

Newsletter

SOCIETY FOR THE STUDY OF EGYPTIAN ANTIQUITIES

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Gilbert and Stewart Bagnani at Tebtunis (Part 2)

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In the Spring 2019 Newsletter, Ian Begg included the first part of an article based on a presentation that he, Giulia Deotto (of the University of Padua) and Giorgia Cafici (Scuola Normale Superiore, Pisa) had given at the 2017 Scholars' Colloquium and Symposium, held in Toronto. The title of their Colloquium presentation was 'Reconsidering the Roman presence at Tebtynis: the area of the vestibule of the Soknebtynis temple'. The following article concludes the publication of that presentation.

By March 11 1931 Gilbert Bagnani, Professor of Ancient History at Trent University, wrote: "My Arabic is getting fluent. The workmen say that I must really be an Egyptian who went over to Europe as a child and is picking up the language of his fathers! What a thought! To-day we had the visit of the captain of the Camel Corps, an awfully nice Sudanese, and I explained the dig to him in Arabic!" Gilbert later had to investigate and settle a dispute among the workers entirely in Arabic.

In July Gilbert was at Oxford studying privately with Alan Gardiner, who had just published his textbook on ancient Egyptian grammar. "Had my first lesson with Gardiner who is frightfully pleased with me. He did not think that I knew as much as I do. I think he is going to take a great interest in me because I learnt what I know from his book. As he said: You are a great justification for my method. He said that nearly all the English & German students come to him & that people who had been working a couple of years at the language wouldn't have done the exercises so well" (18 July 1931)

In September 1931, both Bagnani and his co-director at Tebtunis, Carlo Anti, then leader of the Italian Archaeological Mission to Egypt, gave papers at the Orientalist Conference in Leiden, Holland. Anti spoke about the overall excavations at Tebtunis. He had assigned the reliefs to Bagnani to study and publish since they were the most Egyptian part of their archaeological discoveries. By 18 August Bagnani had "completed my study of the reliefs and must now get to work on writing out my paper for the congress. ... I have found out quite a lot about them & have identified practically all the gods. Which, since they have lost their heads, isn't doing so bad." By 1 September he had "finished my paper thank goodness and shall give it to Anti to take back to Rome and have printed as soon as possible. It is a great thing to have got off one's chest. It is appallingly dull but fairly learned: 22 sheets of typescript." The



Portrait of Gilbert Bagnani, Professor of Ancient History at Trent University, Peterborough, Ontario.

22 page Italian version of Bagnani's study dated August 1931 has only recently come to light among his papers at Trent University.

One scene on the then preserved west wall of the vestibule illustrated two porters bearing a litter carrying what is presumed to be a mummified crocodile. Beside them a shade-bearing figure accompanies a iunmouf priest wearing a panther skin and a lock of hair. Rondot even goes so far as to identify this priest king with Ptolemy XII Neos Dionysos, whose statue was found in the vestibule, based on their similar facial profiles. If true, then the beginning of his reign in 80 BCE

would provide a *terminus post quem* for the reliefs themselves.

For the 1932 season Gilbert brought his wife Stewart and a movie camera with him to record the succession of events, as he called them. "Anti is likely in the autumn to become Rettore of Padua in which case he cannot possibly come out to Egypt. In that case I should become acting director and eventually chief of the mission in name as well as in fact. The prospect of course is very simpatico." (Tuesday 2 February 1932 to Mother) They arrived to find Anti building a mud brick dig house for them, financed by increased funding after the successful results of the 1931 season.

In 1931 Gilbert was already taking panoramic views of the sanctuary. But taking panoramic photos wasn't enough for Gilbert. As he wrote to his mother back in Rome soon after first arriving at the site, "I really wish for the first time in my life that I had a cinema; it would have been such fun when I get back to Rome. The best scenes do not lend themselves to snaps," and to his wife Stewart he had written "I really feel that next year we must beg, borrow, or steal a cinema. There is no place for snaps; what one wants is a succession of events." So in 1932 Gilbert brought a borrowed movie camera to the site and began filming everything. Of 17 reels so far known to have survived, about 100 minutes have been spliced together. They are not in chronological order and seem to date mostly to 1932 and some to 1933 although there are references in the letters to later filming.

Stewart's arrival at Tebtunis in 1932 brought an entirely new perspective to life there. Her letters to her mother in Rome and her diaries describe her interactions with the local wives and children of the Bedouin as well as of the Egyptian fellahin, who otherwise had nothing to do with the excavators. Bedouin women, who had never left the desert for the lands cultivated by the Egyptians, travelled with Stewart on donkeys inland to the market town of Tutun, filmed by Gilbert. When invited out to the homes of the local sheiks, Stewart met their wives and children, normally secluded. Gilbert filmed a wedding procession, and there is also photographic documentation of a few individuals named in the letters. Few excavations would leave so much research material for local ethnographic studies.

In 1932 Anti had to decide what do about the concession to dig at Tebtunis after his promotion at Padua to being the Rector of the University at the end of the year. He realized that he would not be able to spend the winter months in Egypt away from his new responsibilities in Padua, but he wanted to continue the fieldwork somehow. He finally decided to continue both as Rector and Director himself by having Bagnani conduct the actual fieldwork while encouraging him to write the concorsi exams which would enable Gilbert to become an inspector officially qualified to direct excavations in his own name. In his subsequent years as Rector from 1932 until removed in 1943, he added Fascist buildings such as the Liviano to the ancient university campus.

In 1933 both Anti and Bagnani were swept up in the

planning for the state visits to Egypt by the Italian royal family in March 1933. All the intended venues had to be prepared, such as lighting the Tomb of Nefertari in the Valley of the Queens, and constructing a road across the desert sand to the site at Tebtunis, over which Stewart was left in charge. Colourful ceremonial tents were erected near the dig house as a reception area for the royal dignitaries.

On Monday 6 March the royal party traveled by train from Wasta to Medinet el Fayyum and then rode in a seventeen car caravan to Tebtunis, and drove over the new road to the site. For his last visit to Tebtunis, Anti had arrived Friday 3 March and arose early on Monday 6 March, the day of the state visit, to pack and turn his bedroom into an exhibit room to display their better finds. He left Tebtunis for good in a rush with the royal party.

Despite and between all these distractions, Bagnani happened to notice some walls standing through the sand with traces of painting on them. They soon proved to be a frescoed church with attached monastic outbuildings. Bagnani kept a notebook with plans and details, now at Trent. Two of the wall paintings, of Adam and Eve Before and After the Fall, and of Samuel son of Stephen, were removed and are on display in the Coptic Museum in Cairo but a third was stolen and resurfaced soon after at an antiquities dealer in Cairo. Stewart painted some watercolours of parts of these frescoes, and there are dozens of black and white photos of this church and its outbuildings at Trent. So there were at least four Coptic churches excavated at Tebtunis, the first by Grenfell and Hunt in 1899, two more by Bagnani between 26 March and 4 April in 1931, and the 1933 frescoed church. Above and below the painted friezes were painted depictions of textiles, which Stewart Bagnani copied in a series of watercolours.

For the following season, Gilbert was already in Cairo in December 1933. He had long had in an interest in photography, its technical advances and potential for archaeology. "I want to see if I can't go up & have a look at our dig from the air. It might be interesting. I hope anyway to get them to take photographs." Through his connections with Rex Engelbach, the Keeper of the Cairo Museum, and Sir Charlton Spinks, the Canadian-born Inspector-General of the Egyptian Army and head of the Egyptian Air Force, Gilbert arranged to have a series of two dozen aerial photos taken over Tebtunis. Engelbach, an engineer, as early as 1920, during an aerial survey of the Nile, had arranged for aerial photos to be taken of the Theban temples and the Aswan obelisk, and the technique had spread in the Near East and advanced greatly in the 1920s. (Engelbach, "The Aeroplane and Egyptian Archaeology" *Antiquity* 1929, 470-73) Although a plane flew over Tebtunis on February 22 evidently reconnoitering the site, analysis of the detailed accounts of the progress of the excavations in Bagnani's letters suggests that the 1934 aerial photos were taken in the afternoon of Sunday 19 March.

At a meeting of the Italian Overseas Committee on 2 February 1934, Roberto Paribeni announced that the Anti-

Bagnani mission in Egypt was financially suspended because the annual ordinary contribution had not yet been deposited. To Bagnani's rescue came a papyrologist bringing substantial privately raised funds from Milan, Achille Vogliano. Although he had had no previous archaeological or Egyptian experience, he was waiting for Egyptian approval of his permit to dig at Narmouthis (Medinet Madi), a nearby site which had yielded Manichaean papyri. While Vogliano spent most of February buying papyri in Cairo, Bagnani arrived at the site February 3 and started by moving all the sand away from the middle of the processional dromos, and then began clearing a group of houses with a lot of good papyri. While waiting for his application to dig to be approved, Vogliano planned to spend his time with the Bagnani's at Tebtunis. Vogliano finally arrived at the site 28 February, and Bagnani began a new excavation notebook entitled "Campagna di scavo della R. Università di Milano." Then on Wednesday 21 - Thursday 22, Bagnani and Vogliano discovered the largest hoard of papyri found in Egypt in decades in a basement of one of the small houses of the Insula dei Papiri. Dating to the middle of the 2nd century CE, the papyri were originally the papers of the rich family of Laches/Patron intermingled with those of three working farm families (Pakebkis, Kronion, Turbo), evidently their estate managers.

Inside the compound of the Insula dei Papiri, the house units, despite their varying sizes, resemble one another in having south entrances accessible from small enclosed courtyards running east-west, four rooms inside a square, and stairways immediately inside their entrances, usually to the right, as well as upper floors. None of the houses could be entered directly from the streets outside but only from courtyards within the Insula. The presence of houses of similar plan but on different scales suggests an internal hierarchy of occupants. This Egyptian type of walled residential compound is well known from the Middle Kingdom at Abydos and Lahun, and from the Eastern Village at Amarna for example, but the intervening two millennia present a challenge to this comparandum.

In antiquity, the priests would mummify crocodiles and sell them to pilgrims to dedicate, even wrapping up smaller bones and including them as the "children." A small percentage of mummified crocodiles were stuffed with papyri but of the much rarer Ptolemaic date. So to satisfy Vogliano at the end of the 1935 season, they "dug crocodiles & got 5 with magnificent papyri in them! They are the devil, however, to unwrap & it is one of the most unpleasant jobs I know. The stench is perfectly frightful." Years later he wrote that Stewart had insisted that they take the mummified crocodiles away from the courtyard of their house.

Needless to say, the completely unexpected discovery of such an enormous hoard of papyri upset Anti's Agreement with the Florentine papyrologists Girolamo Vitelli and Medea Norsa. Since they had been financing part of the dig since Breccia's in 1929, they expected to receive whatever papyri the Egyptians allowed to leave for Italy. But the 1934 season had been financed by Vogliano, the papyrologist from Milan, and therefore whatever papyri and artifacts were found after he

arrived at the site were sent to Milan. On the other hand, the big discovery of papyri elicited renewed interest and funding for Anti's mission at Tebtunis. 50,000 lire from Paribeni would finally pay for a decauville rail system as well as a car for the 1935 season.

His mother's health began deteriorating and she died rather suddenly Monday evening 28 January 1935. Gilbert flew to Rome by the end of the week and stayed for a few days to see Anti and Vogliano before returning to the excavations. Since both Stewart and her mother were also in Egypt, there are no other letters and, so far, no diaries have been found for 1935.

Gilbert sailed with Stewart and her mother in late July to settle his mother's estate in Canada. Stewart's mother suddenly fell ill in August and died soon after in September 1935. So both Gilbert and Stewart, who were only children and had no children, found themselves suddenly alone within the space of a few months. They were held up in Canada for months trying to deal with settling their mothers' estates, rendered complicated in Canada by the fact of their Italian citizenship. One can only imagine the discussions that ensued about their future. By mid-December, they were intending to return to Italy in mid-January via London. At some point they made the decision to immigrate to Ontario, chose the farmhouse to renovate which they would call Vogrie after an ancestral home in Scotland, and also planned an extensive driving tour through Europe, during which they bought art and furniture for their new home.

Since nothing was ever published, the only clear evidence discovered so far of any excavation at Tebtunis in 1936 is in the Trent Archives. Stewart's diary and the excavation guestbook indicate that Gilbert was on the site from 5 April until 13 May. Their most distinguished visitor was the British High Commissioner, Sir Miles Lampson, and his very young second wife, who looks increasingly bored in the three photographic prints at Trent. As often, the British diplomat kept papers which were subsequently published. In his diary for Sunday April 5,



Gilbert Bagnini and his wife, Stewart, on the steps of the Bata Museum, Trent University



The Bagninis, relaxing with their Saluki hounds

1936, he wrote: “[Bagnani] is a curious figure: a long, gaunt individual in shorts, and with his head wrapped up in a turban; the latter, he explained being a precaution against earache which he otherwise contracts in a desert wind. The net result is peculiar. ... He is a curious creature; I thought rather nice, though I heard afterwards that he is supposed to be particularly anti-British! He talks admirable English, his mother having been a Canadian and also having married a Canadian wife.

Finally, in the 1936 season, Reginald Engelbach actually flew to the site himself 7 May. Another two dozen overlapping aerial photos now in the Trent Archives were taken, perhaps in May after the excavation ceased. Because they overlap, they can also provide 3D images when looked at through a stereoscope. On 27 May 1936 Gilbert and Stewart set sail from Egypt for good. They traveled by car through Greece and the Balkan peninsula up to Italy.

At the south end the intact sanctuary with its priests’ houses and workshops was the residence of the oracular crocodile deity Soknebtunis. Processions would proceed out from the temple through the vestibule and along the dromos lined with its Roman deipneteria, perhaps stopping at the kiosks, before turning at the north end westwards toward the desert. The deipneteria are found nowhere else except along the dromos and were obviously intended to witness the processions, possibly as the mummified crocodile was carried in procession after dark to be buried in the western desert. Since the deity was an oracle consulted by pilgrims, the answers to their questions might have been discerned during the processions.

In 1936 in Canada Gilbert bought a cattle farm near Port Hope, the town where his mother had been born. They enlarged the farm house with a new wing to accommodate and display Gilbert’s library and art collection. Vogrie became an English country house in the backwoods of Ontario where guests would be dazzled by conversation surrounded by rare books and incunabula, medieval and pioneer artifacts, rococo and modern

art. During the war, as a resident alien, Gilbert was not allowed to travel far from home without permission. In 1945 he was invited by Gilbert Norwood to teach in the Classics Department at the University of Toronto, where he remained for the next two decades, until retiring in 1965.

After Gilbert retired from Toronto, Prof. Tom Symons, the Founding President of a small new university in Peterborough, invited Gilbert, his former teacher at Toronto, and Stewart to teach part-time at Trent. Gilbert died in February 1985, leaving his papers and property to Trent. Trent set up scholarships and later built Bagnani Hall in his memory. Before Stewart died in 1996, she donated many cartons of letters and photos to the Art Gallery of Ontario in Toronto.

In 2013 I was contacted by Giulia Deotto, then a graduate student at Padua working on the papers of Carlo Anti at Padua. After she visited the archives at Trent and the AGO, we agreed to collaborate on researching and publishing the archives in Italy and Canada relating to Tebtunis. Then they discovered that Anti’s papers at the Venetian Institute contained academic as well as administrative material. There is now an entire team of grad and post-grad students working in Padua and Venice on various aspects of this project.

Both Anti and Bagnani were capable of organizing scores of workers under their supervision and planning ahead for the future. Both men had chosen Classics as their first field of interest at the University of Rome and then archaeology in Athens but it was Egyptology that provided an opportunity to further their academic careers, that is until Anti became an administrator in 1932 and Bagnani emigrated to escape Mussolini’s tax regime in 1936. As Egyptology lost its priority in their professional lives, they both lost interest in publishing their spectacular finds in the desert, and they drifted apart professionally as well as geographically.

Tebtunis is the second most productive site of papyri in Egypt, after only Oxyrhynchus but, unlike this latter site, Tebtunis provides a wealth of archaeological and architectural remains to be examined to contextualize the papyrological information. Excavations were resumed in 1989 by another papyrologist from Milan, Prof. Claudio Gallazzi. Walls formerly exposed in the 1930s have since weathered badly or been removed entirely, like the sculpted vestibule of the sanctuary, but Gilbert’s photos reveal and preserve their freshly exposed state. It will take a few more generations before all the tens of thousands of papyri from Tebtunis scattered in various museums are pieced together and fully analyzed but at Tebtunis there is the unique opportunity of being able to locate the families in their houses and public buildings, which in turn could enhance our understanding of the people in the papyri. It was the Italian excavations of the 1930s led by Carlo Anti and Gilbert Bagnani that laid the foundations for this potential understanding of Tebtunis’ former inhabitants.

2019 Annual General Meeting of the SSEA/SÉÉA

Every year, on the weekend of the Annual Symposium and Scholars' Colloquium, the entire voting membership of the SSEA/SÉÉA hold their ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING in Toronto to elect the Board of Trustees which governs the Society through the parent, "national" organization ("Head Office") and pass the Society's budget and approve the financial statements.

The national organization organizes the Annual Symposium and Scholars' Colloquium and all publications, including the Journal and Newsletter and maintains the database of members. All members of any chapter of the SSEA or SÉÉA are members of the national organization and entitled to vote. If you cannot attend the Annual General Meeting of The SSEA/SÉÉA, you may also send a proxy, using the salmon-coloured form, which will be mailed to you. The AGM will be followed by a reception.. This year's Annual General Meeting will be held on October 4th, 2019 from 5:30pm. A reception will follow.

Schedule for the 2019 AGM Weekend

Thursday, October 3rd, 7:15pm in 5 Bancroft Ave. – Free Lecture: Topic TBA.

The Colloquium and Symposium are now grouped together as paid events. One fee pays for the entire weekend. Entry fees: \$85 SSEA Members; \$95 Non-members ; \$45 Non-member English ; \$40 Student members. A discount of \$5 is available for all categories with advance registration.

Friday, October 4th, 9am to 4:30pm – Scholars' Colloquium Day 1; held in 5 Bancroft Ave.

Friday, October 4th, 5:30 pm onward – Annual General Meeting of the SSEA/SÉÉA; This event is held in 4 Bancroft Ave.

Saturday, October 5th, 9am to 5pm – Annual Symposium, held in room 1050, 5 Bancroft Ave.

Sunday, October 6th, 11am to 4pm - Poster Session and Scholars' Colloquium Day 2; held in 5 Bancroft Ave.

Annual Symposium 2019

ANIMALS IN ANCIENT EGYPT

Animals were an integral part of ancient Egyptian life and culture. The images, the bodies and the living animals themselves were everywhere in writing, religion and daily life. This year's Symposium will explore the animal world of the ancient Egyptians with a panel of international scholars.

The symposium takes place during the 2019 AGM weekend and will be held on October 5th on the University of Toronto campus in Toronto.

Colloquium and Poster Session

This year, the Colloquium and Poster Session presentations will take place from 9 am to 4:30 pm on October 4th and from 11 am to 4 pm on October 6th at 5 Bancroft Ave. The formal presentation of the posters will be at the beginning of the second day. The detailed schedule for each day will be available online, on the SSEA / SÉÉA website: www.thessea.org.

Assemblée Générale Annuelle de la SSEA/SÉÉA 2019

L'assemblée générale annuelle des membres de la SSEA/SÉÉA se tient chaque année à Toronto lors de la même fin de semaine que le symposium annuel et colloque. On y élit l'ensemble des administrateurs (Trustees), lesquels gouvernent l'organisme parent, « national », de la Société ("Head Office") ; aussi, on y adopte le budget de la Société et approuve les états financiers.

L'organisme national organise le Symposium annuel de même que le Colloque, s'occupe de toutes les publications nationales, incluant le Journal et le Newsletter et maintient la liste des membres. Tous les membres de tous les chapitres de la SSEA/SÉÉA sont aussi membres de l'organisme national et ont droit de vote. Si vous ne pouvez être présent lors de l'assemblée, vous pouvez aussi voter par procuration (proxy), en retournant le formulaire couleur saumon qui vous sera envoyé.

Cette assemblée aura lieu le 4 Octobre à 17h30. Une réception suivra.

Horaire de la Fin de Semaine de l'Assemblée Générale 2019

Jeudi 3 octobre, 19 :15h au 5 Bancroft – Conférence.

Le Colloque et le Symposium sont maintenant les événements payant. Les frais d'entrée seront de : \$85 Membres SSEA ; \$95 non-membres ; \$45 étudiants non-membres ; \$40 membres étudiants. Un rabais de 5 \$, sera applicable sur toutes les catégories, en cas d'inscription hâtive.

Vendredi 4 octobre, 9h à 16h30 – Premier jour du Colloque - Au 5 Bancroft Ave.

Vendredi 4 octobre, débutant à 17h30 – Assemblée générale annuelle des membres de la SSEA/SÉÉA - Au 4 Bancroft Ave.

Samedi 5 octobre, 9h à 17h – 41e Symposium annuel - À l'amphithéâtre 1050 du 5 Bancroft Ave.

Dimanche 6 octobre, 11h à 16h – Deuxième jour du Colloque et Session d'Affiches - Au 5 Bancroft Ave.

Symposium Annuel 2019

ANIMALS IN ANCIENT EGYPT

Les animaux faisaient une partie intégrante de la vie et de la culture égyptiennes anciennes. Les images, les corps et les animaux vivants eux-mêmes étaient omniprésents dans l'écriture, la religion et la vie quotidienne. Cet automne, la SÉÉA/SSEA tiendra son symposium annuel sous le thème "ANIMALS IN ANCIENT EGYPT" («Les animaux dans l'Égypte ancien»).

Le symposium de cette année, qui aura lieu en marge de notre réunion annuelle des membres et du Colloque, se déroulera le 5 OCTOBRE 2019 sur le campus de l'université de Toronto à Toronto au Canada.

Colloque et Session d'Affiches 2019

Cette année, les présentations du Colloque et de la session d'affiches se dérouleront de 9h à 16h30 le 4 octobre puis de 11h à 16h le 6 octobre au 5 Bancroft Ave. La présentation formelle des affiches se fera au début de la deuxième journée. L'horaire détaillé pour chaque jour sera disponible en ligne, sur le site de la SSEA/SÉÉA : www.thessea.org.

Calgary Chapter Report – August 2019

The Calgary Chapter wrapped up the 2018-2019 season with a meeting on June 7th with an illustrated presentation by Dr. Andrew Wade entitled 'Exploratory and Experimental Imaging studies of Egyptian Mummies'. Dr. Wade discussed variations in evisceration and excerebration and how the IMPACT Radiological Mummy Database, established at Western University, can be used to study ancient health and trends in funerary ritual.

The first meeting of the 2019-2020 season will be a lecture by Dr. Lincoln Blumell of Brigham Young University speaking on early Christianity in Egypt. This is scheduled to be on October 17th, and please note that this is a Thursday rather than the usual Friday meeting day.

This will be followed shortly thereafter by a meeting provisionally set for Friday, November 1st with a talk on aspects of the Valley of the Kings by Dr. Erik Johannesson of the University of Calgary.

It is currently planned that Calgary meetings will continue to be held on the University of Calgary campus, but please check the Chapter website and emails for any updates. (calgary.thessea.org)

Winter and Spring 2019 in Montréal

The second wing of the 2018-2019 season proved quite eventful and varied, despite a few setbacks (2 cancelled lectures). Indeed, we had four public lectures (the same number as originally planned!) and our wonderful annual pique nique. The four lectures were, on January 22nd, "L'apport historique des tombes du Bubasteion à Saqqara" by UQAM Prof. Valerie Angenot, on February 19th, "Épigraphie numérique : les nouvelles technologies au service de l'égyptologie" by Perrine Poiron (PhD Candidate UQAM and Sorbonne), on May 2nd, "Silence et turbulence en Égypte ancienne: un aspect de la moralité au Nouvel Empire" by Guillaume Bouchard-Labonté (PhD Candidate UQAM) and finally, on May 13th, "Secrets of the Egyptian Antiquities - New Discoveries" by Prof. Dr. Mamdouh Eldamaty (Ain Shams University), former minister of Antiquities of Egypt. All these lectures were held on the UQAM premises.

This year's annual pique-nique was themed "princesses and princes of Egypt", organized on a potluck basis in executive member Michel Gervais backyard. It was well attended, and nobody left hungry! As usual, we held an auction sale for the benefit of our little society. This year, over 830\$ were thus raised! Amongst other thing, this money allows us to finance the "Elizabeth King-Daimsis Scholarship" which allows a Québec student to attend the Society's annual symposium in Toronto. This year's winner is Savannah Bernatchez (BA student UQAM). Savannah's topic of predilection being the animals, she will certainly have a thrilling experience next October!

A year of activity is over, but another one is just waiting around the calendar's corner! And 2019/2020 will be our 20th season! Come and join us next September 20 for it's launch and the official opening of our new library and study room at the UQAM history department!

July 2019: The First Occasion of Egyptian Heritage Month in Ontario

On Thursday June 6, 2019, the Legislative Assembly of Ontario unanimously passed the second reading of Bill 106 - proclaiming the month of July of each year as “Egyptian Heritage Month”. Bill-106 was the private member bill tabled by Sheref Sabawy, Member of Provincial Parliament for Mississauga – Erin Mills. (MPP Sabawy is the first parliamentarian of Egyptian origin to be elected in any form of parliament in all of Canada). Working with MPP Sabawy, a number of volunteers collaborated with the Egyptian government’s representatives to plan special events in honour of this occasion.



Professor El Damaty and Minister Nabila Makram at the Egyptian Museum (Photo: Leticia Mancini)

The organizers planned two special events. The first took place on Saturday, July 20th, 2019, in the Egyptian Museum of Mississauga. This event included a welcoming reception, dinner and a lecture by former Minister of Antiquities Prof. Mamdouh El Damaty, followed by a tour of the museum. The second event took place on July 23rd, National Day of Egypt, and was held at the Ontario Legislative Building at the raising of the Egyptian flag ceremony.

At one point there was discussion of the SSEA hosting a lecture with Dr. El Damaty, plans in which we enthusiastically participated, but unfortunately this event had to be cancelled due to the speaker’s travel schedule. (Dr. El Damaty had already spoken for Toronto Chapter in May, in a “post-season” event, but the Society welcomed the chance to hear him again).

However, the Society did manage to be represented at the very lovely event at Philopateer College in Mississauga, home of the Egyptian Museum in Mississauga. In addition to several SSEA members, the Society was officially represented by national President Dr. Lyn Green, and Toronto Chapter President/national Vice-President Gayle Gibson. The event was attended by a number of luminaries, including Her Excellency, Minister Nabila Makram, Minister of Emigration and Egyptian Expats Affairs and Hazel McCallion, former (1978-2014) Mayor of Mississauga.

The Egyptian Museum in Mississauga

The Egyptian Museum in Mississauga is the realization of a dream for a group of dedicated Egyptian-Ontarians. After many years of major efforts and expense, they have now established this museum, with a collection consisting mainly of “authentic” replicas and a small Coptic section. (The replicas are deemed “authentic” because they originate in Egypt and are made with the same techniques – and sometimes the same materials – as the ancient originals). Recently, however, they have received a shipment of hundreds more objects, which were not yet on display as of the July 20th event. The Museum has been open (by appointment) for visitors since 2017.

On July 20th, after the lecture by Minister El Damaty, some of the SSEA officers and members present at the special event in honour of Egyptian Heritage Month took the opportunity to tour the collection. Although we did not get to visit the movie theatre, we were able to quickly look over some of the collection. The pieces from the tomb of Tutankhamun are mostly very well done, especially the replica of the painted chest. We look forward to visiting when the museum’s new artefacts are on display.

The Museum is located at 6341 Mississauga Rd. Mississauga, Ontario (L5N 1A5), inside Philopateer College. The hours of operation are 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., Monday to Friday. For more information, visit the Museum’s website at <https://www.theegyptianmuseum.ca/> or check them out on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/pg/The-Egyptian-Museum-in-Mississauga-256575381441715/>

The SSEA Ontario

The Ontario Branch of The SSEA has had a very busy and happy year, with lots of fine speakers and great discussions. By extraordinary good fortune, the Chapter managed to host nine excellent speakers during the year, host two courses and one special event. Thanks are due to all members who had the stamina to help out with the arrangements and to those who came out and made every occasion a social event as well as a scholarly one. In addition to talks and courses, the SSEA Ontario Website hosts all the latest dirt from excavations in Egypt and Museum discoveries thanks to the work of the Nile Scribes.

The year's topics covered Digging in Egypt, past and present, religion, history, and Egyptomania. We had splendid talks from graduate students and from renowned masters in the field. One special treat was an unexpected visit from the former Minister of Antiquities of Egypt, Professor Doctor Mamdouh Eldamaty, who now teaches at Ain Shams and excavates at Heliopolis. – Dr. Eldamaty enjoyed his Toronto visit so much that he came back to the city in July to participate in Egyptian Heritage Month in Ontario and to finally get to Niagara Falls. Dr. Eldamaty's erudition is matched only by his charm and friendliness. We hope there will be occasion to see him here again.

Here's the list of our talks this past year.

September 2018: Dr. Suzanne Onstine, TT 16 and the Chanter Panesy.

October 2018: Erin Ingram, Disturbing the Balance, Heart Scarabs and Mortality

November: Dr. John Baines, Watery Landscapes in Ancient Egypt and Why They Mattered

December 2018: Sherine El-Sabaie, Building Egypt in the West

January 2019: Guillaume Sellier, Université de Québec, In Search of Ancient Egypt in Canada, Montreal 1838-2018.

February 2019: Dr. Ian Begg, Crocodile Mummies, Nazis and

the Garden of Eden. Gilbert Bagnani

March 2019: Gayle Gibson, Ramesses I, the Pharaoh from the Falls

April 2019: Dr. Joshua Roberson, Practical Apotheosis: Becoming a God and (De)constructing the Afterlife in Egypt's New Kingdom.

May 2019 Professor Dr. Mamdouh Eldamaty, Secrets of Egyptian Antiquities (Ein Shams University)

August 2019: Carol Redmount, Archaeological Legos: Putting Together the Sheshonq I Temple at El Hiba.

There were also two courses, one in the Fall, and one in Spring. In October, Chapter President Gibson taught an unusual course called "Widows, Orphans and Tough-Minded Mothers: the Second Intermediate Period to Hatshepsut," and Dr. Lyn Green, cheered up a rainy April with a course on Egyptomania. These courses are held at 4 Bancroft and are intimate and friendly groups where all are welcome, beginners and folks who have been fascinated with Egypt since childhood. Keep an eye out for this year's courses.

For the past two summers, we have been trying a bit of outreach to communities who might not think to come to a lecture at the University, but who enjoy Egypt. Last year we visited a brewery and talked about Egyptian beer while sampling the Canadian stuff. This year we partnered with the Toronto Humane Society for a very cheerful evening of meeting potential pets and listening to Best Friends Forever, Dogs and Cats in Ancient Egypt. Letitia Mancini has been the organizer of our summer events. We managed to hit the hottest day of the summer this year, but still had a reasonable crowd. Perhaps we should try this sort of outreach later in the year? Suggestions as to venues and times are most welcome.

And finally, all are invited to meet before the lectures for supper. Supper is usually at the cosy Free Times Café, at 5 p.m. Come along and meet new friends or enjoy seeing the Usual Suspects.

The opinions expressed in the Newsletter do not necessarily represent the views of the Society for the Study of Egyptian Antiquities. Are you a member of the SSEA? The SSEA/SÉÉA has Chapters in Calgary, Alberta, Montréal, Québec, Toronto, Ontario and Vancouver, British Columbia. The Chapters host lectures and events on Egyptological topics. Full Individual and Student Memberships in the Society includes a volume of the scholarly Journal of the SSEA and the SSEA Newsletter, and free or discounted admission to SSEA events. Associate Membership in the SSEA includes the Newsletter and free or discounted admission to events. Associate Membership is only open to members in provinces which have a Chapter. All categories of membership, excluding institutional members, are entitled to vote at the Annual General Meeting. To apply for membership, write to the address on the front of this Newsletter or email us at info@thessea.org. For updates, schedule changes, and further information, see the SSEA website at: www.thessea.org.