

um building on Oxford Road.

The lecture programme started with Dr Joyce Tyldesley introducing us to '5000 years of wonderful things: Egyptian jewellery past and present'. She traced the history of Ancient Egypt through selected pieces of jewellery: the Girzeh Iron Age meteorite beads from Tomb 133 (600BC) of ritualistic status, the bracelets of Queen Heterperhes (4<sup>th</sup> Dynasty), Kiyas' earrings from Amarna and Cleopatra's pearl earring. These key pieces were selected to show the influence they have had on our understanding of the past. She finished by showing us some beautiful examples of jewellery from the "Egyptian Revival".

Roger Foreshaw then presented 'Amuletic jewellery: Healing and protection'. Amulets are not only aesthetically alluring but are also rather enigmatic objects. Within them they embody certain powers, capabilities and provide protection but a few can be classed also as jewellery. He showed us examples that due to form, colour or material could be seen to provide magical protection as well as adornment.

After coffee we were treated to 'Jewellery from Riqqeh Tomb 124', by Dr Campbell Price, Curator for Egypt and the Sudan at the Manchester Museum. The Museum holds four pieces from this tomb excavated by Engelbach in 1913: a pectoral, a golden shell, small Min figurine and a broken amulet. This material has recently been scanned using an electron microscope (SEM) and analysed by X ray fluorescence

(XRF). The pectoral is an exquisite example of Middle Kingdom craftsmanship and we were able to view it later on the gallery.

The afternoon session opened with PhD student Taneash Siddpura discussing 'The curious case of Ahhotep: A warrior Queen or a fondness for flies'. The pit burial of this Queen consisted of a remarkable collection of jewellery including weapons (gold dagger and axe) plus a chain of three golden flies, often considered to be awards for valour in battle. He re-evaluated the significance of these pieces and whether they still provided enough evidence to support Ahhotep as a warrior Queen.

Denys Stocks now rarely gives lectures so we were indeed treated to a special presentation on 'Beads materials, shapes and manufacturing methods'. Denys is very much an experimental researcher, explaining where the materials were sourced, the type of tools used and how polishing and drilling could be achieved even in the smallest of examples of rings, barrels, cylinders and spheres.

The day concluded with Dr Glen Godenho from University of Liverpool 'Going for gold: The riches, power and influence of the Meroitic rulers'. His lecture focussed on the character of Meroitic material culture and how influential they were, and how influenced this East African culture was by Pharaonic and Hellenistic cultures. He explained how the power base shifted over time from Kerma, Napata, then Mer-

oe and how ornamentation and jewellery changed as a consequence.

The **March** lecture, '**Words, gestures, strings, timbres: Reconstructing ancient Egyptian music without the music**' by Eleanor Simmance, co-ordinator of Birmingham University's TuT Project and Chair of Birmingham Egyptology.

As well as being an Egyptologist Eleanor is also an accomplished musician, playing piano and viola as well as singing. Her talk brought together both of these interests.

The pictorial evidence we have shows that there was an impressive variety of musical instruments in use in Ancient Egypt, including harp, lyre and lute, as well as several types of woodwind instruments. Percussion instruments included wooden or ivory clappers, tambourines, cymbals and the sistrum. The sistrum (plural 'sistra') is not in common use today, though it is still used in the Coptic Church. It consisted of a handle with a 'u' shaped piece of metal at the end. Between the two arms of the 'u' were several cross pieces with small discs threaded onto them. When shaken the sistrum could make a variety of sounds.

Music had many functions in Egypt. One that is often seen shows music being played while people worked in the fields, planting, harvesting and also making wine. This would probably have been to relieve the tedium. As well as listening

to the music the workers would also have been able to sing, chant and tap out the rhythm. We have images that show wind instruments being played and wooden clappers being used.

Apart from work, there are also many pictures showing music being played while people engaged in leisure activities. Some of these took place inside a temple, and are very erotic, but it has to be remembered that the singers and dancers who took part in these rituals were associated with deities such as Bes or Hathor, and were respectable members of Egyptian society.



**Bes statuette from either New Kingdom or possibly Late Period, copyright British Museum**

Eleanor reminded us that some music had a royal context. There are scenes from queens' harems that show harps and other instruments being played, presumably for the enjoyment of the listeners. But there are also pictures that show that music was played in a military context. Would this, perhaps,



**Tomb of Nenkhefta (Fifth Dynasty) showing a variety of musical Instruments. Copyright Cairo Museum**

be the sort of rousing military music we still have today, or something completely different?

Music was used in religious situations as well, either to invoke or sometimes to calm the deity or keep him/her contented. One of the intriguing questions Eleanor brought up was the use of blind musicians in the temples. They were, of course, not supposed to see the most sacred aspects of religious worship, so it was convenient for them to be blind. But were they born blind, had they been involved in some sort of accident or were they deliberately blinded?

The funerary banquet was often drawn showing music being played. One picture in particular, from the tomb of Nakht, a priest and scribe from the Eighteenth Dynasty, shows a harpist playing and obviously singing as he played. We can tell that he was singing from the fact that he is painted with his mouth open.

Hand gestures, called cheironomy, were also an essential

accompaniment to music. Many illustrations show the arm bent at the elbow and the elbow resting on the knee. In the first illustration two of the performers make a rounded shape with the index finger and the thumb, which must have had a specific significance, possibly directing the musicians.

It is impossible for us to know definitely how Egyptian music would have sounded, but the music of the Coptic Church and traditional Arabic music are probably relevant successors. Eleanor is very interested in this line of research so perhaps the next time she lectures to us she will be able to report on further developments.

If you are interested in listening to a genuine attempt to reconstruct the music of ancient Egypt, Eleanor recommended a CD titled 'Music in the Age of the Pyramids: Ancient Egypt' by Rafael Perez Arroyo. There is also a website where you can find more information: [www.rafaelperezarroyo.com/eng/musica](http://www.rafaelperezarroyo.com/eng/musica)  
Report - **Pete Stephens**