

A New Chapter: Two months on at the Egypt Exploration Society

Carl Graves

Leaving the Alma Mater

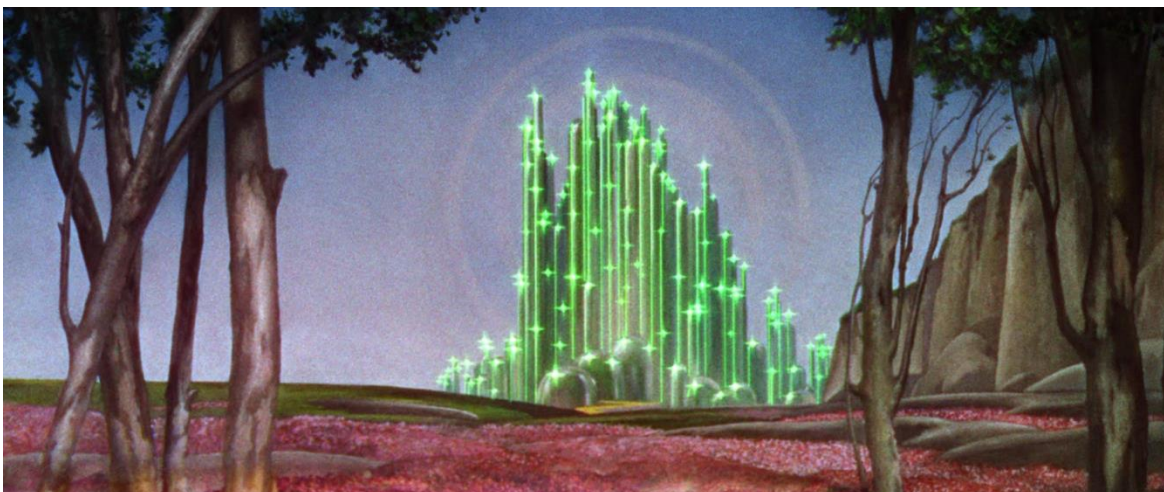
As I walked through the quiet campus green at the University of Birmingham on a cold 8th November evening I reflected on the closing of a chapter in my postgraduate studies; the end of organizing [BE Forums](#), [TUT Projects](#), and [BE Socials](#), because Monday the 11th was the start of something new and exciting; the start of my year working as Education and Public Engagement Manager at the [Egypt Exploration Society](#).



The Aston Webb Building, University of Birmingham's Edgbaston Campus © University of Birmingham

The Return to Oz

When I was younger, I used to think that London was a little like Oz – somewhere almost semi-mythical with glittering streets and exciting opportunities. Birmingham had already seemed like a big step from the quiet lifestyles on the coast of East Yorkshire back in 2006; but 2013 was shaping up to be my next big step. Boy was I about to be disappointed... Busy streets, arrogant pedestrians and expensive rent were not what I was hoping for. Not to worry though, I went with Plan B; I chose to stay in Birmingham (and here I remain) and commute to London every day to my new job at the EES. But the lengthy commute is worth it just to start each morning with the prospect of organizing the events and working in the archives of a society that has been so instrumental in the development of Egyptology as an academic discipline in the UK since 1882.

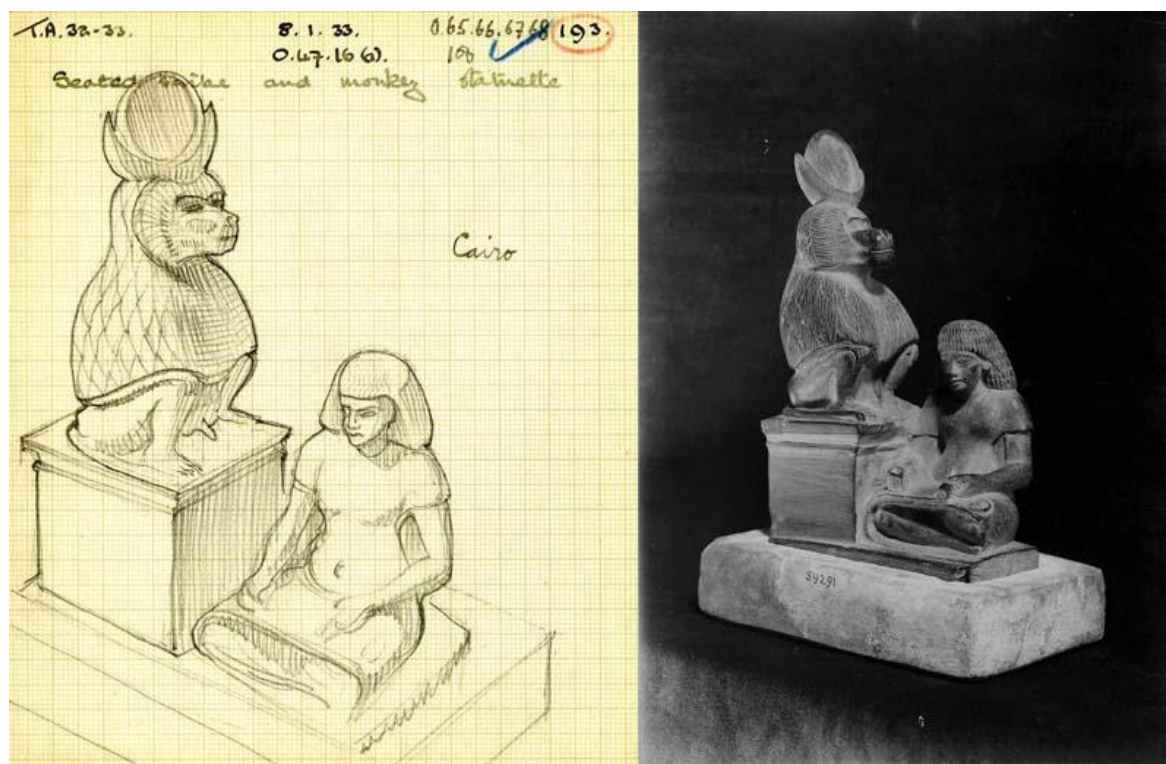


The skyline of Oz – not actually a destination on the Virgin Trains route, or possessing any similarity to the skyline of London

New Challenges

My new position covers the maternity leave of Dr Joanna Kyffin through 2014, and a one month crossover allowed her to kindly show me the 'ropes'. During this time I shadowed her while planning the [EES Winter Study Day](#) on the 7th December. With over 120 delegates and 5 speakers, plus the AGM, it was a hectic 'thrown-into-the-deep-end' day – but a valuable opportunity to network with some of the EES's [thousands of members](#) and internationally renowned Egyptologists.

I have also been involved in the creation of the EES's new [#Amarnafortheday](#) project on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#). In this project we upload one of our Amarna Object Cards from the [Lucy Gura Archive](#) onto social media with a brief description of the object or its current location. Some have proved to be very interesting and others have even been quite amusing! An accompanying [news item](#) focused on one of the cards and an archive image showing the item in the Cairo Museum following distribution by the Society. This was also one of the pieces stolen during the Egyptian Revolution in 2011 and just goes to show how important it is for people to [support](#) the kind of work that the EES does; to conserve archives related to excavations in Egypt, to continue supporting fieldwork and survey through this tumultuous time, and to work with Egyptians in particular to further work and awareness of Egypt's significant heritage.



TA32-33/193, JE59291 A statuette found at Amarna and subsequently deposited in the Cairo Museum but recently stolen in the January uprising of 2011; image courtesy of the Egypt Exploration Society.

I was particularly excited to sink my teeth into the EES's extensive [events programme](#). The Society runs over 25 events every year and this is only expected to increase. These events offer attendees a variety of topics presented by leading experts in the fields represented. Some of these topics aim to challenge previous conceptions of Egyptian history and culture, others delve deeper into new research providing delegates with a glimpse of where Egyptology is heading in the future. Dr Joanna Kyffin recently wrote a [news item](#) for the EES about how the events programme has developed over recent years and where it rests at the moment – putting some pressure on me to keep up the good work she does for the Society! My aims for the forthcoming year is to run a programme of events around the UK in

museums housing Egyptological collections (perhaps originally acquired through EES excavations) so that we can access more of our members and give them an opportunity to see those items in their local museums with some contextual information given by their curators and staff. I also aim to continue the London based events established by Dr Chris Naunton's team up till 2014. Two events are already preliminarily planned to involve Birmingham Egyptology over 2014. The first will see Steven Gregory and Jenny Palmer hold a full day seminar at our London Office in June focusing on the controversial kingship of Herihor during the 21st Dynasty. The second is a more ambitious Birmingham Study Day in November which will see a number of Egyptologists sharing their current research relating to the relationship between 'Gods and mortals' in Ancient Egypt. Another event in late May will see the EES visit Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery for a tour of their Egyptian gallery and talks from staff following its closure between January and May 2013.



An image taken during the EES excavations at Armant, image courtesy of the Egypt Exploration Society

My next challenge is to raise awareness and interaction with the Society's extensive [archive](#) of excavations records, distributions lists, and correspondence dating from the late Nineteenth Century. Starting on 4th April 2014 I will be coordinating an 'Open Archives' afternoon for the public to come into the London Office and see some of our archives, including watercolours by [Howard Carter](#). The day will be mostly run by volunteers and offers a chance for them to present what work they do in the archives and what items most interest them. Visitors can ask questions about such topics as Petrie's excavations with the EES, Amelia Edwards' correspondence with early Egyptologists, as well as records of objects found at Amarna, and much more.

I wouldn't have received these exciting opportunities without the skills I learnt whilst studying in Birmingham and Birmingham Egyptology was crucial to my skills development since early 2013 when, together with Steven Gregory (Chair) and Luke McGarity, we launched it as an online journal and community at the University. I am very proud of how far BE has expanded since then and impressed at the involvement from students within the School of History and Cultures and the plans for further changes in 2014. The first [Annual Symposium](#) promises to be the start of another tradition in BE, providing yet another platform for research and development. I wish BE all the best for its future and know that I am always welcome to stay involved.