

Australasian Egyptology Conference 4

Papers from the Fourth Australasian Egyptology Conference

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Dedicated to Gillian E. Bowen

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Cover: Decorated sandstone block from the Seth Temple complex at Mut al-Kharab in Dakhleh Oasis, depicting King Psamtek I making offering to Ra-Horakhty and Atum, © C. A. Hope.

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Gillian E. Bowen: A Brief Tribute

Colin A. Hope

In 2016, The Centre for Ancient Cultures at Monash University in Melbourne hosted the Fourth Australasian Egyptology Conference. At the end of the same year Gillian Bowen retired from her position at the university after many years of association, first as a student and then staff member; she is now an Adjunct Senior Research Fellow. It therefore seemed appropriate in light of her major contribution to the study of the ancient world at Monash to dedicate to her the conference and the resulting publication. Keynote lectures were delivered by Professor Emerita Francoise Dunand of Strassburg University and Professor Naguib Kanawati of Macquarie University. The conference was organised by staff and students of the Centre, namely Ashten Warfe, Caleb Hamilton and Carlo Rindi Nuzzolo, and the former two were responsible for organising the papers submitted for publication and their blind peer review. The finalisation of the volume was facilitated by Carlo Rindi Nuzzolo, supervised by the current writer and the production was undertaken by Bruce Parr. We are indebted to Archaeopress for their patience concerning the delay in presenting the papers for publication and the contributors likewise.

Gill Bowen studied Ancient History as a mature-age student, while married and with three adult children, bringing to fruition a long-held ambition and interest in the discipline. She gained a first-class honours degree and as a result obtained an Australian government postgraduate scholarship to continue her studies towards an MA. While an undergraduate she was an active member of Clio, the Department of Classics student society, participating in many readings and enactments of classical plays, and acted as both its secretary and president. She was also honorary secretary of the Monash Friends of the Australian Archaeological Institute in Athens. Her chosen topic for an MA was the Roman Procurators of Judaea, which enabled her to pursue an interest in Jewish history, which she had studied at Victoria College while an undergraduate. It was just before Gill commenced this research that she joined a tour of Egypt I led in 1988, organised by the Council for Adult Education in Melbourne. Her presence was quite noticeable, not only for her enthusiasm and interest in Egypt, but also her conviviality and leadership of singing groups on many a long bus trip! Later she attended adult education classes with me on Egyptology. It was at about this time also, 1988–1990, that Melbourne Museum hosted the *Gold of the Pharaohs* exhibition, Egypt's 'gift' to Australia on the occasion of the bicentenary. And Gill acted as a voluntary guide at the exhibition.

At that time, no units on ancient Egypt were offered at Monash University, and so Gill set about gauging student interest and eventually a petition was submitted to the head of The Department of Classics, Professor Alan Henry, confirming the students' wish that such units be offered. Thus, my own involvement with Monash began as a direct result of Gill's initiative. Naturally, one significant consideration was funding – and so began a series of funding drives of a wide variety, many driven by Gill's enthusiasm, including raffles and study days. A committee was established by Alan Henry



Gill 'leading' a tour around Aswan



Gill as a 'scale' for a newly-discovered inscription in the early years of her work at Kellis

to raise funds also by support from interested parties. Gill was naturally a member, along with myself, Saul Bastomsky, lecturer in Roman History, Peter Bicknell, reader in ancient history, and Graham Geddes, a local antique dealer with a collection of Mediterranean antiquities. The study of ancient Egypt at Monash commenced to become one of only two universities in Australia where the subject could be studied in depth, the other being Macquarie University, Sydney.

This brought significant changes with it for Gill, as from 1990 she began to tutor in units on ancient Egypt and joined my excavations on behalf of the Dakhleh Oasis Project at the site of Ismant al-Kharab, ancient *Kellis*, in central Dakhleh. This site had already yielded significant material for the study of late antiquity and the beginning of Christianity in Egypt's Western Desert in the fourth century. This piqued Gill's interest and in 1991 she transferred from an MA to PhD with a new topic on the spread of Christianity in Egypt that would eventually have a primary focus on Kellis and the monuments she would excavate there. I will return to this below.

Between 1990 and 1998 the study of Egyptology expanded at Monash, being possible throughout the three years of the BA and also in the honours' year. Gill not only tutored in the units, but was sometime lecturer also, and, in association with the Australia Centre for Jewish Civilisation, she developed and lectured in two units: Alexandria, Jerusalem and Rome, and Israel in the Ancient Near East: an archaeological perspective. Upon return from a field season in Dakhleh in early 1999, Gill and I learned of the closure of the department where we had been and our move to The Department of History, where we became the Centre for Archaeology and responsible for an entire undergraduate and honours programme! In that same year Gill was, for the first time, given a formal contract at Monash as opposed to being sessional, and her PhD was awarded. This was commended for its breadth of engagement with papyrological and archaeological sources, much of which was previously unpublished. She would then become a fulltime lecturer in Ancient History in 2000.

The following year saw a review of the undergraduate programme, now labelled Archaeology and Ancient History, and the recommendation that units on the classical world should be strengthened following the departure of staff previously responsible for this. This fell to Gill. Not daunted, she prepared and offered classes on Minoans and Mycenaeans, Greece, Rome and Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt. All of these flourished over the course of the next 16 years, with consistent student assessments of the highest level. Gill also prepared honours' level classes on methodology and supervised a range of theses at honours, MA and PhD level, becoming an extremely popular advisor. She was rewarded with promotion to senior lecturer and received various awards for her excellence and innovation in teaching, which involved students working in groups, taking on the role of the ancient community in an attempt to look at various issues from a contemporary perspective. The first was from The School of Philosophical, Historical and International Studies, in which the Centre was located following various amalgamations, and the second, more prestigious, The Faculty of Arts Award for Teaching Excellence. Her commitment to students, their welfare and progress, saw Gill serve as first level co-ordinator at School level and also Transition and Student Progress Co-ordinator for the Faculty of Arts. She was also a regular member of the faculty's Academic Progress Committee, which she chaired on several occasions, and participated in its Academic Mentoring Programme.



Gill (left) with Colin Hope, and Lesley and Tony Mills relaxing in the Dakhleh dig house

Throughout all of this fund-raising continued, combined with public engagement. In 1990 The Egyptology Society of Victoria was established through Monash University, and Gill became Secretary. Its aim was to promote and cater for interest in ancient Egypt; it still flourishes today. Regular lectures were offered and annual study days, open to students and members of the public. Funds were used to bring speakers to Melbourne, library acquisitions and student scholarships to participate in excavations in Egypt.

As I mentioned above, from 1990 Gill became a member of the excavation team at Kellis and she is now the deputy director of this project. In the early years of her participation, Gill's knowledge of numismatics saw her take on the publication of all of the coins from the excavations and become the Dakhleh Oasis Project numismatist. She has been called upon to identify coins from excavations elsewhere in the Egyptian oases by local colleagues. This research has proved to be the cornerstone for the dating of the three, well-preserved churches at Kellis, for the excavation of which Gill was responsible. These are amongst the oldest well-dated churches discovered in Egypt and their architecture has necessitated a revision of ideas about the evolution of ecclesiastical architecture in the country. One is a converted house church, one a cemetery church and the largest a basilica, the architecture of which undoubtedly derives from a model in the Nile valley. As though this was not enough to keep her occupied, Gill also undertook the study of textiles, basketry and leatherwork from Kellis, and agreed to publish the archaeology of the Christian burials at the site. This has become a study of considerable importance as one of the Kellis cemeteries contains an estimated

4000+ graves of which some 765 have been excavated by the Dakhleh Oasis Project bioarchaeologists, and all display the distinctive hallmarks of early Christian burial traditions.

As a result of Gill's expertise in the archaeology of early Christianity she was invited by Anthony Mills, the founding director of the Dakhleh Oasis Project, to study the churches at Dayr Abu Matta and Dayr al-Malak, and the cemetery near Muzawwaqa, all in Dakhleh. The latter displays the same burial pattern as at Kellis, and examples of such graves have been found around the church at Dayr Abu Matta. These discoveries indicate conformity in burial practice by early Christians throughout Dakhleh and compare well with data from nearby Kharga Oasis and in the Nile valley. The Dayr Abu Matta church is triconch and appears to have been in use from the fourth to sixth centuries; associated with it is what may be a monastic keep. Again, the architecture is significant for the study of the development of Egyptian churches. Dayr al-Malak attests the survival of Christianity in Dakhleh into the 14th century. Furthermore, since 2000, Gill has acted as deputy director of my excavations at Mut al-Kharab on the outskirts of Dakhleh's modern capital, which was the capital also from at least the New Kingdom onwards. This was the seat of a bishopric mentioned in the fourth century documents from Kellis and architectural fragments from a stone church have been discovered. Her many discoveries at the site include a well-preserved representation of Psamtek I of the 26th Dynasty making offering to Ra-Horakhty and Atum (see cover illustration) that, along with other smaller fragments, documents building activity within the Seth Temple complex in the Late Period – found during the first season of excavations. Later she would uncover a hoard of plaster moulds used to produce inlays for over-life-size images of Seth that once adorned the temple walls. These extremely rare items attest the representation of the god Seth, winged, with falcon head wearing the *atef*-crown. Their significance cannot be over-estimated as they give indications of the decorative programme within the temple, little of which survives, the size of the building and inlay manufacture at the site.

As with fundraising for Egyptology at Monash, Gill has played a significant role in the funding of all of the fieldwork activities I have mentioned through grants of various types and scales from Monash University, the Australian government and entrepreneurial activities. The latter have involved leading tours to Egypt, Libya and Tunisia. The results of all of this fieldwork and research have been published in a wide variety of academic publications, and several studies are seminal for understanding the nature and spread of Christianity in Egypt. Gill has also played a major role as editor for several Dakhleh Oasis Project monographs. At the time of my writing this inadequate tribute, Gill is in the final stages of writing her volume on the Christian Monuments of Kellis, which will no doubted be well-received by the academic fraternity and have significant impact. Her stamina, slightly reduced with the passing of time, and commitment to her chosen field of endeavour, not reduced at all, will see many other important studies. And of course, there are tai chi, concerts, novels and travel to fit into the scheme of things!

On behalf of all of her friends, colleagues and former students, I thank Gill for her unswerving dedication to promoting the study of the ancient world and student learning experience at Monash University, and acknowledge the significance of her contribution to the archaeology of early Christianity.

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