



President's Report 2022-23 (Dr Chris Naunton)

What a thrill to see TVAES thriving to the extent that it has been in 2023! After two years of lockdowns and lectures online, of change and uncertainty, 2022 seemed to be the year when so many of the things that had not been possible during the pandemic came roaring back, in particular gatherings in person – TVAES meetings! – and travel, most obviously, for many of us, to Egypt. As welcome as this was, some of us still wondered how long it would last, when things would go back to ‘normal’ or if we were already there. As time goes on the more it seems things are back to some sort of normal again, even if COVID is still with us (I’m just recovering from the latest dose as I write!), and if so we can all be very pleased because the Society and Egyptology in general seem to be in very good health.

In 2022-3 the Society ran a very full and varied lecture programme offering events both in person and online – retaining the best of both worlds and reaching the widest possible audience – and something for everyone, covering a huge range of topics including archaeology, language and texts, religion and Nubia, across two millennia of Egyptian history from the Middle Kingdom to the Roman Period. 2022 was the year of two great anniversaries for Egyptology: 100 years since the discovery of Tutankhamun’s tomb, and two centuries since Champollion’s announcement that he had developed a system for reading hieroglyphic texts. These themes were well represented in the programme and it’s a great reflection on the Society’s ability to draw the very best speakers that the curators of the two major exhibitions celebrating these anniversaries visited in person to speak to the group: Dr Daniela Rosenow of the Griffith Institute on ‘Tutankhamun: Excavating the Archive’ and Dr Ilona Regulski of the British Museum on ‘Hieroglyphs: unlocking ancient Egypt’. Along with such well-established scholars the programme also featured some who were perhaps less well-known to audiences in the UK at least. Societies like TVAES play a vitally important role in giving scholars a platform to share their work, and also in offering opportunities for less well-established Egyptologists to gain experience – I have always been very grateful for such opportunities myself, particularly when I was just starting out.

The Society continues also to make a very valuable and direct contribution to Egyptological work through its fundraising efforts. In the last year alone TVAES has hosted a short course taught by Dr Elena Pischikova to raise funds for her work in the South Asasif; a study day on Egypt and Nubia Study generated funds for the Sudan Archaeological Research Society (SARS), and the Society also continues to maintain a donation fund from which small grants can be made to projects on application.

A fascination with Egypt continues to drive more and more visitors to Egypt. Although the Grand Egyptian Museum has still yet to open – to the ongoing bewilderment of those in the travel industry who have had to do much rearranging in recent months! – numbers travelling to Egypt have returned almost to the levels just prior not only to COVID but to the revolution of 2011. The autumn/winter season started early in September 2023, and hotels and sites in Luxor at least were very busy straight away. The demand is no doubt at least in part the result of recent excavations which have led to ever more ‘new’ material being uncovered. In the last few months spectacular discoveries of funerary material have been made in the area of the Gisir el-Mudir at Saqqara and at Tuna el-Gebel, and the resulting blaze of publicity has left the public in no doubt that the supply of newly discovered treasures remains, apparently, inexhaustible.

Egyptology is thriving and TVAES continues both to play a part in, and to reflect, that. Many congratulations to John Billman and the team, and too who have played a part in the successes of the last year. It remains a great honour for me play a small part in the organisation.

Cheers!

Chairman’s Report 2022-23 (John Billman)

During the last academic year, we have continued our move into our “new normal” with an extended programme of lectures which are held either in-person or online. We have been slightly thwarted in this effort by a series of national rail strikes on Saturdays forcing some in-person lectures onto zoom, but on the whole this arrangement has worked well, and we are continuing with the same plans for 2023-4. It helps us fulfil our role as a local society providing in-person contact for members in the Thames Valley while also providing lectures accessible for those who cannot travel as easily to Woodley. Both types of lecture are well-supported, and I encourage all members to engage with the full programme if possible.

It has been a year of continued generosity from the society with the Donation Fund has again been well-subscribed with multiple projects of different types benefiting from our support. The academic year also saw two special fund-raising events; a very successful fund-raising weekly course taught by Dr Elena Pischikova on behalf of the South Asasif Conservation Trust and a Study Day with multiple excellent speakers on Egypt and Nubia on behalf of the Sudan Archaeological Research Society. Few other local societies can match the level of support that TVAES has consistently provided to so many projects working for the preservation of ancient Egyptian and Nubian history.

I would like to thank once again the fantastic team that is the TVAES committee for keeping things running so smoothly. I would especially like to thank Dr Gill Woods for her service as she is retiring from the main committee this year (but will continue on the donation sub-Committee). The committee is getting a little smaller and I would appeal to members to consider contributing to the running of the society. While it is too late to run for the

committee this year given we have space we can co-opt members and so it would be worth chatting to myself or other committee members informally about joining.

Secretary's Report 2022-23 (Francesca Jones)

In the largely post-covid setting, the Society planned to meet obligations to both local and far-flung members by holding a mixture of 7 in-person and 7 online-zoom lectures. However the best laid plans ... due to the ongoing rail strikes, several of the in-person lectures had to be transferred at short notice to an online format. TVAES has often held a summer Study Day, and 2023 saw one focused on Nubia and Sudan, with the proceeds supporting the work of the Sudanese Archaeological Research Society. There was also a ground-breaking collaboration with the South Asasif Conservation Project, with Dr Elena Pischikova giving a series of five on-line zoom lectures on the art of XXVth and XXVI Dynasty tombs.

This Society year, there was no special expedition – one tentatively planned to the New Bodleian Library exhibition on Tutankhamun at Griffith Archive was shelved as it was deemed better for members to visit the display individually. However summer 2023 trips to the British Museum Egyptology Collection and the Egypt Exploration Society Archive were well received.

The 2022 Newsletter – produced by Carolyn Prior – was again a success, with the online format allowing for a larger publication than would be cost-effective in print. Several of the expeditions and research projects in Egypt – part funded by the generosity of TVAES members – were featured by the grateful recipients of Donations Committee awards.

The Committee remained unchanged apart from the post-AGM co-option of Lucy Hughes. Martin Smith took over the onerous role of Treasurer, but otherwise the main bulk of the work lay on the shoulders of John Billman as chairman who organised the lectures and study days.

Chairman's Outlook 2023-24 (John Billman)

As already mentioned, this year we once again have an enhanced programme of lectures roughly 50/50 in-person and online, although we cannot rule out disruption from the still ongoing rail strikes, we will try to minimize it. Our final in-person of the year in June 2024 will be particularly notable as it will be the 30th anniversary of the society. While the turnover of members in three decades is inevitably high, and we have seen many other changes such as the venue, introduction of powerpoint and most recently of course zoom the essence of what we do as a society remains the same. We continue to bring people together to share their passion and interest in ancient Egypt and listen to lectures from great and

knowledge speakers, some leaders in their field. Our President Dr Chris Naunton (the 4th to hold this post) will be joining us as we look back but also forward as we plan to enter our fourth decade.

As has become usual recently I am writing this report from Egypt. While my prediction of the Grand Egyptian Museum opening in the last academic year was sadly over-optimistic, predictions about the growth of tourism in Egypt have proved accurate. Luxor is busier than it has been since the revolution, and fortunately at the moment the tragic events in the Middle East are not impacting Egypt in any noticeable way. This increase in tourism is of course good news for TVAES, if your friends and neighbours are considering (or have just completed) a trip to Egypt why not encourage them to join us at TVAES.

Another potential draw for the society is the forthcoming exhibition at West Berkshire Museum in Newbury. While this is a West Berkshire Museums event, a number of TVAES members have contributed to its creation and especially the labelling, a series of talks and gallery tours will be facilitated by TVAES members and I would encourage you to make the trip west to see some local Egyptology. Overall, we have a busy year ahead once again, and I look forward to seeing members both virtually and in-person.