

Presidents Report 2015-16 (Professor Alan Lloyd)

It is a strange time for things Egyptian and Egyptological. On the one hand, the political situation in Egypt itself is far from good with Islamist threats placing recurrent pressures on the country which force the government into draconian measures that do nothing to promote tourism, travel, or fieldwork in the country. On the other hand, for the Egyptologist there is much exciting material emerging in various parts of the country, in particular the spectacular results of the marine archaeology research along the north-western Delta which provides such vivid insights into Late Period and Greco-Roman Egypt – and there is no reason to believe that that is the end of the matter!

Within the United Kingdom the subject continues to flourish mightily. The universities continue to teach the subject, despite recurrent threats to budgets, and conferences organized by museums and universities are well attended and do much to disseminate the results of recent research. Within this context Thames Valley is very much ahead of the game. The fund-raising study day with Barry Kemp in July brought in a hundred attendees and raised over £3000, no mean feat in these straitened times.

Funding is, of course, a recurrent problem, but it is a problem which goes back to the very beginnings of the subject in this country. It is a sad, but brutal, fact that we can only have what we can afford, and that holds true of the big and not so big institutions. Membership is, therefore, for many of us a crucial issue. Even the Egypt Exploration Society has serious problems at present in this area with numbers dropping year by year and the age profile looking far from promising. However, Thames Valley is to be congratulated in seeing quite the opposite situation with its current numbers growing. This may have something to do with the excellent programmes of lectures which it manages to put together. The last year has been no exception with coverage by excellent speakers ranging from architecture, mortuary religion, daily life, literature, history, museology, and royal iconography, and I was delighted to hear that attendance in January and June was at record levels.

All the signs are that Thames Valley will continue to flourish and serve its members well. I look forward to reading of another successful year in 2017.

Chairman's Report 2015-16 (John Billman)

It is once again my pleasure to report on a very successful year for the society, with a growth in both membership and attendance. The strength of the society was particularly evident in the summer, usually a quieter period, with an overflowing lecture theatre for Lucia Gahlin in June and 107 bookings for our largest ever study day in July. This event with Professor Barry Kemp will surely be remembered for a long time, and still more importantly raised no less than £3200 for Barry's ongoing work in el-Amarna. Meanwhile in the Spring we enjoyed another sell-out trip organized by Beth Asbury, on this occasion to the splendid new gallery at Eton College to view part of the Eton Myers Egyptology collection with its curator.

The ongoing strength of our society remains in no small part due to the marketing work undertaken by Francesca Jones, which when combined with the local third-party Egyptology

classes continues to draw new members to the society. I hope that the multiple recent news stories on ancient Egypt, the current Sunken Cities exhibition at the British Museum and the forthcoming television programme on Tutankhamun will all also contribute to the ongoing and strong interest in the history and culture of ancient Egypt and TVAES. Unfortunately, this interest domestically is in contrast to falling numbers actually visiting Egypt. As someone who has spent almost the entire summer in Egypt I feel this drop in touristic visitation to the Nile Valley is unjustified. The view from outside Egypt and within it is often contradictory, the government is certainly very focused on security and personally I found Luxor to be very quiet and peaceful this year. Meanwhile it is pleasing to see that the opening of new tombs and sites remains high on the priority list of the Egyptian government as the Ministry of Antiquities struggles to meet its obligations with falling revenue from ticket sales.

Our committee is now a wonderful mix of both new and long-serving members. However sadly one of our founding members Jane Ledger has indicated that for health reasons she will not be standing for the committee again this year. Jane has carried out many roles during her 22 years of service on the committee, in particular providing transport for the speakers to and from the station, a role unseen by many members but vital to the smooth operation of the day. Personally and on behalf of the committee and the society I would like to thank Jane for her service to the society over such a long period of time.

Finally, as you may have read in the main email, Anette Olivier for personal reasons has decided that she is unable to stand again as Honorary Secretary, although she will remain on the committee. Honorary Secretary is one of the most challenging roles in the society and I have been very impressed with Anette's progress in getting to grips with this role in the last 13 months. Once again on behalf of us all I would like to thank Anette for her commitment and hard work over this last year, and also for staying on the committee at a difficult time.

Chairman's Outlook 2016-17 (John Billman)

By now most members will have already seen the programme for the forthcoming year and I hope that members are already looking forward to another varied and stimulating lecture programme. We are also planning two additional events, a July study day on Hierakonpolis with Dr Renée Friedman (and team members), and a spring visit to Leiden to see the new galleries, special exhibition, exclusive lectures and more, additional details of these events will be announced later in the year.

For those interested in ancient Egypt our own events continue to be supported by a vibrant local ecosystem of WEA and University of Oxford classes in Egyptology. Indeed, there are two courses in Reading and one in Wargrave running this term alone, as well as classes, lectures and exhibitions further afield in Oxford, London and elsewhere. Once again I encourage members to take advantage of this wealth of provision and participate in both our own events and others over the forthcoming season and at TVAES I look forward to more full lecture theatres in the year ahead.