



News

March 2004
ISSUE 1

Qurna History Project is the bringing together of different strands of historical work that have grown over the last ten years. Qurna Discovery is one part of the project, and readers who have previously received copies of Theban Panoramas News will know that this newsletter is in a different form and it has had a major re-design.

HERITAGE IN DANGER

Qurna is part of the UNESCO world cultural heritage site of the Theban Necropolis. Its people and their way of life, their buildings and artefacts are an intrinsic part of this cultural heritage. Egyptian Law 117 also states that any building or object over 100 years old is itself an antiquity and therefore protected under that law. In common with historic sites world wide, Qurna heritage is threatened in many ways by the forces of modern life, by lack of law enforcement and by

the financial constraints of both the individual and the governing authority. It is also afflicted by all the problems associated with mass heritage tourism.

Qurna History Project has been able to build up a history of individual properties and the growth of Qurna as a whole through research and the collection of illustrations. In some cases the pictures can be fleshed out with written material from travellers' stories and descriptions

by the 19th century scholars working there. Mud-brick buildings can have a life of hundreds, and indeed thousands of years, but may need maintenance and repair. For some years the authorities in Qurna have prevented and discouraged people from repairing the structures. At the same time they have undertaken or insisted upon the demolition of hundreds of houses. As a result - Qurna is a mess. It urgently needs the management plan talked about for decades.

FALLING DOWN



The house of Giovanni d'Athenasi was built around 1815 - probably the first house on the hillside for over a thousand years. Yanni was Britain's man on the ground, excavating and collecting in the bonanza days. The house played a major role in the growth of both Egyptology and tourism, and is an historic building in its own right. A drawing of 1855, taken from a photograph, shows it amongst its tomb-dwelling neighbours. The tower now hangs perilously, and the whole structure is in very urgent need of major repair.



GOING, GOING, GONE

A large ruin on the 1820's drawings is most probably part of Coptic monastic complex - unrecorded in the documents. It has at least two tombs at the back of the courtyard, tall walls and a high arched entrance. We know the tombs have Coptic crosses. In the mid 1820s it had a Qurnawi family living there with their menamas and other mud structures in the courtyard. By the late 19th century the walls were built up and a large new house stood on the hill. Between 2001 and 2003 the present owner, in contravention of all applicable laws, demolished the old structure and has built

a huge, ugly, fired brick and cement building he intends to run as a hotel. Modern tourists want showers and lavatories so he will have storage tanks on the roof. However, no waste water disposal system exists and so the gallons will go down a tomb or some other hole. This is on the Tombs of the Nobles, and below him is the stunning tomb of Ramose. The amazing state of preservation of Ramose and the other tombs is because of the quality of the fine limestone and the lack of rainfall and water penetration. Wake up somebody, please!

DIRTY HABITS

There is now a small army of street sweepers in Qurna, and they try hard in the blazing sun to keep the place tidy. But why can't the modern tourist have some sense of respect here? The small canals are choked with plastic water bottles, crisp packets and plastic bags hang like lanterns in the trees, round every

small rock corner on the paths over the sacred hills there are more bottles and more garbage. And this is in a place where everything is preserved for thousands of years, which is precisely why the filthy tourist is here in the first place. Respect. That should be the motto.

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Robert Hay drawing, British Library and Qurna Discovery. Central hill is Thoth Hill, the entrance to Valley of the Kings is behind the camel



Qurna Discovery itself is a small permanent venue, which houses two main exhibitions: The Robert Hay Panoramas and drawings of Qurna (2001) in which

local history is illustrated through the early 19th century drawings, and Gournia - living villages in the city of the dead (1998) which looks at the current state and modern problems of the hillside community. Outside the venue is a newly built menama (2002) and the soon to be completed small display about water wheels alongside the 19th century Bogdadi saqieh wheel.

Different elements of the Qurna History Project involve informing local and foreign visitors about the history of the area, returning copies of historic records to their place of origin and the preservation of historic artifacts and skills. Exhibition and display are one set of tools to help achieve these different aims and objectives.



Bir Taia, Ginen. Same view c 1920, Carter House in background built 1910. Photo found at a Collectors' Fair, 2004, anon.



Bir Taia, Ginen. Same view 1997, wall to Muslim cemetery on the right. The well has now been capped.




The historical research which informs the whole project has been on-going for ten years. This involves work on written, illustrative and oral records, as well as recording and analyzing the existing built environment. This information is gradually moving into the public domain - through lectures, articles, and the website - but it is hoped that a book will finally be produced which pulls it all together.

Recent photographic records include historic moments such as the flood destruction of 1994 and the Peace March from Hatshepsut following the massacre, social functions - weddings, funerals, moulids - and a mug shot and views record of buildings and changes generally.

The three illustrations on this page show the importance of visual records at all periods. The Hay drawing shows people and animals on what was the north/south 'road' and the ancient Sheikh tombs in the cemetery (not shown here). What was a casual tourist snap in the 1920's shows a way of life that has nearly completely vanished, and a local landmark and meeting place that is now a meaningless stone on the ground. Today there is even less trace than in the 1997 photo. Thanks to Dr Boutros for help in identifying the 1920 photo.



There are photos of local people since 1855, but copies of these are not held by the families concerned, and are rather in private and public collections abroad. A collection is being made of originals (where possible) or copies, and copies in turn given back to families in Qurna when we locate them. Old photos, often taken on a family holiday, can also include valuable details of local topographical history.



The history of a number of standing Qurnawi buildings can be traced back over 200 years, and we hope that this will lead to the restoration and conservation of these important pieces of the built environment. We restored one façade and some internal rooms of the Omda House (2001) and the façade of the Taia zawia (2003). We hope to be able to contribute to a restoration of Yanni's house before it falls down completely.



The eventual book is a long term outcome and for a wide audience, there is a need for smaller publications about Qurna and its heritage, especially for people to use when visiting the area. QHP could publish a variety of minor works by various authors on aspects of the area. It already prints a small collection of reproductions of pictures and photos of Qurna. These are currently only available in Qurna Discovery, but could have a wider market. All these little things are aimed to raise the general knowledge and understanding about Qurna and its community. They contribute in a small way to raising the appreciation of this unique community.



Elder sister making dolls at home on Sheikh abd el Qurna.



There are no little pamphlets about Qurna available in the exhibition or other venues. This poor situation is being remedied. 'Discover Qurna and the Qurnawi' covering both the built and social environment, is almost ready. It will also be in French - many thanks to Sandrine Gamblin. And we hope to print an Arabic version - thanks to Dr Boutros. Others in preparation are 'Mud Things', and 'Water and waterwheels'. Any suggestions for other subjects or writers welcome.

QURNA DOLLIES

The local children have their own particular merchandise - mud lamps, tiny cats and most importantly, Qurna Dolls. These colourful little rag dolls are made by older sisters from scraps of material. They often have bead or sequin 'jewellery' or decoration - the Arabic name for doll 'arusa', is also the Arabic word for bride. They are very cheap - especially for unique, hand-made gifts - and have a long (if broken) history. Eton College Museum has a most delightful string and bead dolly made here some three thousand years ago.

QURNA DISCOVERY

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Qurna Discovery opened April 6th 2001, and despite a change of venue (just the other side of the Omda House) it is still going strong. It gets visitors from all over the world who write nice things in the visitors' book in dozens of languages and scripts - well, let's hope the ones in the scripts we can't read also say nice things!



Gradually more and more local people also come, but almost exclusively men. The tendency for residents not to visit their local museum or tourist attraction is universal. In Canterbury many people have never visited the Cathedral, let alone the Museums. But the word is slowly getting round that it is something a bit special that they should see. Qurnawi women have a very well developed sense of place, and are particularly interested in the

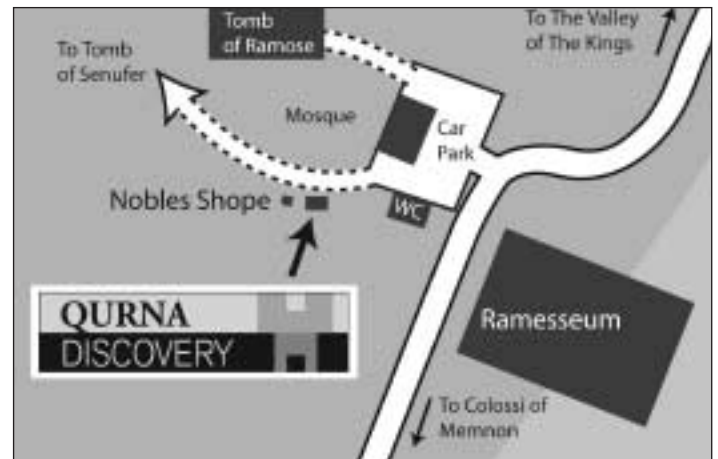
historic images, but only come if accompanied by friends and relatives, and prefer to visit around sunset.

Guardian Mohamed has had to leave for his military service, but luckily his cousin Gaber has been able to takeover. Gaber speaks and writes some English, which is very helpful to tourists. And if Gaber is sick he arranges for his half-brother Ahmed to stand in. Hurrah for extended families!

FOR SALE

Entry to Qurna Discovery is Free - thanks to The Imaginative Traveller - but there are now some things for sale. The Qurna History Project has a large collection of original Egypt postcards and book illustrations which we are printing for sale. Up to now they are printed in small quantities on a home printer in London, but if they go well we may print larger numbers in Cairo. The proceeds go half to the guardian to

supplement his modest income, and half back to the project, which just about covers production



NEIGHBOURS



The simple façade of our venue has two doors. One is to Qurna Discovery, but the other leads to an empty passage and back room. Abdu (see News 3,4 & 5) is currently renovating this part of the building and is planning to open a small gallery/shop. He and Elina will sell local artwork, unusual local crafts and art & craftwork from further afield. It will not sell or compete with the many existing local shops selling limestone, alabaster or soapstone replicas.

The Luxor Art College often sends students to sketch on the

hillside - perhaps they would like an outlet. Edith Dibou, who lives near the Ramesseum, has recently had an art exhibition in Cairo. She also runs a small workshop making rather exclusive clothes with a number of young women trainees. There is no shortage of local talent. And when you have seen the exhibition, bought the artwork, you will need a drink, and you can get cold drinks and a variety of biscuits next door in the Nobles Shope.

Good Luck Elina and Abdu with the new venture.

The Imaginative Traveller

Qurna Discovery is most fortunate that The Imaginative Traveller was attracted by our Hay Panoramas Appeal. The company generously offered to pay the rent, light and guardian costs for years 3-8 of the exhibition. Their support has enabled this unique project to survive and grow.

The Imaginative Traveller writes:

Since the beginning of The Imaginative Traveller, more than thirteen years ago, we have been committed to an environmental policy and the promotion of responsible travel. We employ a high percentage of locally recruited staff, choose our overseas partners with care and have established or support projects in all of our core destinations. Our whole ethos is based upon working with local communities, rather than imposing ourselves upon them and all we ask is that you bear this in mind when travelling with us.

We have ongoing environmental and humanitarian projects in Egypt, Turkey and, India and towards the end of 2002 we also pledged our support for projects in China and Morocco and initiated our own pilot project in Thailand.

Chiang Mai, Thailand - Set up by Stanley, a retired guide who was himself an orphan, after coming across three children scratching out an existence on the streets of Chiang Mai, Stanley decided to take the children home to his own family. Now those three children have turned into 45, all with a similar tragic tale

to tell. Our support for the orphanage has gradually grown since December 2002 and now many travellers are given the choice to visit when in Chiang Mai.

Barhal School, Turkey - At the end of 2003 we extended our support in Turkey to include a school in the north east of the country. After contacting a school in Barhal to assess the children's educational needs our Destination Manager for Turkey, Yavuz Salataci, arranged delivery of stationary sets (books, notebooks, pencils, etc) for 45 children and first aid equipment, atlases and chalk etc for the school.

The Imaginative Traveller offers over 20 different trips to Egypt, in 3 different travelling styles - Adventurer (often using public transport and small family run hotels), Traveller (using privately chartered vehicles and tourist class hotels), and Pioneer (personal challenges that push the limits of travel). Check out our website www.imaginative-traveller.com to find out more.

QURNA MURAL



Golo writes: "The black parts are the window and the two doors. Left we can see the artists of the pharaonic time and the two divinities Merseger (goddess of the mountain) and Ptah (god of the creation and the artists). The centre is Hay in 1826. Right is today in Gurnah."

In 1995 the mud plaster walls of the small property which houses Qurna Discovery were covered in a lovely painting of pharaonic Thebans by the finest of the Hajj painters then working in Qurna, Mohamed abd el Melek. By 2001 this had been replaced by another mural, this time by Fenan Tayib. Our intention was for Mohamed to

do a new mural on the theme of the Robert Hay drawings, but disaster struck. Mohamed fell off his motor-bike six months ago and broke both wrists. We are very relieved that they have healed well and he is back at work again - as a head master. However, he says that he will not paint walls again. What a loss!

Qurna Discovery is delighted that Golo - artist and cartoonist extraordinary - has agreed to paint our Qurna mural. Golo has lived in Qurna for many years, and in Egypt many decades. His work is well known in Egypt's newspapers, journals and numerous books. A wonderful book - his cartoon history of the Theban

Necropolis/Qurna, "Chronique de la Nécropole" - is well underway. It is eagerly awaited. We hope that Golo will find time for the Qurna mural this spring. When it's done we will get some new benches outside - they have been 'on hold' some time.

FAMILY HERITAGE

One aim of the Qurna History Project is to collect photos of identifiable Qurnawi and where possible 'return' these family photos. Visitors have been taking photos here for 150 years and the images are in public and private collections and bottom drawers, all over the world. We are collecting copies of such photos - taken any time from the 1850s to 20 years ago - and taking copies back to give to the family.



Photo purchased at Collectors' Fair, 2002

The back of this photo says "Femmes indigènes, Cheikh el-Gournah (Tombeaux des nobles), Fevrier 1959". The older

of these two lovely women is Bahia Ali Mohammed, her daughter is said to be Sikkina. Sikkina now lives in Armant, but a nice A4 copy is with her family waiting for the next visit.

Thank you to Victor Blunden and Anne Midgley for sending copies of your families' photos.



The young children with the baby goat snapped in 1982? The little girl has a family of her own in As-Siyul.



Three children, two naked, near the Colossi in 1931 have proved difficult to trace, perhaps partly because of the

nakedness. But they provoked discussion as to whether the naked boys were poor or sick. Until quite recently many village children did not wear clothes, but as at least one of these children seems to have the distended belly typical of malnourished children, perhaps poor and sick is the answer. The Dragoon has a Coptic name, Said Tanius, and most probably traveled with the family from Cairo.



The photo of the saqieh near the Ramessesum pylon is also a portrait of our present guardian's grandfather!

It is hoped that all the collected portraits will form an exhibition in their own right - one day.

If your family has any photo records of Egypt visits before 1980, please do look and see if you have any recognizable Qurnawi in the holiday snap. We would be grateful for copies, together with any relevant information as to date, place etc that might help in identifying families.

SHEIKH AWAD

c.1773-c.1868

Egyptian guide, foreman and local historian



Drawing Nestor L'Hote, 1828, Louvre

Sheikh Awad was born and lived in Qurna all his life. Joseph Bonomi was born in London and lived in Qurna for nine years, 1824-32. They were very close neighbours living on Sheikh abd el Qurna, and would have known one another well. Many of Bonomi's 'ethnographic' and topological notes are likely to have come from Awad, who worked with Champollion, Lepsius and Brugsch as foreman and guide. Bonomi worked with Hay, Lane, Wilkinson, Burton and Lepsius recording Egypt and its monuments. Awad married ten or twelve times and had more than fifty children.

Bonomi married twice and had only a few children.



On March 8th 2001 a rather special tea party was held on Sheikh abd el Qurna. 60 or so known descendants of Sheikh Awad were invited to meet Yvonne Neville-Rolfe, great grand-daughter of the sculptor, draughtsman, traveller and early Egyptologist. Two grand-sons of Awad came, with dozens of other family members of three or four generations. Lots of sticky cake was eaten and washed down with cokes provided whole-sale by Hajj Abd e'Satar Ahmed Awad, one of Awad's grandsons. The adult guests were each given a 'certificate' memento showing portraits of both men. It was a very jolly afternoon, and a memorial to the close friendship and professional links between the Qurna community and the British. Sadly Hajj Adli, an Awad grandson in his mid nineties, tall, gentle and for many years a fixture on the mastaba outside the mosque, died in the summer of 2003.

(for report of event see ASTENE newsletter 15)



Dawson collection, 1910-1914, Cambridgeshire County Library



Saqieh rotting in 2003

QURNA DISCOVERY THE BOGDADI SAQIEH

Fifty years ago one of the commonest features of the Nile Valley landscape was the saqieh or water wheel. The Qurna History Project has so far found late 19th and early 20th century photos of ten of the saqieh that were on the fields between the Colossi and the palm groves of Ginena (near Seti temple). Seven of the photos have clear portraits of the men and boys working them.

Until recently the huge horizontal wheel of the Bogdadi family saqieh (above) was lying quietly rotting in a puddle



under some acacias just below the Ramessesum Resthouse. This has been rescued by 15 strong men and a tractor and is now high and dry - temporarily outside Qurna Discovery. A small display is being prepared using old photos and IFAO diagrams to show how and where they worked. We are also hoping to have a small working model made. More anon.

UNTIMELY RETIREMENT

Taia Adaoui Daramalli became an honorary menama craftsman when he made our wonderful first menama (see News No.3), but he is actually one of the most skilled of the stone carvers of flat



limestone replicas of tomb and temple scenes. In recent years he used the zawia as a workshop. Very sadly Taia had a bad accident five months ago with a kerosene stove he used to make tea. He badly burnt his legs, the front of his body and his hands. His right hand, the hand he uses for carving, is severely damaged and was still very raw in January, three months later. It looks likely that he will not be able to work again. This is very serious for him, for his younger wife and his large family. If you would like to send a gift to Taia and his family, do send it to the project co-ordinator and specify it is for them - we will make sure that they get it.

ROBERT HAY

The March/April 2003 edition of the lavish Saudi Aramco World magazine contained a well-illustrated article about Robert Hay and his drawings. Jane Waldron Grutz was commissioned to write this following our contact with Aramco World over the Qurna exhibition (now on-line at www.saudiaramcoworld.com). Selwyn Tillett says he is still planning to republish his book on Hay. Let us hope

there is a growth of interest in Robert Hay and his remarkable collection - held in the British Library MSS Dept. One person known to have recently developed an interest is a young Scottish descendant now living in London, Robert Hay by name!

RESTORING THE BUILT HERITAGE

As reported in our last newsletter the zawia of the Daramalli family was restored in 2003.



Here is the earliest photo we have found so far, 1909,



and a before (2002)



and after (2003).

Since last spring, mud-mason Najjar has also painted his window and door (see News No. 5). His is now by far the smartest home in Qurna. Congratulations also to Najjar and his wife on the birth of Abd er Rahman - the youngest member of a large and happy family.



COMING HOME

It has recently been announced that Mohammed el Bialy had been offered the post of Senior Inspector for Luxor and Karnak. We look forward to welcoming Mohammed back to Thebes.

UNESCO NEWS

We hear from Paris that: *"The World Heritage Centre in the past year could do nothing concerning Qurna. After our mission there two years ago and our resulting recommendations to the Govt (reiterated by the World Heritage Committee), we were not in a position to ensure a follow up, owing to lack of financial and human resources. The Centre, as you know, does not have the means to "enforce" a technical recommendation made by the World Heritage Committee, since the responsibility for the safeguarding of a WH property rests entirely on the State Party in which it is located, in this case Egypt."*

Qurna History Project has recently sent an illustrated report on the current state of Qurna and its problems to UNESCO in Paris. A similar report has also been sent to Mr Farouk Hosni, the Minister of Culture, who made a short personal visit to Qurna in early December. Let us hope that something good comes from this personal involvement of the Senior Minister responsible, who is also a fine artist - modern painter.

Hay's Theba Panoramas & Qurna History Project would like to thank our previous donors

The Imaginative Traveller

Southampton Ancient Egypt Society, Ramases, Manchester Ancient Egypt Society, Lila Abu-Lughod, Joe Attard, Audrey Bateman, Loutfy Boulos, Michelle Brown, Mrs M Clarke, Alec Conn, Josephine Eldred, Marianne Ellis, D.Morgan Evans, Hoda el-Gindi's salon, Ena Halmos, Nawal Hassan, F Nigel Hepper, David Hinton, T.G.H.James, Diana Kesterton, Jeannot Kettel, L.Lonsdale-Cooper, Peter Losson, Avril Lyon, Diana Magee, Jaromir Malek, Deborah Manley, Anne Midgley, Tim Mitchell, Pat Mortimer, Robert Muir, Yvonne Neville-Rolfe, T A Pendrill, Kay Pickavance, Charles Plouviez, Peta Ree, Rob Robson, John Rodenbeck, Geoffrey Roper, Carolyn Scott, Jennifer Speake, Sarah Thorley, Pearl Ward, Valerie Warren, Kent and Susan Weeks, Caroline Williams, Roderic Wood, Mary and Jim Wright.

And thank you also to our new and repeat donors:

Elina Paulin-Grothe, Robert Hay, Hisham Khatib, Robert Muir, Liz Beloe, G.M.James, Bristol Egyptology Society, T.A.Pendrill, Ena Halmos, J. Huggan, John Packer, John Lewis, Fred Whitemore and Roddy Wood

Thanks also to Sandrine Gamblin, Dr Boutros Wadieh, and to Abdu Osman Daramalli and all 'the Home Team' in Qurna.



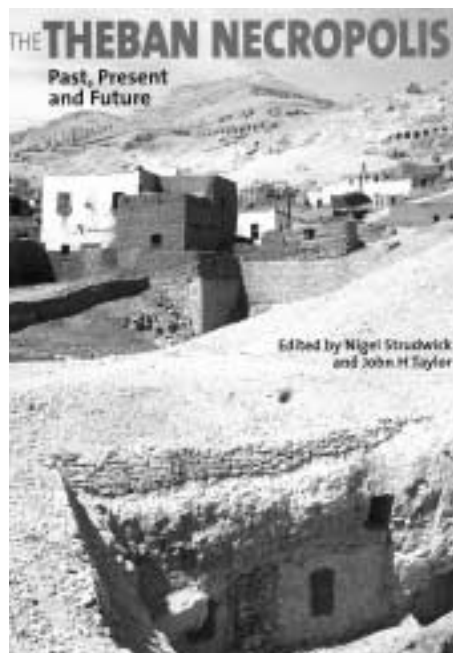
The Home Team. From left: Mubarak, Abu'l Sabur, Mohamed Abu Saleh, Ahmed, Abdu, Mustafa, Mohamed & Ramadan 'Karaba'

No thanks to Lloyds TSB Bank, who asked for new mandates because of international terrorism, then lost our hand-delivered mandates, then closed our accounts without warning. We are in the process of opening a new account at the Co-op.

Appeal account money is not used for research, or collecting images and recording (or buying huge water wheels). It is and will be used for the upkeep of the exhibition, exhibition posters and flyers, QHP publications, the mural, building restorations and the saqieh display. We are looking for a sponsor for the working model of the saqieh - any water related companies out there interested in the history of their industry?

THE THEBAN NECROPOLIS - Past Present and Future

Caroline Simpson's first printed article on Qurna history is at last published - in this lavish British Museum publication edited by Nigel Strudwick and John H Taylor. The paper-back book is indeed expensive at £49.95, but it has 24 original articles, has 250 pages of text and b/w illustrations, and 150 plates mostly in beautiful colour. It is also very heavy! If you can't buy it for your personal collection, encourage your local library to do so.



To find out more please visit our website:
Present website: www.sepcom.demon.co.uk/hay/main.html.
Forthcoming website: www.qurna.org

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