Dear Friends,

Thank you for supporting the 2011 Egyptian season of the South Asasif Conservation Project. Your generosity helped us to have a long and productive summer season which started on May 1st and finished on September 15th. After closing the site I gave lectures in Cairo and Atlanta, USA. I arrived in the UK on October 6th and finally have a chance to express my gratitude and share the results of the season with you.

We finished clearing the collapsed Second Pillared Hall in the tomb of Karakhamun. The thousands of carved and painted fragments we have discovered will allow the reconstruction of the whole room. The reconstruction already done, both in situ and in sandboxes on the ground, let us imagine a unique temple like room, with a central isle higher than the side isles and pillars topped with a massive architrave and colourful cont

Elena with Karakhamun

Sandbox reconstruction of the false door of Karakhamun (TT223)

Welcome (John Billman, Chairman, South Asasif Conservation Trust)

Welcome to this first newsletter of the UK South Asasif Conservation Trust. The trust has achieved a flying start raising £1100 from friends, patrons and the emergency appeal. Remarkably we have already made a real difference to the site by financing the purchase of metal gates to secure the tomb of Karakhamun, especially the wonderful painted burial chamber.

It was a busy season this year and our main article this issue is a detailed 2011 season update from Dr Elena Pischikova, the South Asasif Conservation Project mission director and founder.

Also in this edition Patricia Mason, secretary of the UK trust recounts her experience from her first season on the dig.

After collating UK volunteer details in the next week or so, the next major trust activity will be in March. Dr Elena Pischikova, Dr Robert Morkot, Patricia Mason and I will be undertaking a road tour covering Leicester, Glasgow and Reading in a series of three fundraising study days for the mission. These promise to be fun and rewarding events and I hope you can join us at one of them.
cont. cavetto. The central isle led to a large false door with a statue of Osiris in the niche. The side walls were decorated with large scale offering scenes featuring life size figures of Karakhamun. Future reconstructions will be based on the techniques already in use in the First Pillared Hall. Ancient fragments will be complemented with slabs of new limestone purchased this year. This summer we finished reconstructing a pilaster on the west wall of the First Pillared Hall and the north part of the entrance to the Second Pillared Hall. Two side rooms found on the south wall of the hall contained burial shafts and chambers, which although undecorated, contained a large quantity of fragmentary burial equipment.

Substantial work was undertaken in the painted burial chamber discovered in August 2010. It was cleared of debris which included a substantial number of small fragments of the burial equipment as well as painted plaster fallen from the walls and ceiling of the chamber. The 6000 fragments of painted plaster discovered will enable us to refill almost all the gaps in the chamber’s beautiful astronomical ceiling and in the walls decorated with the scenes of the judgment of Osiris.

Two new discoveries as usual were made at the end of the season.
We found the outlines of the open court of the tomb. Trenches along the south and north walls of the court revealed rows of niches topped with unique lunettes designed with five semicircles. This architectural element has no known direct parallel in Egyptian tomb design.

The second striking discovery is an intact decorated vestibule in front of the open court. The room was sealed with flood debris and therefore inaccessible, probably for a long period of time. This explains the perfect condition of the top registers of the decoration still visible above the debris level. They feature elaborate drawings of daily life scenes including musicians, dancers, wine making and agricultural scenes. The top registers were left uncarved, but further clearing may reveal at least five more registers of scenes in varying stages of completion.

A GPR survey (Ground Penetrating Radar) was carried out this year by a Swansea University team (Dr. Kasia Szpakowski and Dr. Adam Booth). GPR allows buried structures to be detected and provides high resolution images of features buried up to 5m. A Sensors B Software Pulse EKKO PRO GPR system was deployed on site, equipped with antennas. The data was thoroughly analyzed in the computer. The preliminary results show a rectangular area of reflectivity and a series of V-shaped horizons within an overlying sediment in front of the open court in the tomb of Karakhamun. These horizons define a closed anomaly that could be related to an archaeological cavity in the ground some 12m east of the boundaries of the open court. This area will be explored next season.
Hundreds of small objects found this season in the shafts and burial chambers of the tomb of Karakhamun can be dated from Dynasty 25 to the Coptic Period. They include painted fragments of wooden burial equipment, shabti fragments, faience beads and amulets, pottery and animal bones. The finds were researched by Dr. Salima Ikram and Dr. Julia Budka and recorded by a registration team led by John Billman and Patricia Mason.

The Projects mission members are now working on South Asasif I, the first volume in the series of publications which will reflect the results of the six years of field work and research in the tombs of South Asasif. It is expected to be published by the AUC Publishing House in 2012.

The generous donations of friends and patrons of the South Asasif Conservation Trust went towards buying conservation materials, paying Egyptian workmen and conservators, and purchasing a metal door for the burial chamber and metal grids to cover the newly found shafts. You helped to protect the tomb of Karakhamun and contributed towards the safe preservation and restoration of this beautiful and unique architectural monument.

Thank you on behalf of our international team,

Elena Pischikova
Diary of a new volunteer on the South Asasif Conservation Project by Patricia Mason

In January 2011 Elena came to my local Ancient Egypt Society to talk about the ‘Rediscovered Kushite Tombs of the South Asasif: Seasons 2009-2010’. I had read a few articles in Ancient Egypt Magazine but didn’t know much more about the Project than that.

Elena’s lecture was fascinating, and she told us about the beautiful tomb of Karakhamun, a fine example of the Kushite Renaissance, a period when decoration introduced archaising elements based on Old Kingdom iconography. She talked about the wonderful discovery of a decorated burial chamber the previous season, and she also said that the Project needed volunteers to work with them on the site in Egypt.

Elena and I talked after the lecture and she gave me an idea of what would be expected of volunteers at the site. Despite many visits to Egypt, working with Egyptian collections in museums, and also studying ancient Egypt for some years, most recently with Manchester University, I have not worked professionally as an Egyptologist, and never thought that I would get the chance to actually go on a field project. I put together my application, which had to be sent to the SCA (Supreme Council of Antiquities) to obtain security clearance for doing archaeological work in Egypt, and promised Elena that if successful I would come out for 3 weeks in July.

Finally I received, with great excitement, an email entitled ‘2011 Mission Accepted’. I booked my flight to Luxor and was given a list of things to bring, mainly the usual advice about cotton clothes, decent walking boots, Imodium and anti-bacterial gel. There were also a few supply requirements such as mechanical pencils and permanent markers (sharpies) that we needed, as well as our own cameras and laptops to work on.

My first day at the site started at 5.30 am when I met Elena and she took me on a wonderful guided tour of the three tombs that I had read about, Karakhamun, Karabasken and Irtieru.

The centre of activity was in the tomb of Karakhamun (TT223), where a painted burial chamber had been found last season. This had not yet been completely cleared and Elena took me down to see it. I think she was testing me, as we had to climb down two ladders that were tied together, but thankfully one of the workmen held the ladder at the top and helped me onto it.

The burial chamber was very hot and dusty, and while down there Elena showed me how to do field labels for the small finds that were being handed
to us by the experienced Egyptian excavator. I was absolutely thrilled to be labelling up bags for faience beads and pieces of shabti. While there, Elena approvingly said, well you don’t seem to suffer from claustrophobia, so I think I passed that test at least!

As we came back up out of the burial chamber, Elena showed me the work going on in the Second Pilled Hall of the tomb, where the ceiling had collapsed due to floods and usage of this area of the tomb as a quarry. Experienced Egyptian workmen were clearing the southern aisle of the hall, and a line of ‘basket boys’, like busy ants coming up and down, were removing pieces of collapsed bedrock. The Rais (Head of the workmen) Mohammed Ali Ayad, looked on, shouting out encouraging words like Yallah (lets go) and other words I didn’t understand.

Elena stopped to see what decorated stone fragments were being uncovered and showed me how to write field labels on the pieces of stone. She gave me a sharpie pen and told me that a ‘sharpie was my friend’ and to always keep one in my pocket! Together we wrote up the stone fragments with the tomb number (TT223), the location reference of the find, and the date.

By then it was breakfast time, and I was asked what I would like, the choices being a Falafel or Fūl sandwich in flat bread at a cost of 1 LE (about 10p). I opted for the falafel sandwich and washed it down with plenty of water while I met the other American and European volunteers.

After breakfast, I started work on Stone Registration with two other volunteers. This took place in the tent where we had all gathered for breakfast. Here, the inscribed and/or decorated limestone fragments from the walls, pillars or ceiling that had been discovered in the tomb were brought up in crates for registration. The site managers, Hassan and Abd El Razzik, were making sure that we had supplies of registration forms, and delivered new crates of fragments to keep us busy.

Each stone fragment has a form completed for it with a unique registration number. The field label information is put onto the form, the stone is measured and described in terms of stone characteristics, plus details of carving, hieroglyphs, paint and/or plaster...
present. A rough sketch of the stone and any carving is required, inscriptions are translated and transcribed if possible, and the stone is then photographed.

The stone fragments are stored in the tomb of Karabaskan where they are sorted and labelled by the epigraphers who copy and identify the texts, and which part of the tomb they are from. It is particularly exciting when adjoining pieces are found, and a cry goes out from the conservators ‘Join, Join’. Once a ‘join’ i.e. two adjoining pieces are found, this is registered on the database and the skilled Egyptian conservators connect the pieces together.

The identified pieces can then be inserted into new stone, which will hold them together until any further missing pieces can be added. The stone is cut on site and matches the original stone that was used in the tomb. In this way, the team of Egyptian conservators are rebuilding the columns of the pillared hall using the pieces of the jigsaw that have been found.

*Stone fragments stored in the tomb of Karabaskan*

So, for the next 3 weeks, my working day began at 5.30am when we were dropped off at the site, the same time as the Egyptian workers began their day. We all stopped for a break and ‘breakfast/lunch’ at 9.30am. The physical work in the tomb stopped at 11.30am, and we then finished up and left at around 12.30pm when the SCA Chief Inspector Ramadan Ahmed Ali closed the site and the gaffir (guardian) locked up the tombs.

Apart from Stone Registration, I was also asked to photograph some of the fragments of painted plaster from the burial chamber. The plaster was very dusty, and we took photographs of it before and after the conservators cleaned it, which brought up the detail and the colours. The plaster would then go back down into the burial chamber where the incredibly skilled Egyptian paint conservators would reattach it to the walls to complete the painted decoration.
Another task that I did was Object Registration, which took place in the tomb of Karabasken. This involved registering, describing, drawing and photographing the small finds such as beads, amulets, shabtis, cartonnage, painted coffin wood etc. I think it was my favourite job, although one day I did get rather sick of counting beads when an awful lot seemed to be delivered to me from the guys doing the sifting!

Karabasken was a nice cool tomb! Apparently the villagers had used it as a summer house as it remains cool all year. I could certainly notice the temperature change when I came out to go to breakfast, and so it seemed that Karabasken and I became quite a popular visiting spot to get some relief from the 45 degree C temperatures!

Apart from the tasks that I was involved in there are a variety of other activities that can be done by volunteers, depending on their level of expertise. These include epigraphy by those who have language skills, supervision of, and participation in field work, recording features in the tomb, assistance with surveying and taking measurements in the tomb.

Once back from the site and showered, the afternoons were relaxed. The main tasks were data entry from the registration forms and renaming photographs of the objects with their registration number. These would be used to compile the database of finds for the end of season report to the SCA.

The days went very quickly, there was always something being found, but the best new finds were usually on a Thursday! This was frustrating as Friday was the day off, and so we would have to wait until Saturday to explore whatever new feature had been uncovered.

Thursday evening was therefore the 'big night out' with a ferry ride to the East Bank and a dinner in a restaurant, usually overlooking Luxor temple. Then after dinner, the big treat was to go to McDonald's for ice-cream!

Friday was the day off and so I was able to do some great day trips, such as El Tod Temple and Moalla Tombs. I also went to Esna.
Temple, which is so quiet now that the cruise boats don’t stop there, but the walls are being cleaned, as is the ceiling in Dendera, and the beautiful colours are becoming visible.

On my last Friday in Luxor, I was fortunate enough to be there for the festival ‘Moulid of Abu Haggag’ and enjoyed watching the fascinating parade of boats and tented camels, a throwback perhaps to the Opet Festival of ancient Egypt.

The three weeks passed by very quickly and all too soon it was time to head home, but after a few weeks back, Elena sent an email giving brief details of the progress of the work, and also of exciting new finds. That was it, I couldn’t stay in the UK and not see this so, on impulse, I asked Elena if she could use me, booked a flight to Luxor and went back to the dig for another week.

It was great to see the progress and the difference in the site. It was much quieter as it was now Ramadan and only a small workforce were employed, with only a few volunteers around. We now worked from 5am until noon, so that the Egyptian workforce doing the hard physical work could be finished by 10.30am before the main heat of the day.

Elena showed me the work in the Open Court, and asked me to do the field labels for finds, as well as register stone fragments. There was a lot of stone found from the Second Pillared Hall that had been reused during the later building activities in the court. I was actually standing there when they found a beautiful piece of stone with magnificent carvings and incredibly bright coloured paint.

Cleaning in the temple of Esna (Photo: Patricia Mason)
This was a wonderful experience for me, and one which I plan to repeat next year, Inshallah! I have to thank Dr Elena Pischikova, the South Asasif Conservation Project and the Supreme Council of Antiquities for allowing me to join the team of this joint American and Egyptian mission. I learnt so much about the work required on an archaeological project in Egypt, about the Kushite period of Egyptian history, and also about modern Egypt from the friendly Egyptian people that took care of me on the site.

STOP PRESS : Last Call—Volunteering for the South Asasif Conservation Project—2012

Subject to permissions and funding the 2012 season will run from May 1st to mid September 2012. Friends and patrons of the South Asasif Conservation Trust are invited to apply for volunteer roles on the dig next year. Work will mainly comprise object and stone registration (a major task) but can also include (according to skills and inclination) - archaeological work (supervision of Egyptian workers clearance - mainly disturbed context, field labelling, photography, etc.), epigraphic work (subject to language skills) and any other task required. Those with relevant specialist skills may also have an opportunity to utilize those.

Volunteers are not required to pay a fee but will need to be able to meet all of their own costs - flight, accommodation, travel insurance, visa, sustenance and any other expenses you may incur. Beyond a knowledge and genuine enthusiasm for Egyptology volunteers should:

- enjoy robust health (no age limit),
- be reliable
- have a positive and very flexible attitude
- be able to work in the Upper Egyptian Summer dust and heat of 40-45C
- be willing to commit at least 3 weeks.

Places on the dig cannot be guaranteed. Elena will review all the applications matching skills and availability to requirements, but it is hoped to get as many volunteers on board as possible. After this all applications will be subject to approval by the Supreme Council of Antiquities. If you are interested in applying please contact Chairman@Southasasif.com ASAP to discuss, if you have a reasonably current CV please attach this (it will be a requirement for all processed applications).
LUXOR CONFERENCE: THEBES IN THE FIRST MILLENIUM B.C.

The main focus of the conference will be the current archaeology and research on tombs and temples of the 25th & 26th Dynasties in the Theban area. Papers on other Egyptian sites and monuments of the Kushite and Saite Periods are also invited from all areas of research including archaeology, art history, history, chronology, religion, linguistics and anthropology.

The conference is organized by the South Asasif Conservation Project team as the first of a series of regular conferences on Egypt in the First Millennium BC. We expect it to become a place for Late Period scholars to share information on the latest archaeological discoveries and research. The amount of work done in this area is growing every year and we feel the need for a regular gathering place where scholars can bring their questions, ideas, and suggestions, which will encourage discussion. Therefore, the format of the conference will combine presentations with discussion panels to maximize communication.

The conference will be accompanied by field trips to the archaeological sites related to the period, including the Kushite and Saite tombs at the South Asasif necropolis.

The main topics featured at the conference will include

- Kushite in Thebes
- Archaism
- Private tombs, their architecture, decoration and concepts
- Style and iconography of Kushite imagery
- Religious Texts: Book of the Dead, Pyramid Texts, Coffin Texts
- Hours Ritual, Opening of the Mouth
- Burial equipment
- Pottery

The conference is planned as a four-day event including papers and field trips with the first day dedicated to the South Asasif necropolis with speakers to include South Asasif Conservation Project mission members. The other days will focus on the 25th and 26th Dynasty monuments in Thebes and beyond.

**Time** October 1-4, 2012

**Place** Mummification Museum, Luxor

**Abstracts Deadline** No more than 200 words by March 31, 2012

If you express interest in participating or attending the conference you will receive an information package and registration form. Please send all inquiries to conference@southasasif.com.

We look forward to receiving your feedback.

Best wishes,

South Asasif Conservation Project organizers

Elena Pischikova, Julia Budka, Kenneth Griffin
Join the UK Friends

By becoming a friend or patron you can make a real difference to the project. A friend’s subscription of £20 will support the conservation of multiple painted limestone or fragile wood fragments while a patron’s subscription of £100 will hire an Egyptian workman for the season. All donations by UK taxpayers through the South Asasif Conservation Trust will be eligible for Gift Aid enabling the charity to maximise the value of your gift, and higher rate taxpayers to reclaim the difference. Please complete Donation Form below to support the project.

Friends of the South Asasif Conservation Trust

A regular donation provides a dependable stream of income for the project, enabling planning for the season. For just £20/year Friends will receive an annual newsletter, regular email updates, priority booking for UK trust events and special study tours, 10% discount on South Asasif Conservation Trust merchandise and priority consideration for volunteer roles on the mission (subject to skills, qualifications, experience and Egyptian SCA approval)

Patrons of the South Asasif Conservation Trust

By becoming a regular patron you can really make a significant difference to the work of the project on an on-going basis. For only £100/year Patrons will receive all the friends benefits plus highest priority booking for trust events and tours, acknowledgement of support in newsletter and on the South Asasif Project Website and invitation during working season for a personalized tour of the South Asasif site by Dr Elena Pischikova (by prior appointment and subject to Egyptian SCA approval)

Donation Form

I enclose a cheque payable to the ‘South Asasif Conservation Trust’ as follows:

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*I/We confirm that this payment is to be treated as made under Gift Aid. You must pay UK income tax &/or CGT at least equal to the tax that the Society reclaims (the prevailing rate is 25 %)
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All cheques must be in British Pounds Sterling drawn on a UK bank. Details for electronic transfer can be provided on request. Please send to Secretary, South Asasif Conservation Trust, 32 Windrush Drive, Hinckley, Leicestershire, LE10 0NY
Now Booking — Study Days—March 2012
Gateway to an Artistic Renaissance with Dr Elena Pischikova and Dr Robert Morkot

Combining the very latest news and pictures from the dig presented by mission director Dr Elena Pischikova with fascinating lectures on Kush from Dr Robert Morkot and a chance to meet 2011 volunteers, these fund-raising study days provide the best opportunity in the UK to get close to the South Asasif Project while raising vital funds at the same time. Booking forms are attached with this email delivering this newsletter or see http://southasasif.com/Trust-Events.html

Saturday March 3rd 2012—Leicester—New Walk Museum, 10-4.30pm, in association with the Leicestershire Ancient Egypt Society

Sunday March 4th 2012 —Glasgow—Burrell Collection, 11-4.30pm, in association with Egyptology Scotland

Sunday March 11th 2012—Reading—Allen Lab, University of Reading, 10-4.30pm, in association with the Thames Valley Ancient Egypt Society

Advance Notice—Late Period Study Tour with Dr Elena Pischikova

The South Asasif Conservation Project and South Asasif Conservation Trust are tentatively planning a Study Tour to Egypt in Spring 2013. The Study Tour to be led by Dr Elena Pischikova will focus on Late Period tombs and temples, including rarely visited sites, and will be designed to provide a context for the work undertaken by the South Asasif Conservation Project.

Priority booking will be given to Patrons and Friends of the South Asasif Conservation Trust. To register your interest in the trip please email Chairman@Southasasif.com

Patrons 2011

The South Asasif Conservation Trust gratefully acknowledges the generous support of the following Patrons:

John Billman
Annie Haward
Patricia Mason
John Millbank
John and Sue Robinson
Birgit Schoer
John Wyatt