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# PONTARCH

Pontefract & District Archaeological Society.

*Editor: Eric Houlder, Past-President.*



## EXCURSION TO EGYPT, concluding part.

by Barbara Stewart.

On the way back to the hotel we stopped at a papyrus factory. It was interesting to watch the papyrus being made and there were many colourful pictures for sale. Papyrus no longer grows wild on the banks of the Nile but is cultivated.

Friday morning brought an early start and we left the hotel for Cairo Airport and the 500 km journey south to Luxor in Upper Egypt. The road to the airport ran through the district of Heliopolis which is bordered by gardens and apartment blocks of superior quality to the majority we had previously seen.

In the departure lounge some of us were conducted towards the toilets. We marched in single file in the wake of a little man clad in a boiler suit. In each hand he clutched a toilet roll and each of us waved a wisp of toilet paper. I wish someone had taken a photograph.

The flight took fifty minutes and we were bussed to the Winter Palace Hotel. Some of the party were accommodated in the modern extension which was very luxurious. The others were given rooms in the original building which was built by Thomas Cook in the last century. The spacious foyer and rooms were furnished in Victorian style. With its faulty wiring and dicey plumbing it was redolent of decaying colonial splendour. Seated on the terrace overlooking the Corniche and the Nile with its cruise boats and feluccas, the ramparts of the Western Desert looming beyond, we had the illusion that we had been transported into a period not our own. The early part of the century, perhaps, when crowned heads and fabled film stars dined and flirted in this

romantic setting. Pauline and Cynthia hit the jackpot when they were allocated the royal suite. When the electricity failed the receptionist reminded them of this honour!

After lunch we visited the nearby Temple of Luxor. Huge statues of Rameses II dominated the entrance and rounded columns covered with hieroglyphics towered above our heads. Inside the enclosure is a mosque and there are traces of Christian murals superimposed on some of the Pharonic inscriptions.

Dinner in the candlelit gardens beside the pool was enlivened by a riotous floor show complete with belly dancer, snake charmer and carnival horse. Some of us ended up on stage as part of the entertainment. The food was varied, plentiful and excellent.

On Saturday morning we visited Denderah which is an agricultural town on the west bank of the Nile. We travelled past fields of sugar cane and palm trees. Primitive but effective irrigation methods such as water wheels and shadufs (which are constructed from branches supporting a bucket at one end and weighted with a ball of dried mud on the other). Small, square box-like shacks, built of mud bricks and with reeded roofs, lined the banks of the irrigation canals. All were in various stages of dilapidation. Electricity was installed in the 1970s when the Aswan Dam was completed and some have television.

The temple of Denderah was dedicated to the Goddess Hathor and is one of the best preserved of Egypt's temples. Hathor was the goddess of music, dancing and

# LECTURE REPORTS AND COMMENTS.

My thanks to the members who have contributed these short papers. We are always glad to receive reports, not only of our meetings, but of those of neighbouring societies. Please try to stay within three hundred words.

## COWBOYS WITH CASTLES,

a postscript to Noel Fojut's lecture on November 20th last.

Since the oil tanker *Braer* grounded on the rocks of Shetland, shedding its load of crude oil into the sea and on to the rocks and surrounding headlands, great play has been made of the damage to marine and bird life. Heart-felt sympathy has been voiced over the damage to the crofters and the ecosystem, and therefore to the economy of the entire group of islands.

Hardly a word has been spoken on the third, and perhaps the most important method of raising income on the Shetlands. **Tourism**, which to a great extent is archaeology, or prehistory. The pictures flashed into our sitting

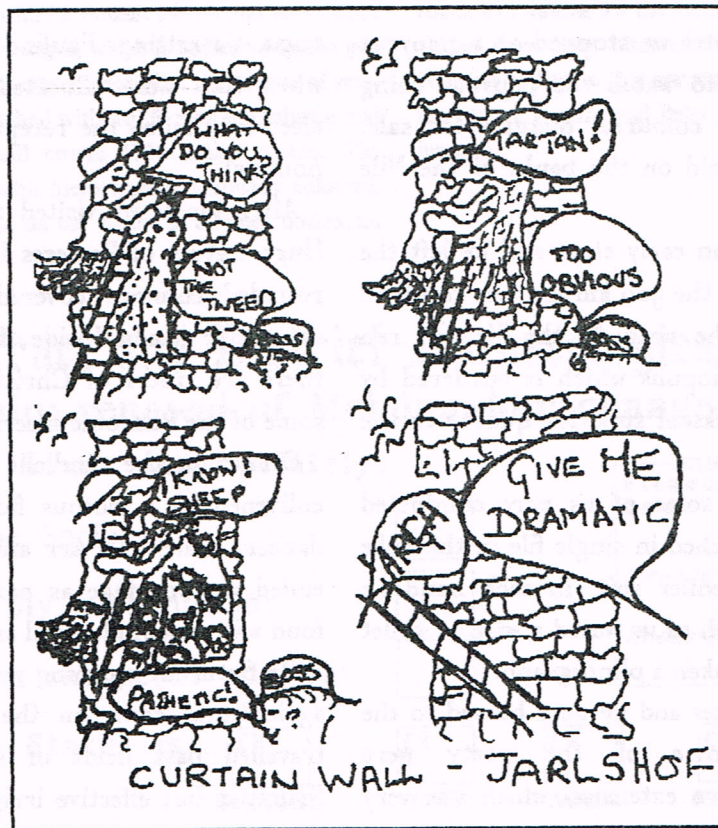
rooms have hardly comprised *the stuff that dreams are made on...* when it comes to choosing the next holiday destination, and yet it is only a small part of the whole which has been subject to a despoiling.

Historic Scotland has covered sites such as Jarlshof with great sheets of hessian as they face the prevailing south-westerly winds, and therefore are liable to a liberal daubing by the airborne globules of oil. Known excavated sites, and unexcavated ones not obvious to the uninformed eye, have been carefully watched to see that no damage is done during the movement of heavy

recovery equipment from Sullum Voe to the south of the island.

A sad scenario to Noel's lecture; it seems that the cowboys are back!

by Janet McNaught. Artwork, Rob.McNaught.



## EXCAVATIONS AT KELLINGTON CHURCH,

by Dr H Mytum,

The excavations at Kellington Church formed the subject of the lecture at a joint meeting of this Society and the History Society attended by 48 members, on February 1993. Dr Harold Mytum used slides to illustrate the progressive stages of the project.

The church of St. Edmund stands on a low rise surrounded by marshy ground some half a mile from the village of Kellington. Due to age and mining subsidence the tower was in a dangerous state. British Coal wanted to mine underneath the church and agreed to pay the cost of underpinning the structure to make the church stable. They also agreed to pay for the tower to be dismantled and rebuilt. All the stones were numbered and stored in a field to the west of the church.

It was decided that, as so much of the church was to be disturbed, an extensive excavation would be made before

underpinning of the structure commenced. The archaeological work was undertaken by three shifts of workers (including our friend Brian Minhinnick, from Wood Hall). Small plans were made of each stage of the work, and combined later.

A north/south burial, indicating a prehistoric or pagan Anglian interment was bisected by a later Christian burial. This suggests that there may have been a burial ground, with perhaps a cairn, on the site. This would have attracted the early Christians to utilise the site for the erection of their first church. Prehistoric flints and Roman pottery found on the knoll reinforce this this supposition.

The first church was a timber structure erected on a raft of pitched mangnesian limestone. The first stone church was constructed around the timber building in the early 12th century. Roman material, perhaps transported from York, was used in conjunction with newly quarried stone. A portion of the wall of the south nave of the first stone church remains, together with a decorated lintel.

Changes were made in the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries, in each case widening and extending the building. The base of a medieval font was found beneath the tower-arch.

There was evidence within the church of several furnaces which were probably used to melt the lead for the windows. A subterranean room was found underneath the chapel. Low-ceilinged, with a tiny window and a small fireplace, it was probably used as a store-place for church plate and sacramental items.

Many coffins were found, some later ones in the churchyard were neatly placed in brick-lined cavities. Altogether, some seven hundred bodies were removed and are now waiting research and eventual re-burial.

The tower has been re-built with its original stones plus a concrete interior. The rest of the church is supported upon huge jacks. The memorial stones have been restored to their original positions.

Barbara Stewart, February 1993.

## EXCURSION TO EGYPT, continued from page one.

happiness. The mother of Horus and goddess of creation she was usually depicted wearing a headdress symbolising the moon supported between the horns of a cow. To the Greeks she represented their goddess Aphrodite. The Graeco-Roman temple has a crypt. There are bas-reliefs to the Goddess Hathor, some of which retain their colour.

In the evening we visited the temple of Karnak in Thebes for a *son-et-lumière* display. This was impressive although many of us preferred the one we had seen at Giza.

Sunday brought an early start for a journey across the Nile to the West Bank and the Valley of the Kings. Barren cliffs silhouetted against the blue sky enclosed the quarry-like valley with its many tombs. Feral dogs prowled around the visitors' centre and the heat was intense. Inside the tombs were wonderful paintings depicting the Book of the Dead. The stunning colours were produced by grinding rocks of different colour, mixing the powder to a paste with oil and applying the paint with a spatula. Each detail was executed by an artist who specialised in that particular item e.g. an eye, a foot, a tunic.

On leaving the Valley we visited an alabaster factory. This was a small, poverty stricken place where we purchased figurines of the goddess Bast, cat-headed deity of the home. This goddess was very popular with the ancient Egyptians.

A smiling little boy proudly showed us his English exercise book as we returned to our coach for the drive to the Valley of the Queens. Here we saw the impressive temple of Queen Hatshepsut who was Queen of Egypt from 1503 - 1482 BC. She was the daughter of King Thutmose I and, as was common practise in the Pharonic Dynasty, she was married to her half-brother Thutmose II.

Workmen using hyperdermics were injecting a substance similar to epoxy into cracks in the pillars and the whole place was thronged with tourists. Although now surrounded by desert the roots of ancient trees have been found, relics of the Temple gardens. During ancient

times there were no houses on the left bank of the Nile. It was a necropolis and, in addition to the tombs of the privileged there were many simple holes where commoners were interred. A workman's village was occupied for about 150 years by the men who built the tombs.

Leaving the Valley of the Queens we visited the Tombs of the Nobles. Here we visited two tombs located in the centre of a village. We drove past the Colossi of Memnon, two gigantic statues which were erected 3400 years ago.

After lunch at the hotel a tranquil sail on a felucca culminated in a visit to Crocodile Island. Herons, black and white kingfishers and egrets swooped across the water. King Tut cocktails and delicious ice-cream were enjoyed beside the hotel pool. The sun set in a glory of colour ranging from pale apricot to deep orange then red. A drive back along the dark lanes in horse drawn gharries provided a fitting end to the evening.

On Monday we visited Karnak, a village which dates back to 3200 BC. The road ran parallel to the Nile with its verdant islands and lush banks. The impressive ruins of this major temple, which is dedicated to the god Amun, reveal just a fraction of the original complex. An avenue of ram-headed sphynxes leads to the great hall with its 137 rounded columns and massive walk. This hypostyle hall covers 5000 square metres. The columns are completely covered with hieroglyphics, originally coloured, now only traces of pigment remain on the underside of some horizontal

slabs resting on the capitals of the columns.

The obelisk of Queen Hatshepsut is identical to the one in the Place de la Concorde in Paris. It is made from fine quality granite quarried in Aswan. Excavations in Karnak began in 1805 and thousands of statues which were found in a cache inside the temple are now scattered throughout the world in numerous museums and collections. The rectangular sacred lake was used for purification by the kings before entry to the temple. Priests, priestesses and kings shaved off all body hair for purity and wore wigs. A large stone scarab which is supposed to represent both the male and female gender was once used as an aid to fertility. Women desiring to become pregnant walked round the statue seven times in an anti-clockwise direction.

On returning to the hotel we dined before packing for our return journey. In the morning we took a final look across the Nile to the desert beyond and left the ancient city for the flight back to Cairo and our last night in Egypt. On Tuesday we returned to Heathrow where our coach was waiting for the journey back to Pontefract. In spite of swollen ankles, some insect bites and a few cases of 'gypsy tummy' I think everyone will agree that our visit was an outstanding success. For this we must thank Pauline and Peter for their efficient organisation and good humour.

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## Pontefract and District Archaeological Society.

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