

# DEAR ANCIENT EGYPT

## Readers' letters

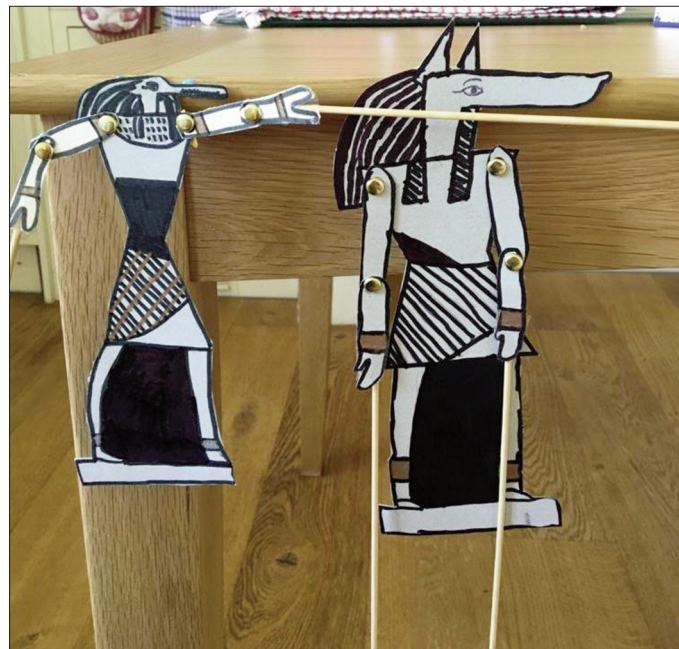


Dear Editor,

It is great to see you encouraging young readers to expand on the Ancient Egyptian studies they receive in Year 5 at primary school by learning more detail from the *Per Mesut* section of *AE* magazine.

I have a keen interest in Egyptology and during lock down earlier in the year when schools were closed I offered to explore the subject with my grandson (9) and granddaughter (7). I first had to learn how to use Zoom, but thereafter we met over the internet for 50 minutes every Tuesday morning for twelve weeks. With the aid of photographs and my research, we start-

BELOW and RIGHT: Ancient Egyptian Handicrafts made by Gillian Marchant's Grandchildren: costumes, puppets, a glittery scarab and mummies. Photos: Gillian Marchant



ed at Deir el-Medina, looked at the making of the tombs in the Valleys of the Kings and Queens, explored funerary rites and mummification, and met many of the gods and goddesses. They learnt about scribes and Ancient Egyptian writing, and to my surprise, my grandson even challenged me to solve sums he had written in hieroglyphs! We also dropped into Karnak and Luxor and entered some of the West Bank mortuary temples and 'flew' to Abu Simbel. I have never seen children sit so still and captivated and eager to ask questions. At their request we had a lesson on Egyptian medicine! They learnt about obelisks and transportation, clothes, crowns and foods. Having debated the importance of the Nile, we then 'sailed' to Cairo and visited Saqqara to look at the different designs of pyramid and ventured into the Serapeum. They enjoyed the Osiris Myth (in particular the loss of Osiris's appendage to a Nile fish!) and the Battle of Kadesh with its interesting weaponry.

After each session they asked for 'homework' which was craft-based using mainly ideas from the Usborne activities book *Egyptian Things to Make and Do*. At the end of the twelve weeks, we had a 'graduation ceremony' in the garden where we all dressed up as Ancient Egyptians and they each received a certificate. All in all it was great fun and a wonderful focus during those difficult months. I was amazed at how much information they retained and perhaps of even greater significance is the thought that future Egyptologists may have been born!

I am attaching some photographs (*see opposite*) of the children's creations.

Gillian Marchant

#### Dear Editor,

I have been reading your great magazine and have always found the vast range of articles very stimulating. In *AE* this month [*AE*121], I was particularly taken by Hilary Wilson's article on Headcloths. (Why this should be for young readers, I don't know. I found it fascinating, and I have had my bus pass for many years.)

The *khat* made me think of hair, and possible styles. It seems that men are usually shown wearing crowns or shaven-headed. What of women? Have you ever had an article about possible women's hair styles, apart from wigs.? I look forward to seeing the answer in print.

Brian Regan

#### Dear Brian,

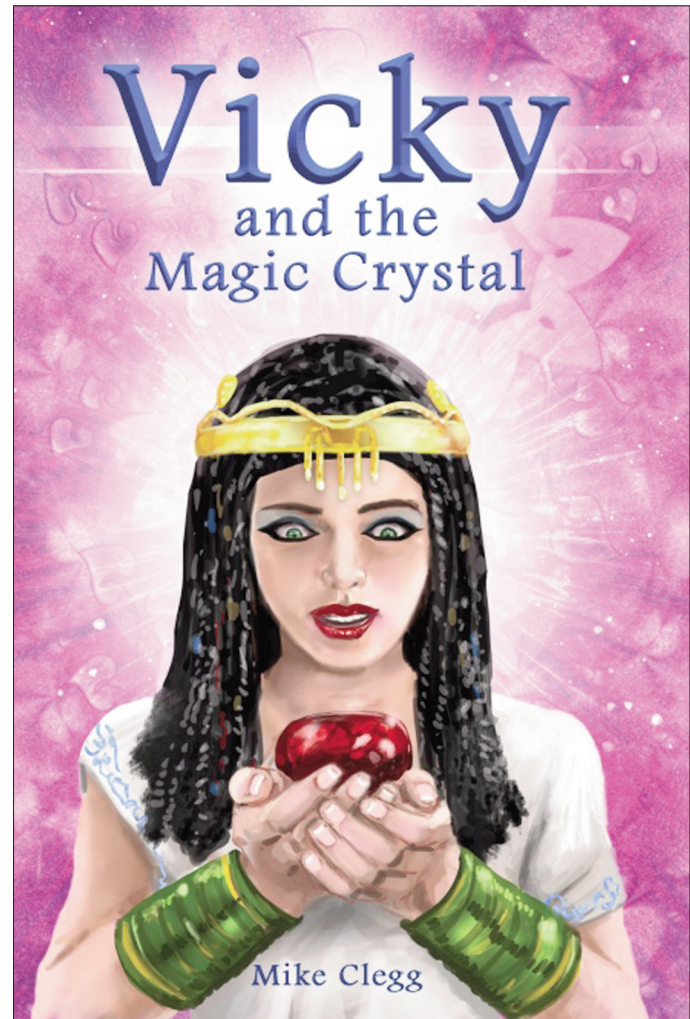
Hilary Wilson thinks it's a great idea – watch this space!

Ed.

#### Dear Editor,

I noticed that in the latest edition [actually the July/August edition – Ed.] of *ANCIENT EGYPT* (*AE*120) Hilary Wilson's *Per Mesut* presented a selection of Egypt-related fiction books. I recently published a book entitled *Vicky and the Magic Crystal* which, in part, tells the story of how Vicky and her friends travel to the time of Tutankhaten, save his life and escort him to Thebes where he changes his name and sets about ruling the country. It was written for older children (young teenagers) although a number of adults have bought it as well. I thought this might be an interesting addition to Hilary's list.

I've recently rejoined the readership of your excellent magazine after a longish absence. I have been more involved in writing and preparing lectures than in reading for recreation. Also I



ABOVE: *Vicky and the Magic Crystal* by Mike Clegg. Published by WRITERSWORLD. ISBN: 978-0-9954823-3-3.

had been hoping to visit Egypt again this year and repeat the excellent cruise on the Nile from Cairo that my wife and I took last year. Covid-19 put a stop to that I'm afraid; maybe 2021!

Mike Clegg

#### Dear Editor,

Just a query about ancient Egyptian ear piercings. I was wondering whether ear piercing was standard throughout the population, or reserved for societies elite, and how were the ears pierced. Have there been any tools discovered to support the theories?

Barbara Atkinson

#### Dear Barbara,

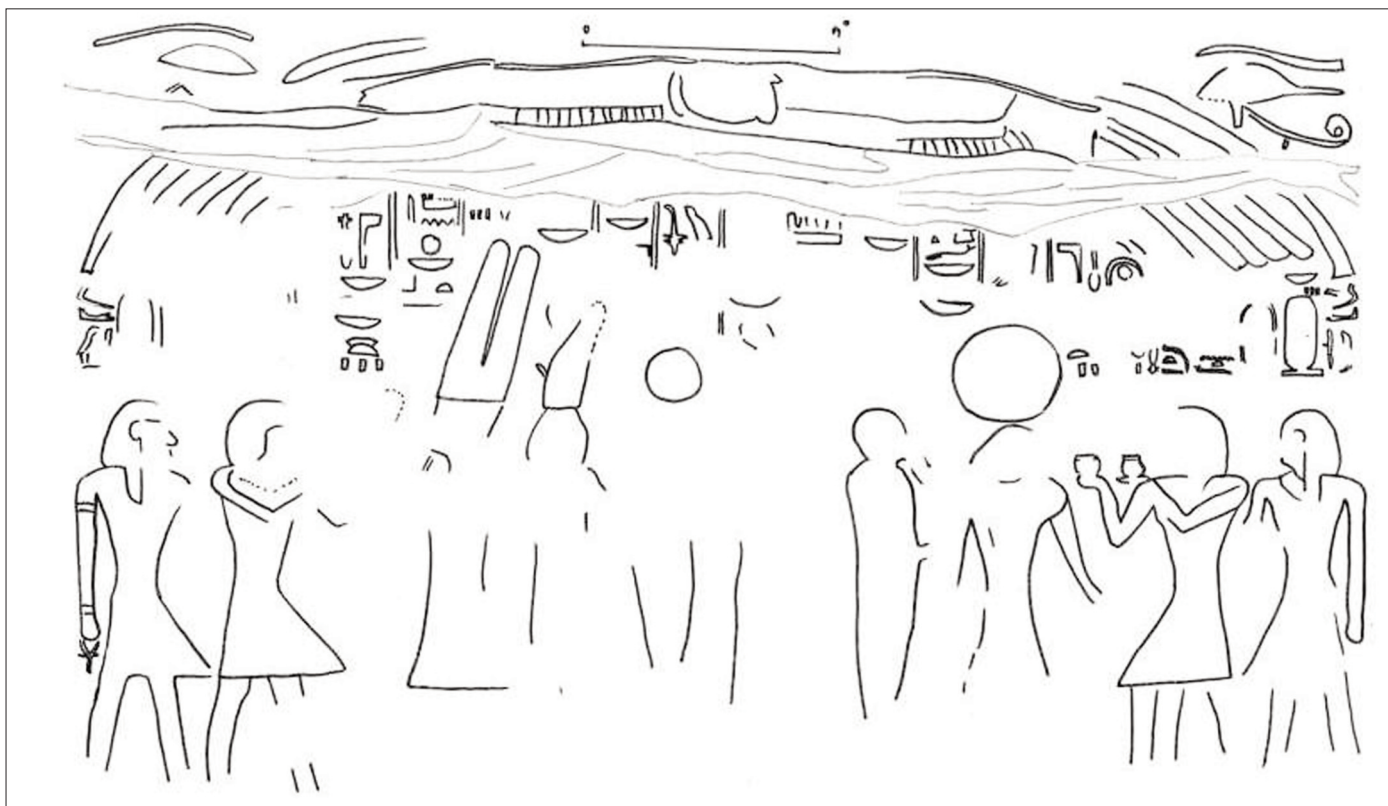
Sounds like a good research project – over to our knowledgeable readers!

Ed.

#### Dear Editor,

I am enjoying the articles on *Gebel el-Silsila Through The Ages*, but I have a query on the coverage of the Sety I shrine in the last issue (p.18 of *AE*121). The article states that Sety is making offerings to Amun and Ramesses I, but the hieroglyphs suggest that these figures are actually Montu and Atum. Can you please explain why these might be Amun and Ramesses I?

## readers' letters



ABOVE: A facsimile drawing of a Nile stela depicting Ramesses I and Amun. Drawing: Moamen Saad

I am looking forward to further articles in this series in future issues.

**Geoffrey Lenox-Smith**

**Dear Geoffrey,**

Thanks to you – and also to Dylan Bickerstaffe – for correctly pointing out a mix-up in the image description. The image on p.18 does indeed show Sety presenting offerings to Atum and Montu. The actual scene referred to – showing Ramesses I and Amun – is reproduced above.

**Ed.**

**Dear Editor,**

I enjoyed Nacho Ares's article on the use of sledges to move heavy stone objects over wetted sand in ancient Egypt – or more particularly, on the non-use of wheels for the purpose. And I thought AE readers would be interested to know that before the advent of fork-lift trucks, the guys that moved heavy sculpture at the British Museum, the Mason's Assistants, almost never used wheels.

I joined Stone and Wall Paintings Conservation at the BM in 1979 and, at that time, everything was moved by hand. For example, to move a granite figure, weighing, say, three-quarters of a tonne and standing on a flat floor, it would firstly be lifted on one side, using a mixing trowel. (For this to work, the trowel must be the type made as a single casting and, the point must be sawn off; this adapted tool now makes a very strong and very thin lever and it can be used to lift any weight.)

For a sculpture standing on the floor, a place must be found for slipping the trowel underneath the base. The first lift needs to be enough to push in the thin end of a wedge, to make a purchase. This would allow the trowel to be slid further in, to make a better purchase next time. After a few such lifts, enough

height would be achieved, for a thin batten the length of the base, to be inserted.

This operation would be repeated on the other side of the base and, once resting on battens, a lever could be used for further lifts. The guys were equipped with timber battens and baulks of various sizes – always in pairs – and specially constructed boxes – also in pairs – and, with these, the sculpture could be raised to any precise height.

Part of the equipment were pairs of 10 x 1.5cm oak floorboards of various lengths, all coated with graphite. A long and a short floorboard would be paired, graphite to graphite, and inserted under the base, at each side and the sculpture would be brought down to rest on the short boards (uppermost) and in this configuration, one or two men could push the sculpture, with ease. More floorboards could be laid down, and, if necessary, the direction could be changed, so as to continue the move to the new location.

**Eric Miller**

**Dear Editor,**

I wonder if you can help me with a question regarding the statue pictured on page 52 of the latest issue (AE121). I am referring to the photograph in *Per Mesut*, bottom left, entitled 'a rear view of a seated statue of Smenkhkara'.

I am no expert and my main interest is Archaic Period Egypt, but it is hard to miss the varying opinions on personnel, parentage and succession during the Amarna period and its immediate aftermath. I was under the impression that while there may be just about enough evidence to establish the existence of Smenkhkara as a king of Egypt, it was still sparse and some of it disputed. I was not aware of anything as definitive as a statue. I have looked through the online catalogue of Egyptian antiquities at the Louvre and cannot find it. Could you direct

me to more information about the statue, perhaps a picture of the front?

I'll take this opportunity to say thank you for an excellent magazine, always enjoyable.

Karen Halfacre

Dear Karen,

Herewith three images of the Louvre statue which, as you can see from the extra arm around the king's back was originally part of a pair statue. I always associate this with Smenkhkara because that was how Cyril Aldred identified it, but more recent scholars have said it is Akhenaten. As the statue is uninscribed you can take your pick!

Hilary Wilson



Three images of a statue that may depict Smenkhkara. Musée du Louvre, Paris. Photos; Hilary Wilson.