PHARAONIC OBSESSIONS: ANCIENT EGYPT, AN AUSTRALIAN STORY

Candace Richards
ABSTRACT

*Pharaonic Obsessions: Ancient Egypt, an Australian Story* explores the modern history of Egyptology through the lens of Australian collecting practices, showcasing the University of Sydney’s significant holdings of ancient Egyptian material culture. Conceptually divided into two themes, ‘objects of obsession’ and ‘sites of obsession’, this exhibition examines the stories of prominent Australians who helped shape the University’s collection, and investigates the reception of ancient Egyptian heritage in Australian society from the mid-19th to the mid-20th century. Historic photography, rare books, poster art and social history collections are entwined within the displays of ancient artefacts to explicitly place the collection in its colonial framework.

*Pharaonic Obsessions* would not have been possible without the editorial assistance of Dr Paul Donnelly (Deputy Director) and Luke Parker (Exhibitions Manager), collection cataloguing by Dr Conni Lord (Egyptology Research Assistant 2017–19) and the research of former museum staff including Catherine Lawler (Museum Assistant 1962–86) and Dr Karin Sowada (Assistant Curator 1996–2005).

Candace Richards, Assistant Curator, Nicholson Collection
INTRODUCTION

Ancient Egypt and modern Australia are worlds apart, but we have been influenced by the land of the Pharaohs in many ways. Throughout history, travellers to Egypt were mesmerised by the ancient wonders emerging from the sands.

In the 19th century, a wave of Egyptomania spread throughout the western world, spurring a generation of scientists, scholars, and tourists to dig deeper into this enigmatic culture.

Each new discovery tantalised the public. Australians, deployed through Egypt during the World Wars or migrating via the Suez Canal, found themselves uniquely placed to explore the sites and wonders.

Since then, the style and secrets of ancient Egypt have reverberated through many aspects of our culture, from art to architecture and film. This exhibition examines Australia’s continuing fascination with the land of the Pharaohs, through the enigmatic artefacts collected by Australians, and the archaeological sites that ignited our imagination.

1. Exhibition installation of a monumental sculpture of Amenhotep III, re-carved to portray Rameses II. NM62.657
The Australian story of ancient Egypt begins right here at the University of Sydney. Founded in 1850, Australia’s first university was modelled after the gothic halls of Oxford and Cambridge. All that was missing was an antiquities and archaeological collection to match.

Charles Nicholson, politician, philanthropist and first vice-chancellor of the University, set out to change that, travelling across Europe to Egypt, using his personal wealth to amass a collection to rival the great English museums. Reaching Egypt for the first time in 1856, Nicholson quickly began collecting artefacts. He met with dealers and Egyptian officials in Cairo and Luxor and visited many archaeological sites. He diligently sought out representative artefacts – no two objects were alike, and each signified a different moment of Egyptian history, from the Old Kingdom to Late antiquity.

In 1860, the University received the first shipment of crates, packed with more than 400 artefacts. These would become the foundation of the University of Sydney’s Museum of Antiquities, soon nicknamed the Nicholsonian Museum. In 1862, Nicholson returned permanently to England, but he never forgot his Sydney collection. His journey home took him via Egypt, where he acquired one of the museum’s most significant sculptures: a bust of Horemheb, Tutankhamun’s general turned Pharaoh.

2. Horemheb, dressed as a royal scribe, before becoming Pharaoh.
NMR.1138
On his conquest expedition to Egypt in 1798–1801, Napoleon was accompanied by a large team of artists, architects, linguists and scientists, whose findings were published in *Description de l’Égypte*, in 1809. The first volume sparked a new obsession in Western Europe with Egypt. It contained fascinating engravings and detailed records of the art, culture and monuments of ancient Egypt. Over the next hundred years, explorers set out to uncover more of Egypt’s rich heritage, and to seek fortune and glory through discovery and plunder.

In the 19th century, it became fashionable for wealthy Western European tourists to make their way down the Nile, stopping at the Great Pyramids of Giza and the Sphinx, at the temple complex of Karnak, at Cleopatra’s Temple at Erments, and at the Rameses II monumental sculptures at Abu Simbel.
Antiquities were sold as souvenirs in the marketplace of every major stop, including Alexandria, Cairo, Luxor and Thebes. They ranged from death masks and decorative cartonnages that once covered mummies, to enigmatic sculptures and stones covered in hieroglyphs. Mummified animals, preserved in their millions in ancient Egypt, were small and portable, making them a perfect souvenir.
3. *Monuments de l’Egypte et de la Nubie, de Champollion-le-jeune*, Rare Books, The University of Sydney, elephant folio 709.32

4. Promesse de mandat territorial’ (100-franc bank note). NM2017.2

5. [Reproduction of portrait of Napoleon Bonaparte by Hippolyte Paul Delaroche]. HP2014.3.44

6. Funerary stele for Shep-en-Sopdet. NMR.79

7. Funerary stele for Di-es-Montu. NMR.81


9. Mummy mask decorated with a scarab on the top, and a winged goddess on the back. NM62.652.1

10. Shabti box or canopic box, depicting the four sons of Horus. NMR.95.1

11. Mummified baby crocodile. NM52.406.1

12. Mummified baby crocodile. NM52.406.2

13. Apron piece of a mummy covering. NMR.298

14. Funerary stele for Tahersethanef. NMR.8

15. Mummified ibises in ornate wrappings. NM62.585

16. Jar for a mummified ibis. NMR.35

17. Mummified ibis. NM62.585

18. Mummy mask. NMR.33

19. Pectoral covering. NMR.299

20. Mummified cat. NMR.30

21. Mummified cat. NM62.586

22. Ostrakon with demotic script. NMR.98

23. Tile depicting dog on a lead. NMR.116

24. Apron pieces of a mummy covering. NMR.300

25. Funerary mask. NM2008.196


27. Fragmentary statue of a seated scribe, Mina. NMR.38
The turn of the 20th century was a remarkable time for European scientific development, including for the study of the past. Archaeology was a burgeoning discipline, and Egyptian sites were central in developing new ways of scrutinising evidence.

New analytical technologies – such as X-rays, discovered in 1895 – were quickly applied to medical science and archaeology alike. Dr Grafton Elliot Smith, a graduate of the University of Sydney’s medical school, pioneered the use of X-rays to study ancient Egyptian mummification at the Cairo Museum in 1903, alongside anatomy studies that involved physically unwrapping the mummies, to understand the process of mummification.

At the outbreak of the First World War, Egypt (then under British occupation) became a main training ground and hospital base for the Allied forces. ANZAC troops camped under the Great Pyramids outside Cairo and explored the sites. At the end of the war, those lucky enough to return home were demobilised through Egypt, allowing officers, infantry and medical staff time to collect souvenirs, both genuine and fake. The bases were re-established in the Second World War.
28. Linen bandaged from the ‘Royal Mummies’ unrolled by Grafton Elliot Smith. NM84.6.1-6,9.
30. 185 amulets, coins, figurines and mummified remains in homemade display cabinet. NM2017.92-273
31. [Two Soldiers on mules visit the Pyramids]. HP83.55.57
32. [‘Sam’ at the sphinx]. HP83.55.48
33. [Australian Light Horseman, Charles Pinney and comrades at the top of a Pyramid overlooking Cairo]. HP2014.1.474
34. Calcite platter. NM58.11
35. Calcite platter. NM58.12
36. Calcite jar. NM60.51
37. Polished jar with red slip. NM53.529
38. Polished jar with red slip. NM53.530
39. Naqada III painted jar. NM53.531
40. Shabti figurine. NM58.22
41. Fake shabti figurine. NM58.25
42. Wood figurine of a girl. NM82.4
The obsession with Egypt reached fever pitch with the discovery of Tutankhamun’s tomb in 1922. Egyptomania reverberated around the globe through headlines about the riches buried with the boy king. These discoveries spurred interest in Europe, America and Australia, influencing popular culture, fashion, design and architecture. In Sydney, a post-war boom in development resulted in many art deco monuments and public buildings, a design style heavily influenced by Egyptian aesthetics.

Tourism to Egypt continued to expand – from Australia, any ship travelling to Europe went through the Suez Canal. Ocean liners would dock at Port Said and passengers could visit Cairo and the famous Sphinx and Great Pyramids. This route was also taken by the many European migrants who came to Australia in the mid-20th century. Souvenirs of these journeys included many photographs, both personal and bought from studios, as well as artefacts, modern replicas and even human remains.
Since 1970, international laws and conventions have been established to protect art and objects of cultural heritage from illicit excavations and theft. Today it is strictly illegal to take ancient objects and cultural artefacts from their home countries.

43. Gold and precious stone amuletic necklace. NM68.25
44. Faience necklace with Aubis amulet. NM68.26
45. Faience and glass bead necklace. NM68.29
46. Faience necklace with lotus flowers. NM68.30
47. Faience necklace with lotus flowers. NM68.31
49. Wheat grains recovered from Tutankhamun’s tomb. NM84.32
50. *Souvenir of Cairo.* HP91.1.19
51. Left foot of a mummy in an Arnott’s biscuit tin. NM62.587.2–3
52. Seal for Heru-em-het, set into a modern gold ring with lotus design. NM63.178
53. Scarab set into a ring made from a two-shilling coin. NM2007.137
54. Wedjat eye, threaded onto a silver necklace. NM2007.138
55. *Egyptian tourist guide, general information on travelling.* On loan, Rare Books and Special Collections Slessor 782
56. *Map of the route of the Orient Line.* HP91.1.13
57. ‘A trip to Europe’ 1929. HP91.1.1
Amelia Edwards’ lifelong obsession began after an unexpected trip to Egypt in 1873. She published the instant bestseller *A Thousand Miles Up the Nile*, capturing “the fascination of Egyptian travel, the charm of the Nile, the unexpected and surpassing beauty of the desert, [and] the ruins, which are the wonder of the world”.

Edwards, concerned that monuments were in danger of damage, set up an investigation and preservation fund. In 1882, the Egypt Exploration Fund (Society since 1919) was established in London and began funding expeditions led by William Flinders Petrie and Édouard Naville in 1883.

In 1882, a prominent Sydney businessman, Josiah Mullens, completed his own voyage down the Nile. Within a year, he established a Sydney branch of the EES, connected with the University of Sydney, and joined the management board of the Nicholson Museum. Mullens’ contributions were sincerely valued by Edwards and the EES committee. They donated a significant granite column capital:

...in recognition of the eminent services of Mr Mullens, and of the generous support which he together with family Fairfax esq. and other citizens of Sydney have given to our work.

A Edwards, Egypt Exploration Fund, to University of Sydney Senate, 24 April 1889
59. *Inundation of the Nile, Egypt* Egypt. HP2014.3.166
60. Monumental column capital depicting the goddess Hathor, with the cartouche of Osorkon II. NM2004.557
Evidence of the earliest settlements in Egypt was a hot topic in 1898 when William Flinders Petrie began excavating the vast cemeteries between Hu (or Diospolis Parva) and Abadiyeh, just north of Luxor. Flinders Petrie's previous work at Naqada had uncovered thousands of pre-dynastic tombs (4000–3000 BC), causing controversy about how old the tombs really were.

New methods were needed to understand the tombs’ chronology. Flinders Petrie knew that pottery forms, shapes and decorations changed incrementally over time, so he classified the pottery forms into nine stylistic groups.

Each was assigned a number, working backwards from a known point in history: the cylindrical wavy-handled vases, were securely dated to the first dynasties, c.3000–2800 BC.

The ways that different forms overlapped in tombs, and the noticeable changes in form, led to a sequential chronology. Each pot was assigned a sequence date, beginning at 30 (in case even earlier tombs were found) and ending at 80. This 1000-year period was named after the site that began it all, Naqada.
By obtaining the complete details of over a thousand graves, it has been possible to undertake the classification of the prehistoric civilisation; thus reducing it to almost a historical condition by a system of sequence dates ... all this work is a means to an end, as the pottery gives us by far the best material for arranging the order of the tombs.

FLINDERS PETRIE (1898–99, p.3)

Flinders Petrie’s work was a crucial moment for archaeology. His revolutionary method helped define the burgeoning discipline of archaeology, independent of historical investigations of the past. It has since been refined and today new methods, using a range of material types, aid in determining chronology.

The ceramics are laid out in the exhibition according to Flinders Petrie’s original sequence-date chart, published as plate 2 in Diospolis Parva: The Cemeteries of Abadiyeh and Hu 1898–99, by the Egypt Exploration Fund, 1901. The Nicholson Collection received several hundred pots from Flinders Petrie’s excavations of the pre-dynastic graves found in these cemeteries. These are a representative selection.
61. Black-topped ware jar. NM00.4
62. Black-topped ware jar. NM00.22
63. Black-topped ware jar. NM00.26
64. Black-topped ware jar. NM00.20
65. Black-topped ware jar. NM00.14
66. Black-topped ware jar. NM00.21
67. Black-topped ware jar. NM00.197
68. Black-topped ware jar. NM00.24
69. Red polished ware jar. NM00.37
70. Red polished ware jar. NM00.36
71. White cross-line ware bowl. NM52.141
72. White cross-line ware bowl. NM00.9
73. Wavy-handled ware. NM00.70
74. Wavy-handled ware. NM00.74
75. Wavy-handled ware. NM00.71
76. Wavy-handled ware. NM00.68
77. Wavy-handled ware. NM00.69
78. Wavy-handled ware. NM00.65
79. Coarse ware jar. NM89.2
80. Coarse ware jar. NM00.39
81. Coarse ware jar. NM00.48
82. Coarse ware jar. NM00.131
83. Decorated ware jar. NM00.32
84. Decorated ware jar. NM00.30
85. Decorated ware jar. NM00.29
86. Decorated ware jar. NM00.76
No other ancient Egyptian city has captured the imagination quite like Amarna. Since the discovery of the bust of queen Nefertiti, wife of Pharaoh Akhenaten, by a German expedition in 1912, the unusual art styles and richly coloured frescoes and pottery have inspired archaeologists and tantalised the public.

The city was established in circa 1346 BC by the Pharaoh Akhenaten as a new capital of the kingdom, centred around a radical change in religious practice. Worship was focused not on a pantheon of gods, but on a singular deity, Aten, an embodiment of the Sun. This radicalism affected many aspects of society, from politics to architecture and art.

After Akhenaten's death, around 1332BC, society shifted away from the Amarna period's radical ideas. As quickly as it emerged, the city of Amarna was abandoned.
Akhenaten’s building plans included a great temple to Aten, as well as palaces, ‘sunshades’ (palatial-style shrines for women’s worship), tombs for the royal family and officials, and infrastructure for festivals. The buildings were highly decorated in the new style of naturalistic art that typifies the Amarna period. At the Maru-Aten, the sunshade for Akhenaten’s daughter Meritaten, decoration based on the lusciousness of the Nile, its plants and bird life, extended even to the floors.

Temple building at Memphis

The talatat block was a building brick used in one of Akhenaten’s earliest temples to Aten, built at Memphis just before the establishment of Amarna. The fragment preserves the names of Akhenaten and Nefertiti in the central cartouche, with rays of red sunlight shining around them. The temple was destroyed following the abandonment of Amarna; this block was re-used in a pavement, where it was discovered in 1854 by Armenian-Egyptian engineer Yusuf Hekekyan, director of the Egyptian government’s investigations at Memphis.

87. Fragmentary face decoration from a blue painted-ware vessel. NM62.998.1-2
88. Section of a floor fresco from Maru-Aten, a ‘sun-shade’ with decorations based on the plants of the Nile Delta. NM64.415.2-3
89. Blue painted jar. NM62.628
90. Blue painted jar. NM62.629
91. Talatat block. NMR.1143
East and west were important concepts in ancient Egyptian religious beliefs. The rising sun in the east was connected to life in this world, and the setting sun in the west with death and the afterlife. Osiris was Pharaoh of the afterlife and presided over the judgement to determine admittance into the next life. One of the god’s most important cult centres was at Abydos.

The cemetery fields of Abydos were used since the predynastic period, before 3000 BC. In the Middle Kingdom (c.2025–1700 BC), an already 1000-year-old tomb was thought to be the ancient burial place of Osiris. Every year, Abydos hosted a great religious festival with a procession through the cemetery to the tomb. To be buried at Abydos was to be buried close to the god, and it remained a popular burial place for the next 2000 years.
Excavations at Abydos began in 1899 and continued for several decades with the Egypt Exploration Society. News of the finds from each season’s work quickly spread through newspapers around Australia, printed alongside photographs of local football matches (Adelaide Chronicle, 18 July 1903) and recipes for ‘Currant jelly’ and ‘Nougat’ (Queanbeyan Observer, 19 May 1905).

92. Lintel from a ‘false door’ from the tomb of Pafherneter and Shepenhor (husband and wife). NM25.36–37

93. Offering table, with inscription of a prayer for offerings addressed to Osiris for Ankhu, a senior warden of Nekhen. NM62.659
Tomb 1401

The Tomb 1401, in which many men and women were buried, was significantly disturbed before excavation. The remaining artefacts indicated that the occupants were wealthy and suggested they may have been buried with more luxurious items, later looted. The excavation was carried out by Hassan Sharif, a local workman on the 1924–25 season of excavations directed by Dutch Egyptologist Henri Frankfort.

94. Painted shabti jar with a jackal-head lid, filled with eight painted shabti. NM25.16.1-10
95. Hand-formed clay ball with scarab impressions. NM25.30
96. Ring with lion-shaped bezel. NM25.14
97. Pectoral amulet depicting a scarab with outstretched wings. NM25.15
98. Unpainted shabti jar with a jackal-head lid, filled with ten plain shabti. NMR.25.31.1-12
Tomb μ 50

The Tomb μ50 was a shaft grave with chambers for multiple people. The four upper chambers were significantly robbed, but the lower two were intact. These burials date to the 12th Dynasty (1991–1802 BC) and were excavated under the direction of Flinders Petrie for the EES in 1902–03.

99. Carnelian necklace NM03.19
100. Frit and faience necklace. NM03.5
101. Faience necklace with half bead incised with two nefer signs. NM03.9
102. Faience necklace. NM03.7
103. Carnelian necklace. NM03.18
104. Miniature jar. NM03.2
105. Kohl pot. NM03.4.1–2
106. Faience bracelet. NM03.8
107. Beads scattered by grave robbers. NM03.10
108. Pair of votive ears. NM03.121.1–2
109. Bronze mirror, missing handle. NM03.11
110. Pair of kohl pots. NM03.1.1–5
111. Amythest beads from a necklace. NM03.6

Catalogue no. 101
Tomb F78

Tomb F78 was a single burial, dating to the 6th Dynasty, 2345–2278 BC. The person was buried with a mirror directly in front of their face, laid on a limestone pillow. The miniature jars were found along with a wooden box and a comb; neither made it to Sydney. This tomb was excavated under the direction of Flinders Petrie for the EES in 1908–09.

112. Limestone headrest (pillow). NM09.3
113. Copper mirror. NM09.5
114. Miniature jar. NM64.235
115. Miniature piriform jar. NM09.1
116. Miniature piriform jar. NM09.2

Detail from the excavation card for tomb F78. Courtesy of the Egypt Exploration Society
A STORY ENDS

Reaching the afterlife was a complicated process – every day and night the soul was transformed, and dangers had to be overcome. The deceased were armed with as many spells and objects as they could afford for their journey, and their bodies were preserved through mummification.

This coffin, decorated with the symbols for resurrection and protection, was for the priest Nesy-Pauty-Tauy, shown pouring an offering for Osiris.

117. Coffin of the priest Nesy-Pauty-Tau. NMR.77, NMR.78, NMR.82
The Ultimate Obsession

This model boat evokes scenes of the River Nile teeming with life 4000 years ago. Boat models are characteristic of the Middle Kingdom tombs where they represented the funerary barge taking the decease on their eternal journey. These models are among the most admired and animated depictions of ancient Egyptian life. Examples likely damaged during entombment of retrieval are frequently restored and embellished. The hull of this boat is of a working barge of the Middle Kingdom, with original as well as additional figures comprising seated towers and standing sailors. In the centre, a blackened figure has been transformed from a rower to a ‘deceased’ figure, sheltered by a canopy added from a shabti box or model shrine dating 1500 years later than the rest of the model.

118. Funerary barge. NM2019.383
1. **Monumental sculpture of Amenhotep III, re-carved to portray Rameses II**
   Egypt, 1390–1352 BC, modified 1279–1213 BC
   granodiorite

   from Bubastis, Egypt Exploration Society (EES) excavations directed by Édouard Naville, 1887, donated by Egypt Exploration Society (EES), 1888
   Nicholson Collection, NM62.657

2. **Horemheb, dressed as a royal scribe, before becoming Pharaoh**
   Egypt, 1336–1323 BC
   granodiorite

   possibly from the Ptah Temple, Memphis
   acquired by Sir Charles Nicholson from Hanna Massara, Cairo, Egypt, 1862,
   donated before 1870
   Nicholson Collection, NMR.1138

3. **Monuments de l’Égypte et de la Nubie, de Champollion-le-jeune**
   creator: Prisse d’Avennes following the work of Jean-François Champollion
   publisher: Firmin Didot frères, Paris, 1847

   Rare Books, The University of Sydney, elephant folio 709.32 1
4. *Promesse de mandat territorial*  
100–franc bank note  
France, 1796  
paper  

collected by Grafton Elliot Smith while working at the Cairo Museum, 1900–09, donated by Elwyn Andrews and Elizabeth Bootle in memory of their great-uncle Sir Grafton Elliot Smith, 1984  
Nicholson Collection, NM2017.2  

5. [Reproduction of portrait of Napoleon Bonaparte by Hippolyte Paul Delaroche]  
1840–60  
photographer unknown  
cased daguerreotype  
donated by Sandra Savides, 2014  
Macleay Collections, HP2014.3.44  

6. Funerary stele for a woman, Shep-en-Sopdet, depicted on the right presenting an offering to Horus and his four sons  
Thebes, Egypt, late 25th Dynasty, 670–650 BC  
wood, pigment  

acquired by Sir Charles Nicholson, Egypt, 1856–57, donated 1860  
Nicholson Collection, NMR.79  

7. Funerary stele for Di-es-Montu  
possibly Thebes, Egypt, 26th Dynasty, 664–525 BC  
wood, pigment
8. Gabriel Lekegian  
*Sphinx at Giza no. 10 circa 1886*  
photographic print  
Jon Hosking bequest, 1992  
University Art Collection, UA1992.37.4  

Gabriel Lekegian, an Armenian born Egyptian, was a studio photographer in Cairo, who became the official photographer of the British Army in Egypt in the 1890s.

9. **Mummy mask decorated with a scarab on the top, and a winged goddess on the back**  
Egypt, Ptolemaic period, 332–30 BC  
cartonnage, painted and gilded linen  
acquired before 1962  
Nicholson Collection, NM62.652.1  

10. **Shabti box or canopic box, depicting the four sons of Horus**  
Egypt, Late period, 664–332 BC  
wood, pigment  
purchased by Sir Charles Nicholson from antiquities dealer Robert Henson, London 1856–58, donated 1860  
Nicholson Collection, NMR.95.1
11–12. **Mummified baby crocodiles**
Egypt, Late period to Roman period, 664 BC – AD 100

linen, mummified remains

collected from the Crocodiles Caves, Maabdeh, Egypt, donated by Professor Richard Smith, 1952
Nicholson Collection, NM52.406.1–2

13. **Apron piece of a mummy covering, decorated with Isis and Nephthys surrounding a mummy, and a dedication to Osiris**
Egypt, Ptolemaic period, 332–30 BC

cartonnage, painted linen

acquired by Sir Charles Nicholson, Egypt, 1856–57, donated 1860
Nicholson Collection, NMR.298

14. **Funerary stele for Tahersethanef**
possibly Thebes, Egypt, reign of Amenhotep II or III (18th Dynasty), 1427–1352 BC

ceramic

acquired by Sir Charles Nicholson, Egypt, 1856–57, donated 1860
Nicholson Collection, NMR.8

15. **Mummified ibises in ornate wrappings**
Egypt, Late period to Roman period, 664 BC – AD 100

linen, resin, mummified remains
from the Ibis Cemetery, Abydos, EES excavations at Abydos directed by Flinders Petrie, 1912–13, donated by the Egypt Exploration Society, 1914
Nicholson Collection, NM62.585

Computed Tomography (CT) image created by Sydney Hybrid Theatre Unit

16. **Jar for a mummified ibis**
possibly Saqqara, Egypt, Late period to Roman period, 664 BC – AD 11

   ceramic, plaster, mummified remains

   acquired by Sir Charles Nicholson, Egypt, 1856–57, donated 1860
   Nicholson Collection, NMR.35

17. **Mummified Ibis**
   Egypt, Late period to Roman period, 664 BC – AD 100

   linen, resin, mummified remains

   from the Ibis Cemetery, Abydos, EES excavations at Abydos directed by Flinders Petrie, 1912–13, donated by the Egypt Exploration Society, 1914
   Nicholson Collection, NM62.584

   Neutron Tomography image created with DINGO instrument, ANSTO Lucas Heights

18–19. **Mummy mask and pectoral covering**
   Egypt, Ptolemaic period, 332–30 BC

   cartonnage, painted and gilded linen
20–21. **Mummified cats**  
Egypt, Late period to Roman period, 664 BC – AD 100  
linen, mummified remains  
acquired by Sir Charles Nicholson, Egypt, 1856–57, donated 1860  
Nicholson Collection, NMR.33, NMR.299

22. **Ostrakon with demotic script**  
Deir el-Bahri, Egypt, 200–100 BC  
limestone, black ink  
acquired by Sir Charles Nicholson, Egypt, 1856–57, donated 1860  
Nicholson Collection, NMR.98

Demotic script is a cursive form of ancient Egyptian writing. The inscription here records the dreams of a man during his stay at the sanctuary of Amenhotep, Deir el Bahri:  

*It was a dog that I saw, which was running after an ibis, with the result that I said “I shall need to [look] after it; rescue it from him” but I could not release it from his mouth.*  
Translation: John Ray, 2006

23. **Tile depicting a dog on a lead**  
possibly Thebes, Egypt, 19th to 20th Dynasty, 1295–1069 BC
faience, glazed and painted
acquired by Sir Charles Nicholson, Egypt, 1856–57, donated 1860
Nicholson Collection, NMR.116

24. Apron pieces of a mummy covering, decorated with Imstey and Duamutef (the of Horus’ sons) and the goddess Nephyths kneeling
Egypt, Ptolemaic period, 332–30BC
cartonnage, painted linen
acquired by Sir Charles Nicholson, Egypt, 1856–57, donated 1860
Nicholson Collection, NMR.300

25. Funerary mask with blue wig
Egypt, Ptolemaic period, 332–30BC
cartonnage, painted linen
acquired before 1962
Nicholson Collection, NM2008.196

26. Giovanni Belzoni
The temple at Erments 1820
From the series Plates illustrative of the researches and operations of G. Belzoni in Egypt and Nubia
Lithographer: Charles Joseph Hullmandel
hand coloured lithograph on paper
Jon Hosking bequest, 1992
University Art Collection, UA 1992.29
Giovanni Belzoni, a circus strongman turned explorer, infamously used
explosives in his explorations of the great monuments of the Nile.

27. **Fragmentary sculpture of a scribe, Miya, son of Iny, with a papyrus scroll resting on his lap**

   Egypt, 18th Dynasty, 1550–1295 BC
   Limestone
   
   acquired by Sir Charles Nicholson, Egypt, 1856–57, donated 1860
   Nicholson Collection, NMR.38

28. **Linen bandages, from the ‘Royal Mummies’ unrolled by Grafton Elliot Smith**

   Egypt, New Kingdom period, 1550–1069 BC
   Linen, ink
   
   collected by Grafton Elliot Smith while working at the Cairo Museum, 1900–09, donated by Elwyn Andrews and Elizabeth Bootle in memory of their great-uncle Sir Grafton Elliot Smith, 1984
   Nicholson Collection, NM84.6.1-6, 9

29. **JW Power**

   *Egyptian prose & poetry* 1920s

   Ink on paper (reproduction displayed)
   
   Edith Power bequest, 1961
   University Art Collection, PW1961.1244

   In 1908 at the University of Manchester, Margaret Murray took a ground-breaking scientific approach to the unwrapping of ‘two brothers’, by involving a multi-disciplinary team to examine all facets of
the mummification process. She was the first woman to publicly unwrap a mummy and the first female professor of archaeology in the UK. Her publications and continued advocacy for the study of Egypt’s ancient history earned her the moniker ‘Grand Old Woman of Egyptology’.

30. **185 amulets, coins, figurines and mummified remains, in homemade display cabinet**

Egypt, New Kingdom to Roman period, 1550 BC – AD 300, with modern forgeries acquired by Lieutenant Colonel (Dr) John Basil St Vincent Welch while deployed with the 1st Australian Field Ambulance at Luxor, Alexandria and Cairo, Egypt, 1914–18 donated by Molly St Vincent Welch in memory of Lieutenant Colonel JB St Vincent Welch DSO (1881–1919) and Dr JB St Vincent Welch (1919–1972), 2017 Nicholson Collection, NM2017.92–273

31. **[Two Soldiers on mules visit the Pyramids]**

Egypt, 1917–18 photographer unknown
gelatin silver print (reproduction displayed)

collection of Eric ‘Sam’ Calyton, during his service in the 6th Mobile Veterinary Section, Australian Imperial Force, in Egypt, 1917–18, donated by Eric Clayton, 1983 Macleay Collections, HP83.55.47
32. ['Sam’ at the sphinx]
Egypt, 1917–18
photographer unknown
gelatin silver print (reproduction displayed)
collection of Eric ‘Sam’ Calyton, during his service in the 6th Mobile Veterinary Section, Australian Imperial Force, in Egypt, 1917–18, donated by Eric Clayton, 1983
Macleay Collections, HP83.55.48

33. [Australian Light Horseman, Charles Pinney and comrades at the top of a Pyramid overlooking Cairo]
Egypt, 1914–16
photographer unknown
photographic print (reproduction displayed)
collection of Private/Lieutenant Charles Robert Pinney (later Captain), during his service in the Light Horse Regiment/5th Battalion, Australian Imperial Force, Egypt, 1914–16, donated by Sava Pinney, 2014
Macleay Collections, HP2014.1.474

34–35. Platters
Egypt, Early Dynastic period, 3100–2649 BC
calcite
acquired by Captain (Dr) Garnet Halloran, possibly while serving in the Royal Army Medical Corps, Egyptian Expeditionary Force, 1918–19, donated by Allroy Cohen, 1958
Nicholson Collection, NM58.11–12
36. **Jar**  
Abydos, Egypt, possibly Old Kingdom period, 2686–2181 BC  
calcite  
collected by Marjorie Smyth while serving as a Nurse at Australian General Hospital, Egypt 1915-16, donated by Marjorie (née Smyth) and Frederick Spencer Burnell, 1960  
Nicholson Collection, NM60.51

37–38. **Polished jars with red slip**  
Egypt, early–mid 18th Dynasty, 1550–1420 BC  
ceramic, red slip  
acquired by Captain (Dr) Harry Leaver, possibly while being demobilised from service with the Australian Medical Corps, 1917–19, donated 1953  
Nicholson Collection, NM53.530,531

39. **Naqada III painted jar**  
Egypt, Early Dynastic period, 3100–2649 BC  
ceramic, matt paint  
acquired by Captain (Dr) Harry Leaver, possibly while being demobilised from service with the Australian Medical Corps, 1917–19, donated 1953  
Nicholson Collection, NM53.529

40. **Shabti figurine**  
Egypt, possibly 18th–25th Dynasty,
1550–664 BC

faience, glazed and painted

acquired by Captain Allroy Cohen, possibly while serving in the 56th Australian Infantry Battalion, Egypt, 1916–1918, donated 1958
Nicholson Collection, NM58.22

41. **Shabti figurine**

*Egypt, early 20th century imitation*

stone

acquired by Captain Allroy Cohen, possibly while serving in the 56th Australian Infantry Battalion, Egypt, 1916–1918, donated 1958
Nicholson Collection, NM58.25

42. **Figurine of a girl**

*Egypt, New Kingdom period, 1550–1069 BC*

wood, pigment

collected by Allan Douglas Mashford, possibly while serving in the Australian Infantry Force, 1939–45, donated by Margaret Mashford, 1982
Nicholson Collection, NM82.4

43–47. **Amuletic necklaces**

*Egypt, New Kingdom to Ptolemaic period, 1550–30 BC*

faience, gold, semi-precious stones

purchased by Frederick S Kelly from Mohammed Mohassib, Luxor, Egypt, 1910
donated by Kelly’s niece, Beatrice McPhillamy, 1968
Nicholson Collection, NM68.25–26, 29–31
48. Howard Carter and AC Mace
*The Tomb of Tutankhamun, vol. 1*
first edition, 1923

on loan from a private collection

49. Wheat grains recovered from Tutankhamun’s tomb, erroneously labelled ‘1340 BC’
Valley of the Kings, Egypt, 1327 BC

organic material

collected by Grafton Elliot Smith after 1922, donated by Elwyn Andrews and Elizabeth Bootle in memory of their great-uncle Sir Grafton Elliot Smith, 1984
Nicholson Collection, NM84.32

50. *Souvenir of Cairo*
publisher: Cairo Postcard Trust, c.1929

from the Eileen Gilroy Collection, donated by John Elston, 1991
Macleay Collections, HP91.1.19

51. Left foot of a mummified human, in an Arnott’s biscuit tin
Egypt, New Kingdom to Ptolemaic period, 1550–30 BC

mummified remains

acquired before 1962
Nicholson Collection, NM62.587.2–3

52. Seal for Heru-em-het, set into a modern gold ring with lotus design
Egypt, 18th Dynasty, 1550–1295 BC; modified c.1900–38
53. Scarab, set into a ring made from a two-shilling coin
Egypt, New Kingdom to Late period, 1550–332 BC; modified 1945
faience, silver
acquired by a member of the RAAF Ground Crews, Egypt, 1940–43, gifted to Gwenyth Jones, 1945, donated 2007
Nicholson Collection, NM2007.137

54. Wedjat eye, threaded onto a silver necklace
Egypt, New Kingdom to Late period, 1550–332 BC; modified 1945
carnelian, silver
acquired by a member of the RAAF Ground Crews, Egypt, 1940–43, gifted to Gwenyth Jones, 1945, donated 2007
Nicholson Collection, NM2007.138

56. Map of the route of the Orient Line
c.1929
from the Eileen Gilroy Collection, donated by John Elston, 1991
Macleay Collections, HP91.1.3

57. ‘A trip to Europe’ 1929
photographs documenting a tourist’s trip on SS Baradine from Adelaide to Europe via Egypt

from the Eileen Gilroy Collection, donated by John Elston, 1991
Macleay Collections, HP91.1.1-2

55. Egypt, tourist guide, general information on travelling
publisher: The Egyptian State Tourist Administration & the Tourist Development Association of Egypt, Cairo, 1938

from the private collection of Kenneth Slessor, donated by the Journalists’ Club, NSW
on loan from Fisher Library Rare Books and Special Collections, Slessor 782

Kenneth Slessor OBE (1901–1971) was a well-known poet and journalist before being appointed as Australia’s official War Correspondent in 1940. His service took him from Britain to Greece, Syria and Egypt, where he was met by his wife Noëla. His diaries from Cairo record not the tourist attractions, but the observations of daily-life and city scenes for which his pre-war writing was best known.

“I am sitting at a little round marble topped table in the alley ... Here is the list of the first dozen or so of the procession of merchants and assorted pests ...

9. Patriarchal, dignified gentleman in dark brown galabia with mauve silk scarf ... selling antiquities, which he shows furtively in palm of hand, implying that they are probably of immense value and stolen from the Egyptian Museum – actually made by the thousand at factory..."

K. SLESSOR, Cairo, 25 May 1942 (Slessor and Semmler, 1985).
58. **Rameses II cigarette packets**  
c.1970s  
manufacturer: Stephano Brothers, United States of America  
on loan from a private collection

59. **The inundation of the Nile**  
Egypt, 1896  
publisher: Underwood & Underwood  
stereoscopic photograph  
donated by Sandra Savides, 2014  
Macleay Collections, HP2014.3.166

60. **Monumental column capital depicting the goddess Hathor, with the cartouche of Osorkon II**  
Bubastis, 874–850 BC, or possibly originally carved during the 12th Dynasty, c.1985–1795 BC, and modified during construction work of Osorkon II, 874–850 BC.  
Aswan granite  
found at Temple of Bubastis, during EES excavations directed by Édouard Naville, 1887, donated by the Egypt Exploration Fund at the behest of Amelia Edwards, in recognition of the eminent services to the society by Josiah Mullens and other citizens of Sydney, 1889  
Nicholson Collection, NM2004.557
61–68. **Black-topped ware**
69–70. **Red-polished ware**
72. **White cross-line ware**
73–78. **Wavy handled ware**
80–82. **Coarse ware**
83–86. **Decorated ware**

Diospolis parva, Egypt, Pre-Dynastic period, 4000–3000 BC

ceramic

Found during Egypt Exploration Society (EES) excavations at Diospolis Parva in Egypt, directed by Sir Flinders Petrie, 1898–99, donated by the EES 1900.

Nicholson Collection, NM00.4, NM00.22, NM00.26, NM00.20, NM00.14, NM00.21, NM00.197, NM00.24, NM00.37, NM00.36, NM00.9, NM00.70, NM00.74, NM00.71, NM00.68, NM00.69, NM00.65, NM00.39, NM00.48, NM00.131, NM00.32, NM00.30, NM00.29, NM00.76

71. **White cross-line ware**
Abydos, Egypt, 4000–3500 BC

ceramic, pigment

donated by the Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford 1952
Nicholson Collection, NM52.141

79. **Coarse ware jar**
ceramic

acquired before 1947, possibly donated by the Egypt Exploration Society
Nicholson Collection, NM89.2
87. **Fragmentary face decoration from a blue painted-ware vessel**
Amarna, Egypt, 1352–1323 BC

Ceramic, pigment

Found during EES excavations at Tell el-Amarna directed by Francis Newton and Thomas Whittemore, 1924, donated by Egypt Exploration Society, 1925
Nicholson Collection, NM62.998.1–2

88. **Section of a floor fresco from Maru-Aten, a ‘sun-shade’ with decorations based on the plants of the Nile Delta**
Maru-Aten water court, Amarna, Egypt, 1352–1323 BC

Plaster, pigment

Found during EES excavations at Tell el-Amarna directed by Thomas Peet and Leonard Wooley, 1921–22, donated by Egypt Exploration Society, 1925
Nicholson Collection, NM64.415.2–3

89-90. **Blue-painted jars**
Amarna, Egypt, 1352–1323 BC

Ceramic, pigment

Found during EES excavations at Tell el-Amarna directed by Francis Newton and Thomas Whittemore, 1923–24, donated by Egypt Exploration Society, 1925
Nicholson Collection, NM62.628–629

91. **Talatat block**
Aten Temple at Memphis, Egypt, 1352–1323 BC
limestone, traces of red pigment

found in the dromos of Ptah Temple, Memphis (where it had been re-used), excavated by Yusuf (Joseph) Hekekyan, 1854, given to Sir Charles Nicholson, Cairo, 1862, donated before 1870
Nicholson Collection, NMR.1143

92. Lintel from a ‘false door’ from the tomb of Pafherneter and Shepenhor (husband and wife)
Abydos, Egypt, 26th Dynasty, 664–525 BC

limestone

found during EES excavations directed by Henri Frankfort, 1925, donated by the Egypt Exploration Fund, 1925
Nicholson Collection, NM25.36–37

93. Offering table, with inscription of a prayer for offerings addressed to Osiris for Ankhu, a senior warden of Nekhen
Abydos, Egypt, 12th Dynasty, 1981–1802 BC

limestone, gesso, pigment

found during EES excavations directed by Flinders Petrie, 1902–03, donated by the Egypt Exploration Fund, 1903
Nicholson Collection, NM62.659

94. Painted shabti jar with a jackal-head lid, filled with eight painted shabtis
Abydos, Egypt, 19th Dynasty, 1292–1189 BC

ceramic, pigment

found during EES excavations directed
95. Hand-formed clay ball with scarab impressions
Abydos, Egypt, 19th Dynasty, 1292-1189 BC

Hand-formed clay ball with scarab impressions
Abydos, Egypt, 19th Dynasty, 1292-1189 BC

96. Ring with lion-shaped bezel
Abydos, Egypt, 19th Dynasty, 1292-1189 BC

Ring with lion-shaped bezel
Abydos, Egypt, 19th Dynasty, 1292-1189 BC

97. Pectoral amulet depicting a scarab with outstretched wings
Abydos, Egypt, 19th Dynasty, 1292-1189 BC

Pectoral amulet depicting a scarab with outstretched wings
Abydos, Egypt, 19th Dynasty, 1292-1189 BC

98. Unpainted shabti jar with a jackal-head lid filled with ten plain shabti
Abydos, Egypt, 19th Dynasty, 1292-1189 BC

Unpainted shabti jar with a jackal-head lid filled with ten plain shabti
Abydos, Egypt, 19th Dynasty, 1292-1189 BC
found during EES excavations directed by Henri Frankfort, 1924–25, donated by the Egypt Exploration Fund, 1925
Nicholson Collection, NM25.31.1–12

99. **Necklace**
Abydos, Egypt, 12th Dynasty, 1991–1802 BC
carnelian

found during EES excavations directed by Flinders Petrie, 1902–03, donated by the Egypt Exploration Fund, 1903
Nicholson Collection, NM03.19

100. **Necklace**
Abydos, Egypt, 12th Dynasty, 1991–1802 BC
white frit, dark-green faience

found during EES excavations directed by Flinders Petrie, 1902–03, donated by the Egypt Exploration Fund, 1903
Nicholson Collection, NM03.5

101. **Necklace with incised half bead of two nefer signs**
Abydos, Egypt, 12th Dynasty, 1991–1802 BC
faience

found during EES excavations directed by Flinders Petrie, 1902–03, donated by the Egypt Exploration Fund, 1903
Nicholson Collection, NM03.9

102. **Necklace**
Abydos, Egypt, 12th Dynasty, 1991–1802 BC
faience
found during EES excavations directed by Flinders Petrie, 1902–03, donated by the Egypt Exploration Fund, 1903
Nicholson Collection, NM03.7

103. **Necklace**
Abydos, Egypt, 12th Dynasty, 1991-1802 BC
carnelian

found during EES excavations directed by Flinders Petrie, 1902–03, donated by the Egypt Exploration Fund, 1903
Nicholson Collection, NM03.18

104. **Miniature jar**
Abydos, Egypt, 12th Dynasty, 1991-1802 BC
polished calcite

found during EES excavations directed by Flinders Petrie, 1902–03, donated by the Egypt Exploration Fund, 1903
Nicholson Collection, NM03.2

105. **Khol pot**
Abydos, Egypt, 12th Dynasty, 1991-1802 BC
faience

found during EES excavations directed by Flinders Petrie, 1902–03, donated by the Egypt Exploration Fund, 1903
Nicholson Collection, NM03.4.1-2

106. **Bracelet**
Abydos, Egypt, 12th Dynasty, 1991-1802 BC
faience
107. **Beads scattered by grave robbers**
Abydos, Egypt, 12th Dynasty, 1991–1802 BC
faience, shell

108. **Pair of votive ears**
Abydos, Egypt, 12th Dynasty, 1991–1802 BC
limestone

109. **Mirror, missing handle**
Abydos, Egypt, 12th Dynasty, 1991–1802 BC
bronze

110. **Kohl pots with lids**
Abydos, Egypt, 12th Dynasty, 1991–1802 BC
polished limestone

found during EES excavations directed by Flinders Petrie, 1902–03, donated by the Egypt Exploration Fund, 1903
Nicholson Collection, NM03.10

Nicholson Collection, NM03.12.1-2

Nicholson Collection, NM03.11
111. **Beads from a necklace**  
Abydos, Egypt, 12th Dynasty, 1991-1802 BC  
amethyst  
found during EES excavations directed by Flinders Petrie, 1902-03, donated by the Egypt Exploration Fund, 1903  
Nicholson Collection, NM03.1.1-5

112. **Headrest**  
Abydos, Egypt, 6th Dynasty, 2345-2278 BC  
limestone  
found during EES excavations directed by Flinders Petrie, 1908-09, donated by the Egypt Exploration Fund, 1909  
Nicholson Collection, NM09.3

113. **Mirror**  
Abydos, Egypt, 6th Dynasty, 2345-2278 BC  
copper  
found during EES excavations directed by Flinders Petrie, 1908-09, donated by the Egypt Exploration Fund, 1909  
Nicholson Collection, NM09.5

114. **Miniature jar**  
Abydos, Egypt, 6th Dynasty, 2345-2278 BC  
ceramic  
found during EES excavations directed
115. **Miniature piriform jar**  
Abydos, Egypt, 6th Dynasty, 2345-2278 BC

polished calcite

found during EES excavations directed by Flinders Petrie, 1908-09, donated by the Egypt Exploration Fund, 1909  
Nicholson Collection, NM09.1

116. **Miniature piriform jar**  
Abydos, Egypt, 6th Dynasty, 2345-2278 BC

polished calcite

found during EES excavations directed by Flinders Petrie, 1908-09, donated by the Egypt Exploration Fund, 1909  
Nicholson Collection, NM09.2

117. **Coffin of the priest Nesy-Pauty-Tauy**  
Egypt, 22nd Dynasty, 945-889 BC

gesso and paint on wood

acquired by Sir Charles Nicholson, Egypt, 1856–57, donated 1860  
Nicholson Collection, NMR.77, NMR.78, NMR.82
118. **Funerary barge**

Egypt, 11-12th Dynasties, 2046–1794 BC, with additions from the Ptolemaic period, 360–120 BC and the 19th century AD gesso and paint on wood

in the collection of Cecil Schwartz before 1903, purchased with funds from the Morgan Hughes bequest, Joyce Marchant bequest and SJ Atkinson bequest, 2019 Nicholson Collection, NM2019.383
REFERENCES

Quoted texts


Excavation reports and catalogues


Nicholson, C., 1891, *AEgyptiaca: comprising a catalogue of Egyptian antiquities collected in the years 1856, 1857, and now deposited in the museum of the University of Sydney*, London, Harrison and Sons.


**Further reading**


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Published in conjunction with the exhibition:

*Pharaonic Obsessions: Ancient Egypt, an Australian Story*,
Chau Chak Wing Museum

November 2020 – ongoing

Curator       Candace Richards
Author        Candace Richards
Exhibition designer       Studioplusthree
Exhibition photography    David James
Cover image    JW Power, *Egyptian prose & poetry* 1920s (detail)
                ink on paper
                Edith Power bequest, 1961
                University Art Collection, PW1961.1244

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