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CONTENTS

TELL EL-AMARNA, 2012–13	Barry Kemp	1
THEBAN HARBOURS AND WATERSCAPES SURVEY, 2013.	A. Graham, K. D. Strutt, V. L. Emery, S. Jones, and D. S. Barker	35
THE SACRED FALCON NECROPOLIS OF DJEDHOR(?) AT QUESNA: RECENT INVESTIGATIONS FROM 2006–2012	Joanne Rowland, Salima Ikram, G. J. Tassie, and Lisa Yeomans	53
GLASS OF AMENHOTEP II FROM TOMB KV55 IN THE VALLEY OF THE KINGS	Paul T. Nicholson and Caroline Jackson	85
A BROTHER FOR THUTMOSE III (CAIRO MUSEUM BN 104).	Dina Metawi	101
THE DEAN OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL PHOTOGRAPHERS: HARRY BURTON	Ronald T. Ridley	117
THE EGYPTIAN ROYAL TITULARY OF ALEXANDER THE GREAT, I: HORUS, TWO LADIES, GOLDEN HORUS, AND THRONE NAMES	Francisco Bosch-Puche	131
THE <i>PASTOPHORION</i> : ‘PRIESTS’ HOUSES’ IN LEGAL TEXTS FROM PTOLEMAIC PATHYRIS AND ELSEWHERE IN EGYPT	Siân E. Thomas	155
COMPOSITIONS IN EGYPTIAN HIEROGLYPHS IN NINETEENTH CENTURY ENGLAND	Chris Elliott	171
LOCAL VESSELS AND IMPORTED COPIES MANUFACTURED IN SANDY FABRICS AT TELL EL-GHABA, NORTH SINAI	Silvia Lupo and Maria Beatriz Cremonte	191
MISSING <i>KOMS</i> AND ABANDONED CHANNELS: THE POTENTIAL OF REGIONAL SURVEY IN THE WESTERN NILE DELTA LANDSCAPE.	Joshua Trampier, Willem Toonen, Aude Simony, and Jennifer Starbird	217
SOME REMARKS ON A NEGATED EARLIER EGYPTIAN NOMINAL SENTENCE AND RELATED CONSTRUCTIONS	Sami Uljas	241
SOME LITERARY ASPECTS OF THE KAMOSE INSCRIPTIONS	Roland Enmarch	253

BRIEF COMMUNICATIONS

A ROMAN PERIOD CHILD'S MUMMY IN THE SAFFRON WALDEN MUSEUM . . .	Christina Riggs	265
A BLOCK OF RAMESSES II REUSED AS A THRESHOLD IN THE WAKALA OF QAWSUN (CAIRO)	David Lorand	270
A COPTIC EPISTOLARY EXERCISE FROM WADI SARGA	Jennifer Cromwell	272
A MIDDLE KINGDOM FUNERARY STELA OF A WOMAN AT AL-SALAM SCHOOL MUSEUM, ASSIUT	Abdalla Abdel-Raziq	275
A STABLE OF THE THIRD INTERMEDIATE PERIOD AT TELL EL-RETABA	Łukasz Jarmużek	281
NEW TITLES OF THE GREAT CHANCELLOR BAY	Alexander Safronov	290
THE ORACULAR AMULETIC DECREES: A QUESTION OF LENGTH	T. G. Wilfong	295
A NEGLECTED FUNERARY TEXT	James P. Allen	300
ON THE VALIDITY OF SEXING DATA FROM EARLY EXCAVATIONS: EXAMPLES FROM QAU .	Tatjana Beuthe	308

REVIEWS

ANNE BOUD'HORS and CHANTAL HEURTEL, <i>Les ostraca coptes de la TT29:</i> <i>Autour du moine Frangé</i>	Reviewed by Jennifer Cromwell	313
ANDREAS DORN, <i>Arbeiterhütten im Tal der Könige: Ein Beitrag zur altägyptischen Sozial- geschichte aufgrund von neuem Quellen- material aus der Mitte der 20. Dynastie (ca. 1150 v. Chr.)</i>	Christopher Eyre	317
JEAN-CLAUDE GOYON, <i>Le recueil de prophylaxie contre les agressions des animaux venimeux du Musée de Brooklyn: Papyrus Wilbour 47.218.138</i>	Pierre Meyrat	319
FREDRIK HAGEN, <i>New Kingdom Ostraka from the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge</i>	Matthias Müller	321
HORST BEINLICH (ED.), <i>'Die Männer hinter dem König': 6. Symposium zur ägyptischen Königsideologie</i>	Anthony Spalinger	324

BRAM CALCOEN, <i>TT176: The Tomb Chapel of Userhat</i>	Nigel Strudwick	325
IAN S. MOYER, <i>Egypt and the Limits of Hellenism</i>	Gaëlle Tallet	327
DAVID ASTON ET AL. (EDS), <i>Under the Potter's Tree: Studies on Ancient Egypt Presented to Janine Bourriau on the Occasion of her 70th Birthday</i>	Roberta Tomber	329
H. S. SMITH ET AL., <i>The Sacred Animal Necropolis at North Saqqara: The Mother of Apis Inscriptions</i>	S. P. Vleeming	332
ANDREAS H. PRIES, <i>Die Stundenwachen im Osiriskult: Eine Studie zur Tradition und späten Rezeption von Ritualen im Alten Ägypten</i>	Mareike Wagner	334
KAREN EXELL, <i>Soldiers, Sailors, and Sandalmakers: A Social Reading of Ramesside Period Votive Stelae</i>	Eric Wells	338
ANGELIKA LOHWASSER, <i>The Kushite Cemetery of Sanam: A Non-royal Burial Ground of the Nubian Capital, c.800-600 BC</i>	Derek A. Welsby	341

BRIEF COMMUNICATIONS

A Roman Period child's mummy in the Saffron Walden Museum

In the Egyptian collection of the Saffron Walden Museum in Essex, the painted linen portion of a mummy mask from Deir el-Bahri forms the outer wrapping of the mummy of a child. The mask is part of a well-attested group of such objects dating to the late Roman Period (c.250–300 CE), offering a *terminus post quem* for the mummy.

THE Saffron Walden Museum in the market town of Saffron Walden, Essex opened in a purpose-built brick building in 1835, making it one of the oldest public museums in the UK.¹ Founded by a voluntary association, the Saffron Walden Museum Society, the Museum has wide-ranging collections: natural history; costumes, textiles, and decorative arts; ethnography; and local archaeology and history, including a silver-gilt necklace from a nearby Viking burial. There is also a small collection of Egyptian antiquities, including the mummy of a child, which is published here for the first time (fig. 1).

Like many other public institutions in the town, the museum benefited from local Quaker philanthropists, in particular the Gibson and Tuke banking families. Also instrumental in establishing the Saffron Walden Natural History Society (now Saffron Walden Museum Society Ltd) were two brothers named Joseph Clarke (1802–1895) and Joshua Clarke (1806–1890), who helped build its collections during the mid-19th century, by soliciting donations and seeking out material to purchase. In 1880 the museum appointed its first paid curator, George Nathan Maynard (1829–1904), a mark both of its growth as an institution and of the professionalisation of the museum field.

The Museum did not subscribe to the excavations of the Egypt Exploration Fund or the British School of Archaeology in Egypt. Instead, most of its small collection of Egyptian antiquities derives from a disparate assortment of private donors in the 19th and early 20th centuries. The collection also includes a range of objects collected by Sir Frederick Henniker (1793–1825) on his travels in Egypt and Palestine in 1820–21, in the company of George Francis Grey. Henniker described his travels in a memoir published the year before his death.² The Henniker family lived at Newton Hall near Great Dunmow, Essex, and Henniker, who was educated at Eton College and St John's College, Cambridge, succeeded his father as second baronet in 1816. After his death in 1825, and before mid-century, some of Frederick Henniker's personal possessions were sold at auction. His brother the Rev. Sir Augusten Brydges Henniker (d. 1849) was then in possession of the hall and baronetcy, but he resided much of the time at Thornham Magna, Suffolk, where he was rector.³ At the auction, whose

* I am indebted to curator Carolyn Wingfield and conservator Lynn Morrison of the Saffron Walden Museum for their generous assistance in making the mummy, related documentation, and the original museum registers available for study; for comments on an early draft of this brief communication; and for subsequent information on the collection history of the mummy, located by former education officer Jenny Gibsone in the museum archives. At Addenbrookes Hospital, superintendent neuroradiographer Halina Szutowicz provided information about the initial results of the CT-scan, which was made possible through funding from the Saffron Walden Museum Society Ltd.

¹ In 1974 the Uttlesford District Council took over running the Museum Service, but the building and collections remain in the ownership of the Saffron Walden Museum Society Ltd: see < www.swmmuseum.org.uk >.

² F. Henniker, *Notes During a Visit to Egypt, Nubia, the Oasis Boeris, Mount Sinai, and Jerusalem* (London, 1824).

³ G. F. R. Barker, 'Henniker, Sir Frederick, second baronet (1793–1825)', rev. Elizabeth Baigent, *Oxford Dictionary*

exact date and location are not known, Joseph Clarke—one of the influential Clarke brothers in the Saffron Walden Natural History Society—acquired some of Henniker's Egyptian collection.

The only specific information regarding the objects Clarke acquired from the sale dates from the 1880s in the form of several registers compiled by the first curator, George Nathan Maynard. Maynard's Register A dates from 1886. In it, Maynard grouped museum objects by their place of origin, and a sub-section headed 'Ancient Egypt' is part of a larger section devoted to Africa. Maynard lists the objects in this by numbers prefaced with the letter E, for 'ethnography'. The Egyptian objects catalogued in this register range from E450 to E474.⁴ Objects E454 to E474 represent the Henniker objects, since he is listed in the donor column for the entry E454 and 'do' [ditto] is repeated in this column through the bottom of the page, which ends with object E459. At the top of the next register page, object E460, an alabastron, has an entry in the donor column which states that it was presented by Joseph Clarke; this presumably relates to Clarke's role as purchaser at auction. The remaining Egyptian entries, to E474, do not specify a donor, but either Clarke or Henniker, or both, seems to be implied. This section of the list includes a fragment of stone identified as part of the casing of the pyramid of Khafre (E466), two lithographs of 'a fine mummy case in the Islington Museum' (E469-470), some human hair (E471), and pieces of bread (E474).

The first six objects listed in the Egyptian section of Register A (E450, E450a, E451, E452, E452a, and E453) are clearly not associated with Henniker, however, and it is to this group that the Saffron Walden Museum's mummy of a child belongs. The object numbers followed by the letter 'a' do not seem to bear a direct relation to the preceding number but rather represent insertions, perhaps made to maintain a coherent grouping of objects by theme. One possible explanation is that Maynard placed these non-Henniker objects together at the start of this section because they are associated with mummies. Thus E450 consists of 'Specimens of 7 varieties of linen cloth & portions of hempen bands stained by bitumen, forming the swathing of a mummy, which was opened & examined at the Charing Cross Hospital in 1833 by the late Pettigrew', and E451 consists of linen fragments from a mummy said to have been opened by Belzoni in London 'in the presence of the Duke of York' and donated to

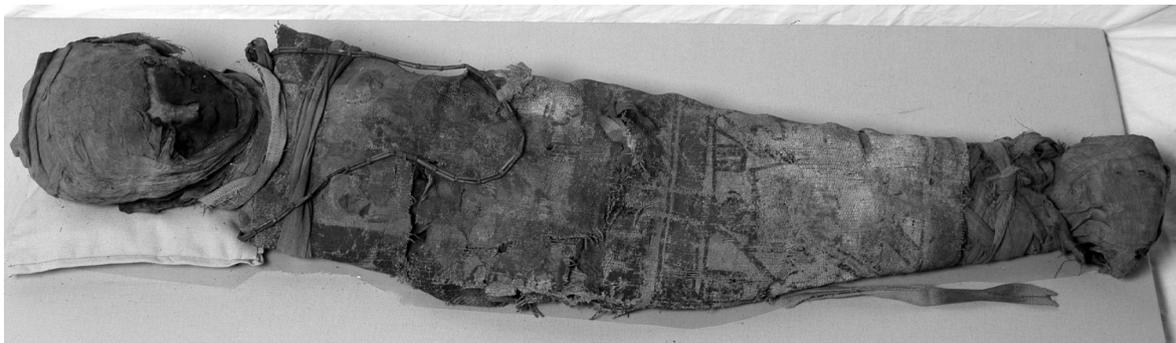


Fig. 1. Child mummy, Saffron Walden Museum.

of *National Biography* (Oxford, 2004) (available online: <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/12943>>); W. R. Dawson, E. P. Uphill, and M. L. Bierbrier, *Who was Who in Egyptology* (3rd edn; London, 1995), 199.

⁴ Register A, pp. 507/39 to 508/40; the pages of the register are numbered in two sequences. Maynard organised information about the museum collections in a number of ways, and a bound volume now known as Maynard Register No. 1 covers the period from 1832 to 1880-81, when Maynard began work at the museum. He was therefore compiling registers of collections retrospectively for this period, and may have had earlier documentation, such as original labels, which no longer exist. Register No. 1 includes an alphabetical index by object name or type, but this contains no mention of the child's mummy, or of the cat mummy (E454) said in Register A to be part of Henniker's collection. Thus the 1832-1880 index does not appear to be an exhaustive or complete record of the museum's collections in 1880. The two references to the mummy in other documents bound into Register No. 1 are chance annotations on documents concerning the sale and transport of birds purchased from Frederic Barlow of Cambridge.

the museum by Mrs Strongmore in October 1826. Object E452 is the finger of a mummy donated by Mrs Tho[ma]s Smith, with no date specified, and E452a is a 'Frag[ment] of thick bituminous coat apparently from a mummy child's arm', with no donor or date given. Object E453 is the thigh and knee portion of a mummified human leg, with 'Hobler 21 April 1841' listed in the donor column.

The sixth object heading the list of Egyptian material in Register A is object E450a, the mummy of a child. The entry is the longest given for any Egyptian object and reads in full:

Mummy 3 ft 2 in supp'd to be that of a young son of Ptolemy Lagus K. of Egypt who reigned [blank] B.C. The greater part of its swathing remains, with a necklet of blue and amber-coloured beads and central pendant—a small fig. of Isis in white clay with light blue glaze. Thebes

The faience beads, which the Museum had until recently kept in place on the mummy, are almost certainly not original to it, since they are in keeping with the lengths of restrung ancient beads that European tourists acquired in Egypt in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, down to the short strip of linen knotted around them at one point. The identification of the child as a son of Ptolemy I is apocryphal: it fits the 'value-added' biographies routinely attached to mummies to emphasise the romance of Egyptian history, in this case via a link with the Ptolemies.⁵ The erroneous attribution has influenced interpretation of the object into recent times, and the previous display, created in 1989 with input from the British Museum, gave a date for the mummy in the 4th century BCE, apparently derived from the register's reference to Ptolemy I Soter. In fact, the mummy dates to the late 3rd century CE, based on the style of the painted linen in which it is wrapped.

The Register A entry is entirely correct in stating the provenance of the mummy as Thebes, for the outer wrapping consists of a painted linen shroud, part of a type of mummy mask well-attested among late Roman burials at Deir el-Bahri, as well as at the late Roman cemetery outside the walls of Medinet Habu.⁶ Masks found at Deir el-Bahri have faces sculpted in plaster over the linen support; the weight and fragility of the plaster means that the faces sustained damage more easily than the painted linen. Similar masks found near Medinet Habu have faces made of clay instead, which were likewise prone to damage. Such masks first appeared on the antiquities market in the 1850s, in conjunction with the Luxor antiquities dealer V. Galli Maunier's 1854 digging in the Hatshepsut temple. In 1893–4, the Egypt Exploration Fund found mummies with painted linen and plaster masks during its clearance of the Mentuhotep temple, and in the 1920s, the Egyptian Expedition of the Metropolitan Museum of Art discovered and thoroughly documented a number of Roman burials with identical masks. In the late 1920s and early 1930s, the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago found clay versions of the masks near Medinet Habu.

The museum has recently discovered more information about the collection history of the mummy. Bound into another volume of Maynard's curatorial records, labelled Register No. 1, is an invoice from the firm of Charles Bird, 'Carrier to and from [Saffron] Walden and Cambridge'. The invoice is for the transport of a 'bird' and 'cases of birds' from Cambridge, together with a 'mummy bought at Horseheath sale'—at 1£ 17s. 6d., far more expensive than the 20 shillings charged to carry all the birds. At the bottom of the invoice, an annotation made in the museum and dated 7 April 1879 specifies that the birds and mummy were collected from the address of a Mr Barlow. 'Mr Barlow' was Frederic Barlow (d. 1894), a solicitor in the firm of Barlow, Palmer, and Neville, who served as mayor of Cambridge for two terms

⁵ D. Montserrat, 'Unidentified Human Remains: Mummies and the Erotics of Biography', in D. Montserrat (ed.), *Changing Bodies, Changing Meanings: Studies on the Human Body in Antiquity* (London, 1998), 170–80 for fictive biographies associated with mummies and related objects in the 19th century.

⁶ Deir el-Bahri: C. Riggs, 'Roman Mummy Masks from Deir el-Bahri', *JEA* 86 (2000), 121–44 (n.b. fig. 1 on p. 123 double-printed due to printing error, and reproduced as such, in W. Grajetski, *Burial Customs in Ancient Egypt: Life and Death for Rich and Poor* (London, 2003), 131 fig. 158); C. Riggs, *The Beautiful Burial in Roman Egypt: Art, Identity, and Funerary Religion* (Oxford, 2005), 232–43, with updated corpus of examples at 295–301. Medinet Habu: U. Hölscher, *The Excavation of Medinet Habu, V: Post-Ramessid Remains* (Chicago, 1954), 42–4; see Riggs, *JEA* 86, 131–2 n. 35.

in 1875 and 1876. Barlow used his home at 60 St Andrew's Street in Cambridge as a self-styled museum to display his collection of curios, chiefly specimens of bird taxidermy. His collection was auctioned at his residence on 21 May 1878, by the firm of Wisbey and Son, with offices in Trinity Street, Cambridge. Bound into Register No. 1 is an annotated copy of the sale catalogue. Whoever attended the sale on behalf of the museum marked prices next to the listed objects and indicated which bird specimens were bought for Saffron Walden; these are presumably the birds listed on the transport receipt together with the mummy. Although a handwritten note in the sale catalogue mentions an item called the 'mummy pot of the Egyptian ibis', which also featured on the cover of the catalogue, there is no mention of an actual mummy in the Barlow sale (nor, for that matter, does an ibis pot seem to exist in the Museum collection). The Barlow sale is thus the source of the birds transported with the mummy, but Barlow does not appear to be the source of the mummy itself. The carriage receipt describes the mummy as being bought at the 'Horseheath sale', referring to a settlement midway between Cambridge and Saffron Walden. The association of the birds and the mummy therefore seems to be due to convenience for transportation, rather than a shared source, and the mummy would thus be yet another object acquired for the Museum at a country auction, making it difficult to trace its collection history much further. The information is still important, however: the fact that the mummy was in the Saffron Walden Museum before April 1879, when the carriage receipt was annotated, confirms that it does not derive from the EEF excavations. Instead, it was most likely acquired in Egypt in the 1850s or shortly thereafter, around the same time as other masks of this type were purchased by European travellers, albeit without the associated mummies.

In 1980, the mummy was x-rayed at Newmarket General Hospital, and a radiography report in the museum archives estimated that the body was that of a child aged around 7 years and 9 months based on the developmental stage of the radial and ulnar epiphyses. The report also noted misalignment of the first and second lumbar vertebra, which would normally stem from a 'major trauma' but is here in keeping with post-mortem dislocation or pressure, for instance during mummification. In October 2010, a CT scan performed at Addenbrookes Hospital in Cambridge offered further details about the age, gender, and possible cause of death of this individual, concluding that the child was a boy aged 4 or 5 years, according to dental and skeletal indicators. The child suffered a fractured right collarbone and skull, and although the collarbone had begun to heal, these injuries most likely proved fatal. The body had been partly eviscerated and excerebrated in the embalming process, and a wooden stick or palm rib is positioned along the back of the body, a trait observed in several other late Roman burials at Deir el-Bahri.⁷

The body is wrapped in several layers of linen of at least two different qualities, a more finely woven textile nearest the skin, and a coarser weave between this layer and the painted mask, which is used like a shroud to cover and wrap the mummy. The face of the mask is not preserved, and may have already deteriorated before the mummy was exported from Egypt, given the properties of the plaster or clay used to model faces on these masks.⁸ On the Saffron Walden mummy, any moulded face original to the mask has been cut off at neck level, reducing the wrapping to a rectangular shroud that extends from the neck of the mummy to just above its ankles; however, the terminology 'mask' is retained here in the supposition that the object did originally have an integral face.⁹ At some point, probably before it entered the museum, a triangle of the linen wrappings was also removed from the face of the mummy, revealing the facial features. The surface of the mask follows the decorative pattern of all the female masks of this type from Deir el-Bahri, which depict an idealised image of the deceased wearing a white tunic with wide, purple *clavi* executed in a tapestry weave. Even without a preserved face, the female and male examples are easily distinguished by their clothing and jewellery. On the Saffron Walden mummy, the preserved surface of the mask depicts a shawl

⁷ See Riggs, *JEA* 86.

⁸ Compare the mask presented in Riggs, *JEA* 86, *passim*, esp. pl. 17.1 (Dublin, National Museum of Ireland 1901:79).

⁹ Riggs, *JEA* 86, 121.

with purple tapestry roundels, known as *orbiculi*, which passes around the subject's shoulders and over the front of her upper arms. The subject's hands are held opposite each other, in front of the body. The proper left fist holds a floral wreath, while the right hand seems to be open, cradling an object probably to be identified as a two-handled glass cup (*kantharos*) for wine. Small breasts are formed on the surface of the mask, by covering knots of braid or textile with a layer of plaster.¹⁰ The fact that the mummy of a boy would be wrapped in a mask designed for an adult female suggests that children were differently gendered compared to sexually mature individuals. Although funerary equipment for both boys and girls from other sites and periods does represent children with features gendered as 'male' and 'female' (hair, clothing, posture), it may be that among the community buried at Deir el-Bahri, male children of a certain age were considered better suited to a funerary covering connected with the female social sphere.¹¹ Whether this choice was a positive one, based on associations such as maternity and rebirth, or a negative one, based on rejection of adult male iconography as inappropriate for a child, is difficult to say. The choice could also have been a matter of convenience, using material already at hand, but given the particular care that was often taken with burials of children, it is more likely that the embalming and wrapping of the body, and the use of a mask covering with female characteristics, represent a purposeful intent, as part of a strategy for the safeguarding and mystic regeneration of the deceased.

The lower register of the mask is somewhat better preserved than the upper. In the centre, the antelope-prowed *henu*-barque of Sokar rests on a stand, flanked by seated black jackals symbolizing Anubis, Wepwawet, and the jackals that pull the sun-god's barque through the sky in Egyptian mythology. Behind each jackal towers an open lotus blossom, and the jackal on the viewer's left grasps a cord in its mouth, which connects to the red sun disk at the top of the scene above Sokar's falcon head. Three empty columns for hieroglyphic inscriptions depend from the upper border of the scene, on either side of the *henu*-barque. In between the upper and lower registers is a band filled by floral decoration and a central disk. Red borders around this band and the registers are well preserved, as are the black outlines throughout the decoration and the dark purple of the *clavi*. Traces of red, green, and yellow paint stand out against a white background elsewhere, although on the whole the surface is abraded, revealing the coarse weave of the linen substructure below.

The mask conforms to the slender contours of the mummified body, covering the sides of the child's torso and legs. Due to the fragility of the mummy, it was not possible to identify any fixing mechanism at its back. One strip of linen is wrapped once over the mask and around the shoulders, which may help hold the mask in place, but since the mummy's wrappings have been disturbed around the head and neck, it is unclear whether this placement of the strip is original. If so, similar strips might be expected at other intervals along the body. The entire mummy was wrapped in at least three layers of undecorated, tabby-weave linen before the mask was put in place—enough to serve the ritual and religious purposes of mummification, but not enough to add substantially to the small dimensions of the embalmed body. The feet of the mummy have the best-preserved layers of wrapping, although modern interference and re-wrapping cannot be ruled out. A finely woven linen textile covers the bundled feet themselves. Around the ankles, bandages of a more average weave form at least three crossing layers at diagonal angles, with two ends brought around to the front and knotted firmly.

A finely woven textile like that around the feet also appears around the head of the mummy, where bandages were removed at some point to reveal the eyes, nose, and mouth; the skin of the nose bridge and forehead is missing, revealing the skull beneath. The fine linen adheres to the upper forehead, sides of the head, and crown of the head, except for a loose area where the mummy's hair is visible. At least two layers wrap from one ear, down around the chin, up past the other ear, and around the head, a motion that may have helped hold the jaw in place. A wrapping motion from left ear up to right would fit with the downward, rightward tilt of

¹⁰ Riggs, *JEA* 86, 125.

¹¹ Compare, for instance, the coffins sized and decorated for boys, from late Ptolemaic Akhmim: Riggs, *Beautiful Burial*, 83–6 (Akhmim).

the mummy's head (and, in theory, the most natural actions of a right-handed embalmer working at the head end of the body). Two or three linen bandages of a denser weave pass loosely around the neck. Since these overlap the cut-off upper edge of the mask, they may represent modern re-wrapping, or 'tidying up', after the hypothesised removal of the mask's face in the mid-to-late 19th century.

The Saffron Walden Museum mummy closely resembles a child's mummy in the Peabody Museum of Natural History at Yale University.¹² The Peabody Museum mummy is also wrapped in a full-sized female mask that almost covers the full length of this mummy, and is in a better state of preservation with the clay face intact. The smaller body size of the Peabody child mummy reflects interrupted growth due to a number of factors identified in an X-ray study: several healed fractures, systemic infection, and possible malnutrition. Like the Saffron Walden mummy, the Peabody mummy has its arms placed along the sides of the body, hands open—a typical posture for mummies in the Roman Period.¹³

The Saffron Walden child mummy adds another example to the known corpus of late Roman mummy masks from Deir el-Bahri. It also draws attention to the small but intriguing collection of Egyptian antiquities in the Saffron Walden Museum, some of which (though not this mummy) can be linked to Sir Frederick Henniker and his self-documented 1820 visit to Egypt. Together with the identically wrapped mummy in the Peabody Museum at Yale, the Saffron Walden mummy demonstrates the care that could be taken for children's burials in Roman Egypt, underscored by the use of 'adult' funerary objects for the small bodies of those so prematurely dead.¹⁴ Although the Deir el-Bahri masks were made in a uniform size, rather than scaled down for use on children's mummies, their function was the same as a purpose-made, child-sized coffin or shroud: to commemorate a loss while transforming the dead.

CHRISTINA RIGGS

A block of Ramesses II reused as a threshold in the Wakala of Qawsun (Cairo)

Publication of a lintel/architrave of Ramesses II probably from Heliopolis re-used as a threshold in medieval Cairo.

ONGOING public works in al-Gamaliya street and Bab al-Nasr street (medieval Cairo) have revealed (again) the lower part of a threshold belonging to the eastern gate of the Wakala built by the amir Seif al-Din Qawsun al-Nasseiry (before AD 1341, under Mamluk sultan al-Nasir Muhammad).¹ This huge pink granite monolith (c.220 cm long and 25 cm high) is a fragmentary lintel or architrave naming Ramesses II (figs 1 and 2). Both ends were broken in order to fit the Mamluk doorframe, but the right end seems less affected to judge from the preserved text. The height of the block was also reduced, and so all hieroglyphs lost their legs or their lower part (c.1/4 to 1/3 of their original height). Briefly mentioned and illustrated by V. Meinecke-Berg in 1985,² the block does not seem to be referred in subsequent Egyptological literature.³

¹² Yale, Peabody Museum, ANT. 6942: Riggs, *Beautiful Burial*, 297 cat. 132; G. D. Scott, *Ancient Egyptian Art at Yale* (New Haven, 1986), 200 cat. 161. For the X-ray analysis, see *Secrets of the Mummies Revealed* (Yale Peabody Museum Anthropology Collections, 2004) <http://www.peabody.yale.edu/collections/ant/xrays_04.html> accessed 19.05.2010.

¹³ Thus also P. H. K. Gray, 'Notes Concerning the Position of Arms and Hands of Mummies with a View to Possible Dating of the Specimen', *JEA* 58 (1972), 200–204.

¹⁴ Cf. L. Meskell, 'Dying Young: The Experience of Death at Deir el-Medina', *Archaeological Review from Cambridge* 13/2 (1994), 35–45; S. Ikram, 'Barbering the Beardless: A Possible Explanation for the Tufted Hairstyle Depicted in the "Fayum" Portrait of a Young Boy (J.P. Getty 78.AP.262)', *JEA* 89 (2003), 247–51.

¹ See N. Warner, *The Monuments of Historic Cairo* (AUC Press; Cairo, 2005), 88 (no. 11), with previous references.

² V. Meinecke-Berg, 'Spolien in der mittelalterlichen Architektur von Kairo', in Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, *Ägypten: Dauer und Wandel. Symposium anlässlich des 75 jährigen bestehens des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts Kairo am 10. und 11. Oktober 1982* (SDAIK 18; Cairo, 1985), 133, 135, pl. 12c.

³ See the recent contributions of D. Heiden, 'Pharaonische Baumaterialien in der ayyubidischen Stadtbefestigung