

# QURNA DISCOVERY

Friends News  
Issue 2

February 2010

Theban Panoramas News  
Issue 8

**Qurna Discovery opened April 6th 2001. Despite two changes of venue it is still going strong, and entry is still free. It now occupies two buildings - one holds four different exhibitions and the other will have many items and displays and will soon be open. Qurna Discovery is visited by many local people, other Egyptians and people from all over the world**



## SAVED!

By November 2009 nearly all the buildings on Sheikh abd el Qurna and Dra abu'l Naga had been demolished. The Daramalli House and the zawyeh bet Khalil stand to show future generations the last 200 to 300 years of Theban history. It was a long struggle to keep these for Qurna Discovery but in the end all is well - thanks to the Minister, to Dr Hawass, and everyone in Qurna, the UK and all over the world who supported us in so many ways.

## The Daramalli House

When the Qurnawi were leaving the hillside, Abdu started to collect traditional pieces for the House. Once the Zawyeh was open in 2007, we were ready to get the furniture and displays ready in the house, but then both buildings were appropriated by the Art Symposium. Following intense negotiations the artists left the zawyeh in June 2008, but it took many more months of discussion and many emails and entreaties for them to leave the house, which they did in the spring of 2009. They still have some stuff in the outside room which we hope they will remove soon.

Abdu and the team no longer had the time last year to do the necessary work to get the House ready, so things have been badly delayed. However, in recent weeks Abdu has been getting old items of furniture and implements expertly restored and repaired ready to be displayed. His archaeology work in the Valley and in the workers huts on the hills has just finished, and he will be working on Sheikh abd el-Qurna from now on.

The house will show traditional household items and the yard will hold some agricultural implements etc. We are planning a number of exhibitions for the many walls. Since the late 18<sup>th</sup> century the Qurnawi have been employed on the archaeological sites and



Abd Sabur Daramalli and some of the collection in 2007 monuments and this deserves a display. The houses that existed and the families that lived in them is another major theme – for which the large photo collection compiled by Caroline Simpson since the early 90s will be most useful. The Daramalli family have a number of old family photos which will form the basis of a display about the families that lived in the house. Photos and drawings of Qurna covering the last 250 years or so will also make a display – some are shown in the zawyeh exhibitions but many more fascinating images will then be available for people to view on site. We hope that John Taylor and others who were hoping to restore the Yanni house will put together a small display about that next-door property that had such a special place in the story of the early exploration and archaeology in Thebes.

## From the Secretary:

Because of the uncertainty caused by the Art Symposium use of the buildings, we haven't had a newsletter since August 2008 and we haven't been able to make a major appeal for funds. Now it is all settled. We know that Qurna Discovery is there to stay. Now we have to focus on raising the money to complete and maintain it. This page concentrates of what is needed and some ideas for trying to raise it. This is where YOU, the Friends can help. Run an event, enlist your friends as Friends, chat up the rich and powerful, use your influence and skills whatever they are. Please think of how you can help Qurna to continue to have a visible presence.

Thank you

### Approaches we should make once the Daramalli House is open

- international

UNESCO

ICOMOS

Aga Khan Foundation

Ishmaeli Foundation

- Egypt:

The Ambassador again and ask his advice

British Council - Cairo

Ford Foundation - Cairo

US AID - Cairo

Cultural centres in Cairo

Arab Contractors (Osman)

Orascom

HSBC Egypt

British University in Egypt

and the archaeological missions -

again - no luck so far

- in the UK

Independent travel companies

Egyptological societies

University departments

.....and what others?

**QURNA**  
**DISCOVERY**

## AGM 2009, Friends and Money Matters

This was held on December 5<sup>th</sup> in London. You can read the Minutes on the website. The Committee members were re-elected: Yvonne Neville-Rolfe – Chairman, Robert Hay – Treasurer, Caroline Simpson – Secretary and Cecilia Duggan. We are pleased to welcome Judy Penhaligon to the committee. The Friends exist to support Qurna Discovery, more particularly

to raise the money to do the work and keep it going.

In 2007 we agreed to appeal for the money to cover 5 years. This would be 2008-2012 inclusive. We have done 2008 and 2009. We have enough money for 2010 running costs.

**We have no promised money for 2011 or 2012.** At the AGM we agreed it was necessary to look also at the longer-term survival of this unique resource.

### What do we need money for?

#### Day to day running costs:

- ◆ Wages for Guardians – Guardians are essential for both properties when open. Staff need paying. This is by far the major part of our running costs.
- ◆ Other running costs there, phone, electricity, management, sick cover etc

**Running Costs in Egypt.** EL15,690 for 2010, and EL16,990 for 2011 and 2012. (Total £5,800 at Feb 21st exchange rate)

#### Additional foreseen costs:

- ◆ Creation, conservation and installation of remaining planned exhibits and displays.
- ◆ Arabic translation of any new texts for displays.
- ◆ Any new exhibitions, displays or interpretive material.
- ◆ On-going maintenance and repair – the zawyeh needs a new floor as of Feb 2010
- ◆ Advertising – signs on buildings, posters, fliers et al – the SCA has asked us to repaint the signs in a different colour.
- ◆ A new menama outside.
- ◆ Any work that is agreed on the remaining bab el-hagar.

#### [www.baladyhandicraft.com](http://www.baladyhandicraft.com)

Balady Handicraft Qurna is an exciting project of Abdu's in the new settlement at as-Siyul. Its aim is 'to promote the abilities of traditional crafts of the Qurnawi and especially to train the ability of young people'. At the AGM it was agreed to explore ways in which we could work to mutual benefit. We believe this would appeal to those interested in contributing to the development of indigenous communities and not just their history. Some Travel companies are interested in community development and sustainability. A connection with BHQ could develop amongst Friends and friends a more rounded interest in the village and its

moved population – people could visit the workshops when over there and be involved and see the future, go there and buy locally made crafts with no hassle.

For the full list of ideas for action, please look at the website Minutes.

ASTENE



FQD is very grateful to the Association for the Study of Travel in Egypt and the Near East for a grant towards non-wage related





## Win some – lose some

In February 2007, soon after the house demolitions started, Caroline negotiated with Dr Mansour, (Antiquities Director of Luxor – east and west) later agreed by Dr Hawass, for the preservation of four properties that formed an historic group on Sheikh abd el Qurna.

The demolitions have continued ever since, but the last major ones in this area were in March and April 2009. On March 25<sup>th</sup> Yanni's House, that was the most northern of the four properties we hoped would remain, was demolished by the Government bulldozers. This was a sad day for Qurna history, and for those members of ASTENE who had wished to restore it.

And on April 4<sup>th</sup> the bulldozers returned unannounced and demolished the wonderful mud structures outside the bab el-hagar that Qurna Discovery planned to clean and display. Our team there had put up a valiant struggle and tried to stop both these demolitions, but were not successful.



Susan at the opening of the Zawyeh, October 2007

### Susan Weeks

Artist, ceramicist and, field archaeologist of distinction, beloved wife, soulmate, workmate and life-long companion of Kent Weeks, drowned in a tragic accident in the Nile in December.

Susan spent her working life in Egypt, for many decades in Luxor and Qurna. She recorded the vanishing arts and crafts of Qurna and had a deep love for Qurna and its people. A most generous friend of Qurna Discovery, she gave advice and help to Caroline over many years. "We looked forward to working closely on the Daramalli House - but sadly that is not to be."

She will be very greatly missed.



Susan's visit to the Daramalli House, March 2007, after the family had left but before any restoration work.

### A second Guardian

When the Daramalli House is open it requires its own Guardian. It is not yet decided, but we may be welcoming back our first Guardian, Mohamed, who left to do his military service.

### Happy Family Matters

Abdu and Nadjua have a delightful son called Yasiin. Our first Guardian, Mohamed, married Hoda last year and they have just had their first baby, a boy called Youssef. Long life and happiness to all.



# News

February 2010  
ISSUE 3

**Qurna History Project is the bringing together of different strands of historical work that have grown over the last sixteen years. Qurna Discovery is one part of the project.**



A Qurnawi antiquities inspector, a conference delegate (centre), was fascinated to learn about his village.

## “Earth Structures of Qurna”

Caroline Simpson, Secretary of the Friends, is also the Coordinator of the Qurna History Project. Earthen architecture and ‘mud structures’ of all sorts have fascinated her since living in Ghana in the 60s, and here in Qurna it was all around. In February 2008 Caroline went to **Terra 2008**, the ICOMOS 10th international conference on the study and conservation of earthen architectural heritage, held in Mali. Caroline made a six-panel exhibition, which was on display at the national exhibition centre in Bamako. It was ironic that when the wonders of earthen architecture were being celebrated at an illustrious conference in Mali, a whole earthen culture was being systematically bulldozed in Egypt.

The panels show a wide variety of mud structures common in most Qurnawi houses and yards and then illustrate the houses and other buildings themselves. The first panel puts them in their historical context, while the last shows both recent destruction and the non-Qurnawi earthen buildings that will remain. The text is in French and English. The exhibition may be borrowed for display, and can be mounted with pins, Velcro, or even hung! Contact Caroline for further details. See the website: [www.qurna.org](http://www.qurna.org)

## Mansour el-Hashash

Yvonne Neville-Rolfe, Chairman of the Friends, is the great granddaughter of Joseph Bonomi. Bonomi worked in Qurna in the 1820s and 30s, and for some years he was an employee of Robert Hay – the subject of the main exhibition in the zawyeh. Last year a cousin gave Yvonne some more family documents to add to her collection, and one is the pencil drawing on the right. This is Mansour el-Hashash, who we know from Bonomi and other Qurna Europeans was a much-respected centenarian guide and elder, who was born in 1723! He is still remembered by family elders today as a very learned man. This portrait was probably drawn in 1830 and is most likely the first portrait of a named Qurnawi

Do look on the Q H P website, where you will find various articles and information about Qurna.

[www.qurna.org](http://www.qurna.org)

Many thanks to Charlie Ridley for being ‘webmaster’ for many years and to Martin Dow for taking over.

If your local society would like an illustrated talk about any aspect of the QHP or Qurna history, do contact Caroline Simpson: [Caroline@forbury.demon.co.uk](mailto:Caroline@forbury.demon.co.uk)

