 'Language', began with Dr. Luis Siddall, who acquired his MA in Egyptology at Macquarie University, with a presentation on Amarna letters from Tyre, followed by Matthew George, a third-year BAnchHis (Hons) student, on the textual portrayal of divine characters, and Evan Jewell and myself, BAnchHis (Hons) candidates, speaking together on bilingualism in Ptolemaic Egypt and the decrees of Canopus and Memphis. The session was concluded by MA student Alex Thompson, speaking on the ostrakon O.Macq.Inv.2152 and the transportation of grain in Coptic Egypt.

Susan Turner, PhD candidate, began Session Three, 'Art', with a talk on the horse in ancient Egypt, followed by Samatha Dunncliff, also a PhD candidate, on Old Kingdom boat fighting scenes. The final speaker of the day was Claire Hainey, BAnchHis (Hons) candidate, presenting on the principles of composition in the battle scenes of Sety I.

As the first of many Young Egyptology Forums it is hoped to come, the day proved a success. As a speaker, I found it both fulfilling and inspiring to stand alongside my peers and present my own work, while as a coordinator of the event, I felt proud to have assisted in making it a

reality. I would like once again to give thanks, firstly to Leonie Donovan for creating this fantastic opportunity, as well as to Susanne Binder and Yann Tristant for their academic guidance; secondly to each presenter for their willingness and enthusiasm, and finally to all those who were able to attend the event and show their support for the speakers.

We are pleased to announce that the Young Egyptology Forum No. 2 will be held on Sunday, 16th September, 2012. We look forward to hearing from a new line-up of presenters, as well as to giving the A.C.E. community another opportunity to come together and support Egyptology in Australia.

Alice McClymont, YEF Student Co-ordinator

FAREWELL CAROL

Volunteers in the A.C.E. office are saddened that a good friend and mainstay in the office is leaving. Carol Allen is retiring to move to Victoria to be near a daughter and a soon to be born grandchild.

Although a fulltime teacher with TAFE, for the last 14 years Carol has contributed one day a week to the A.C.E. Her special contribution has been financial administration, although she has always willingly shouldered any task that came her way, at busy times taking the work home when it could not be completed in the office. From the early days following the retirement of Joan Beck, when with Gary Dibley and Carmel Amos she began as a volunteer, Carol's support and willing cooperation have made it a pleasure to work with her. Carmel in particular, who shared their 'working' day and responsibilities for keeping an entirely volunteer office operating, wishes to thank Carol for her wonderful companionship. Carmel tells us she will miss all the talk and laughter – but is looking forward to the visits to Victoria.

We wish Carol many happy years in her new home in Victoria, gardening, doing her very beautiful embroidery and, of course, carrying out her grandmotherly duties.

The Australian Centre for Egyptology and the Activities Committee of the Rundle Foundation are also indebted and indeed grateful to Carol for the generous gift of her valuable time and the major part she has played in achieving a successful public outreach by the Rundle Foundation. Carol has promised she will come back for our conferences and we will make sure she sticks to that promise! So Farewell Carol not Goodbye.



2012 Annual Mini Conference

RECENT EXCAVATIONS IN EGYPT

Sunday, April 1, 2012 at 1.00 pm sharp

Ryde Eastwood Leagues Club Auditorium

Macquarie University Egyptologists will discuss their recent work in Egypt. Speakers will include Prof. Naguib Kanawati, A/Prof. Boyo Ockinga, Dr Yann Tristant and Dr Malcolm Choat.

A booking form is included with this Newsletter.

Cost \$25 includes afternoon tea

Diary Dates

Annual Mini Conference

Sunday April 1 2012, 1.00 pm sharp

Annual Dinner

Saturday June 30 2012, 6.30 for 7pm

Annual Conference

Saturday August 11 2012, 10 am sharp

Young Egyptology Forum No. 2

Sunday September 16 2012, 1.00 pm sharp

2012 Annual Conference

Saturday August 11, 2012

Ryde Eastwood Leagues Club Auditorium

9.30 for 10 am sharp

For this year's conference we have invited two very well known scholars. One has accepted our invitation and the other is yet to reply as he is presently on fieldwork.

The speaker we have confirmation from is Dr Ian Shaw, Senior Lecturer in Egyptian Archaeology at the University of Liverpool, author of *Egyptian Warfare and Weapons* and *Hatnub: Quarrying Travertine in Ancient Egypt*, co-author of the *British Museum Dictionary of Ancient Egypt*, editor of *The Oxford History of Ancient Egypt* and co-editor/author of *Ancient Egyptian Materials and Technology*

Dr Shaw's main research interests focus on ancient Egyptian artefacts, technology, innovation, warfare, urbanisation and social life. His fieldwork was initially mainly concerned with the city-site of Tell el-Amarna in Middle Egypt, but since 1985 he has surveyed and excavated a number of quarrying and mining sites dating from the Early Dynastic period through to Roman times (including the Hatnub travertine quarries, the Wadi el-Hudi amethyst mines, the Wadi Maghara turquoise mines, the Sikait-Zubara-Umm Kabu emerald mines, and the Gebel el-Asr anorthosite gneiss and carnelian quarries). Since 2005 he has undertaken two seasons of work on a new multi-disciplinary survey of the town and cemetery of Medinet el-Ghurob in the Faiyum region of Egypt. Dr Shaw has also surveyed and excavated at the tomb-site of Ankhtify at el-Moalla (information from the University of Liverpool web site).

This year the conference price will include morning tea, a light lunch and afternoon tea. As this is a catered function, tickets will be **pre-sold and will not be held at the door unless they are already paid for**. Only if the event is not sold out, will there be tickets for sale at the door.

Cost: Members \$70, Non-Members \$80

Students and Pensioners \$50

School Groups with a minimum of 5 students \$40 per student

Teacher with 5 students FREE

A booking form will be in the next Newsletter

2012 Annual Dinner

Saturday June 30, 2012

The Heritage Function Centre

Ryde Eastwood Leagues Club

6.30 for 7.00 pm

The guest speaker at the Annual Dinner this year will be none other than our own Ronika Power, hopefully by then Doctor Ronika Power. A booking form is included with this Newsletter.

Cost \$60 per person

Young Egyptology Forum No. 2

Sunday, September 16 2012 at 12.45 for 1.00 sharp

Ryde Eastwood Leagues Club Auditorium

We are again holding a forum to celebrate and demonstrate the talent of our upcoming Egyptologists, young and no-so-young. The format this year will be similar to last year, with three sessions, a break after Session 1 and an afternoon tea served after Session 2. There will also be a keynote speaker. Further details and a booking form will be included in a later Newsletter.

Cost: \$25, Students \$15, including afternoon tea

Tickets will also be on sale at the door.

New Publication

Naguib Kanawati (2011) *The Cemetery of Meir, vol. 1: The Tomb of Pepyankh the Middle*.

The publication includes colour photographs, line drawings and a full commentary on all the scenes and inscriptions of the richly decorated chapel as well as the the two superbly painted burial chambers of Pepyankh the middle and his wife, Hewetiaah. The tomb owner held very important positions in the Egyptian administration of the Sixth Dynasty, including those of the Vizier and the Overseer of Upper Egypt in the Middle provinces. The present monograph is based on the recent fieldwork at Meir (Assiut) by the Australian Centre for Egyptology funded by a grant from the Australian Research Council.

Price: \$66

Recent Publications for Sale

N. Kanawati et al (2010) *Mereruka and his Family, Part III: I. The Tomb of Mereruka*, ACE Reports 29

N. Kanawati et al (2011) *Mereruka and his Family, Part III: II. The Tomb of Mereruka*, ACE Reports 30

Price: \$66 each

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

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