

SUDAN & NUBIA

The Sudan Archaeological Research Society



Bulletin No. 2

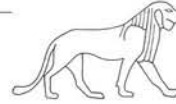
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Contents

Introduction

Vivian Davies 1

Reports

The Yellow Nile: new data on settlement and the environment in the Sudanese Eastern Sahara
Birgit Keding 2

A preliminary note on a rescue excavation at el-Zeidab
Abdel Rahman Ali Mohamed 13

Survey and excavations at Kawa, the 1997/8 season
Derek A. Welsby 15

Alluvial architecture and luminescence dating of Holocene palaeochannels in the Northern Dongola Reach of the Nile
Mark Macklin and Jamie Woodward 21

New fieldwork at Kurgus
The Pharaonic inscriptions
Vivian Davies 26

The cemetery and the fort
Isabella Welsby Sjöström 30

The Fourth Cataract archaeological survey project, Kareima – Abu Hamed Section
Mahmoud el-Tayeb 35

SARS Survey from Omdurman to Gabolab 1997
The survey
Michael Mallinson 42

Pottery and small finds
Laurence Smith 45

Palaeoecology: the significance of the plant and animal remains
Dorian Q. Fuller 52

Excavations at Qasr Ibrim
Qasr Ibrim 1998
Pamela J. Rose 61

The 1998 excavations in the Trench 10/14 area
David N. Edwards 65

Pliny's 'Tergedum' discovered
Bogdan Zurawski 74

Lord Prudhoe and his lions
John Ruffle 82

Miscellaneous 88

Front Cover: Ceramic statue of the goddess Beset from Kawa.

Introduction

Vivian Davies

Members will note that this second issue of *Sudan & Nubia* is already considerably larger than the first, a clear signal, I am pleased to say, both of our Society's commitment to fieldwork and of the growing interest in Middle Nile archaeology in general. With the four-year programme of survey in the Northern Dongola Reach completed, we began last season a significant new project at Kawa (see Derek Welsby below), a major Pharaonic and Kushite cult-centre and one of the most important archaeological sites in the Sudanese Nile Valley, now threatened by modern development. At the same time our interest in the hydrological research on the Nile palaeochannels in the Dongola Reach continues (Mark Macklin and Jamie Woodward), and we have also supported archaeological survey both in the Bayuda desert in advance of the building of a new road (Michael Mallinson, Laurence Smith and Dorian Fuller) and at the site of Kurgus, the point where the Egyptians appear to have marked the southern boundary of their empire in the New Kingdom (Vivian Davies and Isabella Welsby Sjöström).

Among our guest contributors, two of our Sudanese colleagues report on valuable rescue projects, one on a site affected by the building of the Shendi-Atbara road (Abdel Rahman Ali Mohamed), the other in the area of the Fourth Cataract, where a new dam is being planned (Mahmoud el-Tayeb). Also under threat is the site of Soniyat in the Debba Bend, now very plausibly identified by a Polish expedition as the 'Tergedum' mentioned in Book II of Pliny's *Natural History* (Bogdan Zurawski). Rescue is also very much the theme of the Egypt Exploration Society's latest excavations at Qasr Ibrim, the last remaining site in Egyptian Nubia, where an unexpected rise in the level of Lake Nasser/Lake Nubia is damaging strata previously thought to be safe, necessitating urgent work on those areas (Pamela Rose and David Edwards). Fortunately there is no such threat to the Wadi Howar, a long dried-up tributary of the Nile, evocatively known as 'the Yellow Nile', where a German research project is producing fascinating new data on changes in environment and shifts in settlement patterns (Birgit Keding). A different kind of research, on the records of an important early traveller, is represented in our final paper (John Ruffle). Lord Prudhoe, its main subject, will be familiar to many of our readers for his association with the two great lion sculptures from Gebel Barkal, which now grace the Egyptian Sculpture Gallery of the British Museum.



Lord Prudhoe and His Lions

John Ruffle

The Percy family, the dukes of Northumberland, has held the castle in Alnwick in Northumberland since the early 14th century and it was made their principal seat under the first duke in 1766. The history of the family can be traced back to Brabant in Belgium where the regional crest is a lion, and figures of lions, usually with a characteristic straight horizontal tail, are to be seen throughout the town of Alnwick. One member of the family, however, is better known to Egyptologists for the magnificent pair of lions which guard the Egyptian galleries of the British Museum (Colour Plate XLIX).

Algernon Percy was born in 1792, the second son of the second Duke of Northumberland. At the age of 13 young Algernon entered the Royal Navy and in 1815 reached the rank of Captain. A year later he was created a peer in his own right, taking the title Lord Prudhoe from a family estate in the Tyne valley between the counties of Durham and Northumberland.

In 1826 he set out on a series of journeys in Egypt and the Levant travelling with an officer from the Rifle Brigade, Major Orlando Felix. Felix, Prudhoe's senior by two years, had set out for Egypt rather earlier than Prudhoe and by the time Prudhoe arrived in Cairo he had already made one journey up the Nile at least as far as Abu Simbel.

Lord Prudhoe arrived in Egypt in December 1826 and in February he and Felix set out on Prudhoe's first and Felix's second Nile journey during which they seem to have reached Wadi Halfa, returning to Cairo at the beginning of July 1827. After a brief visit to Sinai they set out on 26th August on a voyage through the Aegean Sea travelling in *HMS Pelican*, captained by Charles Irby, of the Irby and Mangles partnership which assisted Belzoni in his uncovering of Abu Simbel in 1817. They returned to Cairo in April 1828 and spent several months there working up material from their first Nile journey before making a second journey up the Nile this time as far as Sennar, which they reached on May 3rd 1829 and whence they returned later in that month to Cairo. From there they returned to England, apparently with some urgency.

These journeys are patchily recorded. Five of Lord Prudhoe's notebooks survive but the records of the Aswan to Wadi Halfa leg of the first journey and of the return journey from Sennar in 1829 are both missing. The note books are supplemented by sketches by Felix, most of them dated, and by eleven letters written from Felix to his commanding officer, one Col. Brown, in the Rifle Brigade's headquarters in Malta. The date lines on these are not entirely trustworthy but they do add some details to the account. The notebooks

and drawings are in the archive at Alnwick Castle and Felix's letters are in the National Library of Scotland.¹

Lord Prudhoe's journeys were undertaken in a spirit of scientific curiosity, which was one of his characteristics. He and Felix had prepared for their journey by learning what was then known of the hieroglyphic script and what was then available of Egyptian history. They evidently made efforts to keep abreast of the latest research: Prudhoe records that when they met Gardner Wilkinson at Assiut on their first journey they obtained from him a copy of the Rosetta Stone inscription. His own copies of inscriptions were made with great care and show his understanding of the text.

The period in Cairo between their return from the Greek Islands in May 1828 and the start of their second Nile journey in December was spent in working up the notes they had made on the first journey. Felix wrote that he was 'bewildering myself with hieroglyphics and plunging into huge Latin folios [while] Prudhoe is hard at Arabic'. James Burton wrote that they 'strenuously assisted his labours' on his *Excerpta Hieroglyphica*, and Champollion whom they met in Cairo in September acknowledged them to be 'hieroglyphiseurs decidees'. Felix reported that his 'long list of the Egyptian Pharaohs [was] much more certain than the Kings of England' and says 'I differ very much from Monsr Champollion in the chronology of the kings and had a great triumph the other day, in finding that he is coming round to my list'. Their second journey was intended as the first leg of a major enterprise, to go up the Nile to Sennar and from there cross to the Red Sea and thence across Arabia and Persia to India. Travelling on dromedaries (they never use the term camels), they left Cairo on 20th December 1828 with their heavy gear (including apparently several cases of claret!) keeping pace with them on a boat. They reached Aswan within a month and on 20th January 1829 they were at Korosko, where

'In the evening 6 boats with French and Tuscan flags came down the river, & remained with us fast to the shore at Korosko – it was Monsr Champollion & Signore Rosaline^(sic) returning from their labors. Shewed us many drawings & Mons C said he had the names of the temples & people in Nubia – those he shewed for Derr & said for Ebsambul, we could neither make out or find on the temples. He has certainly much more knowledge on the subject of hieroglyphics than any man living, but I fear he is not entirely to be trusted. I require conviction where proofs to be obtained (are) that letters spell words -after five hours palaver he left us dead tired, & glad both of dinner & repose.'

On the 13th February they reached Gebel Barkal standing, as Prudhoe describes it, in a

¹ For an account of the journeys of Prudhoe and Felix from 1826-1829 see Ruffle 1998. An edition of the notebooks and letters is in preparation.

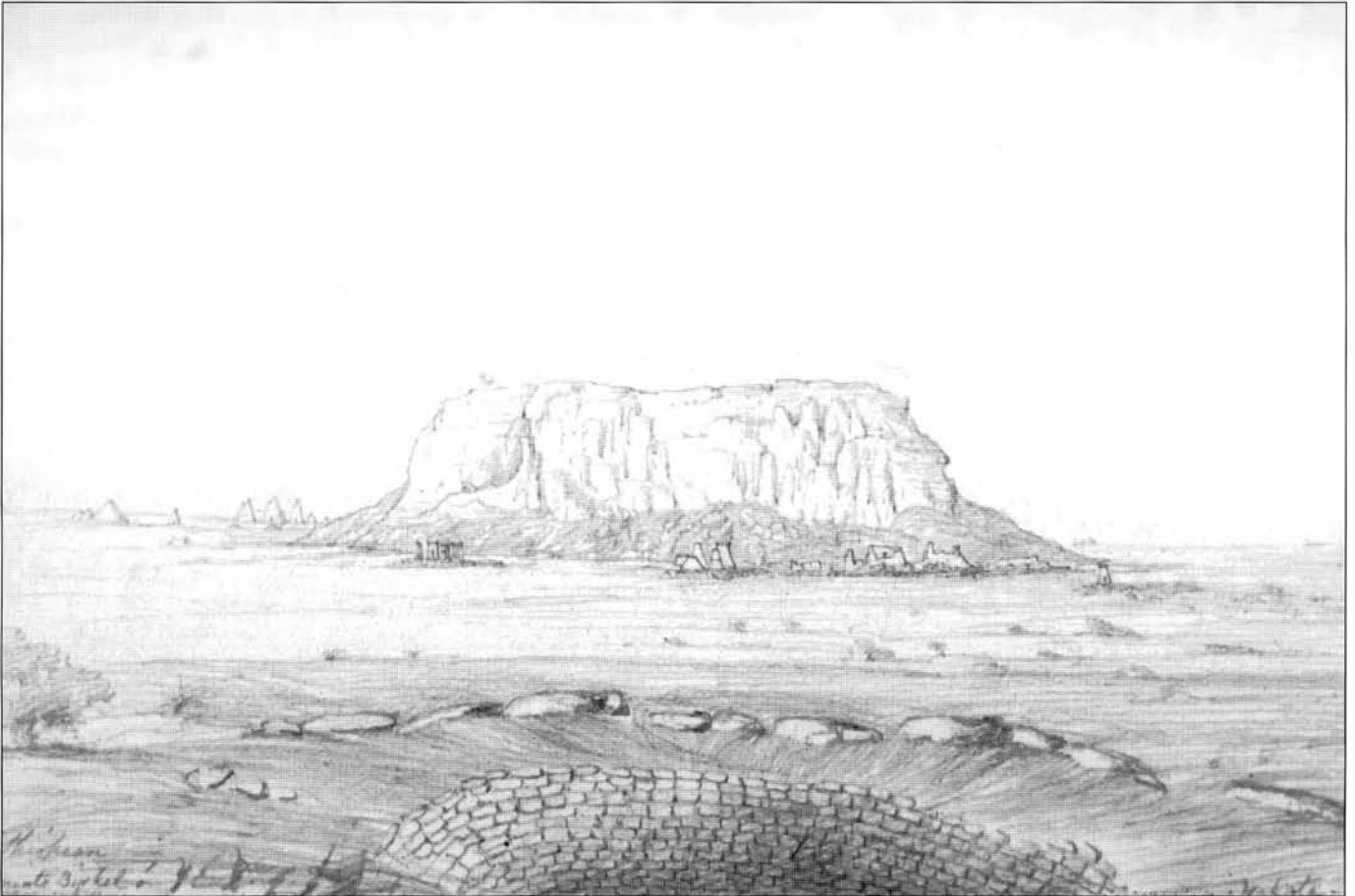


Plate 1. Pencil sketch of Gebel Barkal by Orlando Felix from Alnwick Castle Archive.

'large and fertile plain extending many miles in length to the East. The Gebel Barkal standing by itself and looking over it. ... An hour's ride brought us to the foot of the mountain Gebel el Barkal where are the remains of Temples and in the desert beyond pyramids. After satisfying ourselves of what was there we retired to the cultivated ground for the night. The house built in each village for the reception of travellers was our home and the Sheikh supplied our wants. The inhabitants came in the morning and evening to our house and a few joined us on our excursion to the mountain. They are a civil and honest set but not willing workers at our research for hieroglyphics. They had a tradition about Nimrod probably from the Old Testament and talked in the usual manner about Kasnis, (Treasures), which were concealed in the ruins and the pyramids, and which of course, they were anxious to discover.

From the day of our arrival till Friday February 20th our daily work was at the ruins of Gebel Birkel or the pyramids near them.'

In these ruins Lord Prudhoe distinguished five temples which were 'sufficiently perfect to ascertain most of their detail and three more (which) are distinctly to be traced by their columns or foundations..' In the course of his week's

stay he made some overall measurements of these temples, copied the cartouches and noted some of the major sculpture (Plate 1).

He then went on to describe some of the pyramids and to assess their date.

'There is nothing to fix their date and certainly nothing which leads to a conclusion of their remote antiquity. The sculpture is so bad that it would disgrace the worst time of the Romans in Egypt and the painting is absolutely a daub.'

In those early days of Egyptology there were major questions to be resolved and Lord Prudhoe felt reasonably certain that he had answered one. Rather inelegantly he said:

'The question of the antiquity of Ethiopia I consider ascertained as far as we have yet been [able?], principally from the remains at Gebel Birkel, and are decidedly after the Egyptian and copied from the Egyptian.'

He recognised that

'At Gebel Birkel the temples are built on foundations of temples erected by the Pharaohs Tothmes 4th, Amenoph 3rd and Ramses 2nd...The sculpture as well

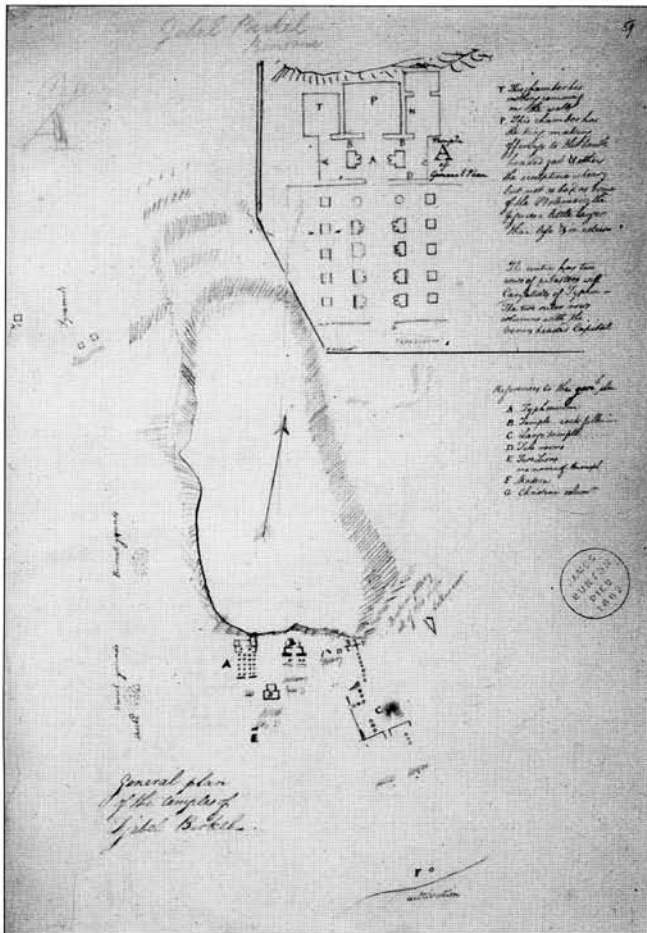


Plate 2. Burton's plan (Add. Ms 25651 f.59) of Gebel Barkal (by the permission of The British Library).

as architecture of Ethiopia is a very bad copy of Egyptian, bad in design and worse in execution....'

Amongst the sculpture he noted

'two admirable lions of red granite of excellent execution by Amenoph 3rd. One only was inscribed by him, the other was subsequently sculptured in hieroglyphics by Asro who put on it the dedication for Amenoph and his own name in very inferior writing to the other. The best (ie. the better of the two) is perfect, this last is broken in three pieces'

Although he spoke of the 'excellent execution by Amenoph 3rd' he seems to have determined that at least some of the XVIIIth Dynasty inscription was cut by Asro or Amenasoo for he says later

'The most ancient of the temples at Birkel is No.4 Amenasoo, who has cut Amonoph 3rd's name on one of the two beautiful lions which probably was placed at the outer gate of the temple built by that king, and on the base of this lion he has also cut a line of hieroglyphics which Amonoph had not (???) left blank tho' on a similar base of the other lion they had been engraved.'

Lord Prudhoe was not the most elegant or the clearest of writers.

These lions are of course those now in the British Museum. Numbered EA 1 and 2 (Colour Plate XLIX) they are suitably positioned at the entrance to the great Sculpture Gallery no doubt much as they were originally sited as guardian figures in front of the great temple of Amenophis III at Soleb.

EA1 has an original inscription naming Amenophis III. EA 2 was unfinished and bears the name of Tutankhamun. Both lions are also inscribed with the name of the 3rd century BC Kushite ruler Amenislo, read by Mariette as Amonasro, under which he figured in Mariette's libretto for Verdi's *Aida*.

When they were removed to Gebel Barkal they were set up within the complex of temples but not at the gate as Lord Prudhoe described, at least not at the front gate. Their original location is well known (Plate 2). They were recorded by a number of 19th century visitors and they figure on a plan of the site in the papers of James Burton, now in the British Library. Timothy Kendall has shown that the lions lie within the temenos of Palace B1200 and appear to be aligned on a separate pinnacle of rock at the southern end of the mountain (Plates 3 and 4, Colour Plate L) (Kendall 1991, 309).² This pinnacle was interpreted as a colossal version of the uraeus (Kendall 1997a, 6; 1997b, 168-9).

These lions were seen by Lord Prudhoe at Gebel Barkal in 1829 and they arrived in the BM in 1835. Alas there is no record amongst Lord Prudhoe's papers telling us how this came about. Lord Prudhoe moved on from Gebel Barkal without further mention of the lions and duly reached the White Nile on March 30th, where he was met by a boat sent for his use from Khartoum. He discharged his caravan and 'urged them to depart immediately for fear of lions!'

In one of his letters Felix recounts that they stayed ten days in Khartoum, then rode along the Blue Nile to Sennar (where, Felix claims, they were the first Englishmen since James Bruce some 50 years earlier) and across to the White Nile but, feeling threatened by the Sholooks, they returned to Khartoum and thence to Berber from where they intended to cross to Suakin and thence to India. However, on the very evening of their arrival in Berber

'a janissary of the Pasha's ... arrived also, bringing Lord Prudhoe ... letters which left him nothing for it, but to return to England with all dispatch.'

They crossed the desert on dromedaries from Abu Hamed to Korosko from whence they travelled by boat to Aswan and eventually home to England. They had no opportunity to revisit Gebel Barkal and Lord Prudhoe must have made plans to remove the lions through an agent. It is conceivable

² I am greatly indebted to Dr Kendall for his encouragement and practical help and for permission to use his copyright material.

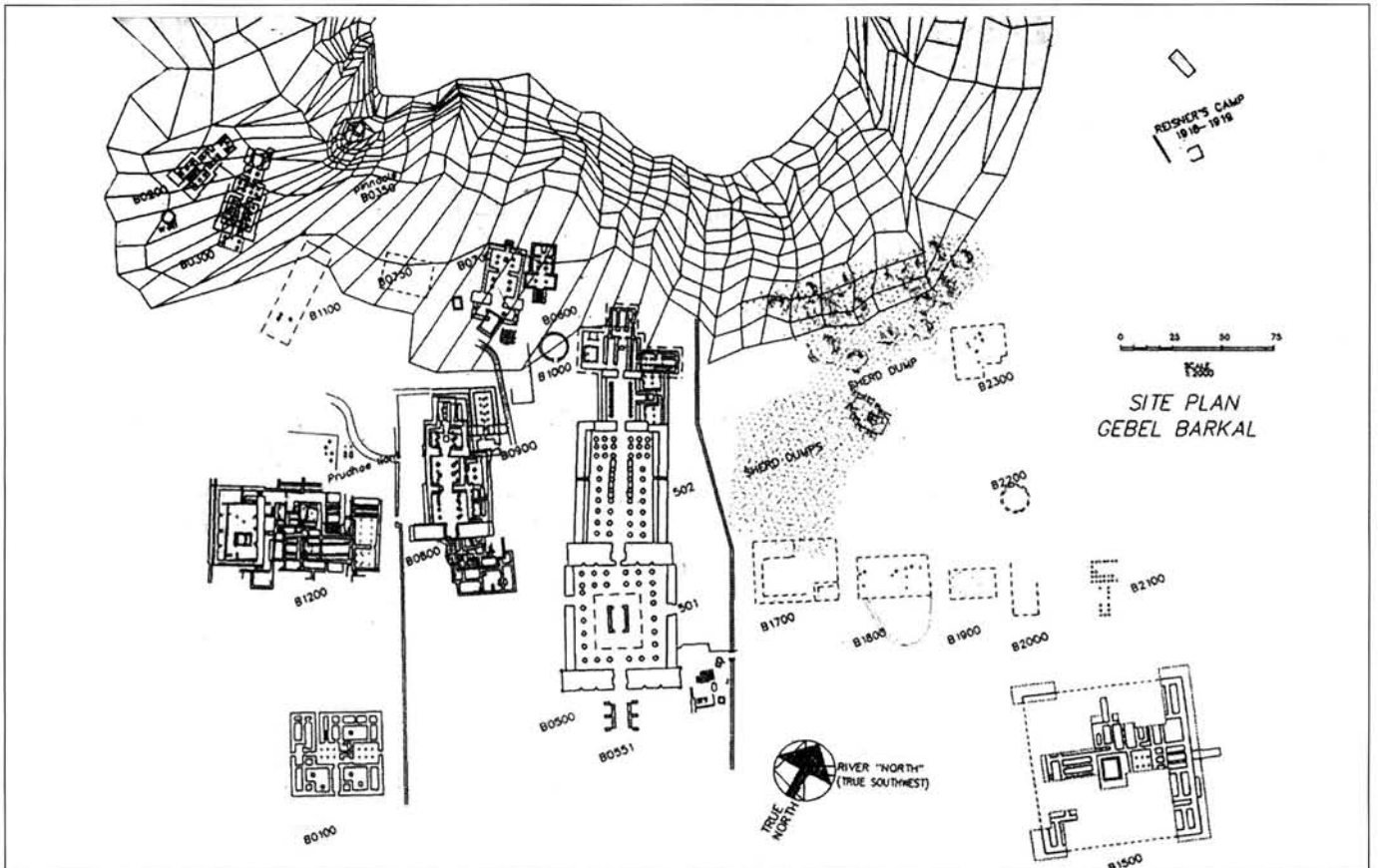
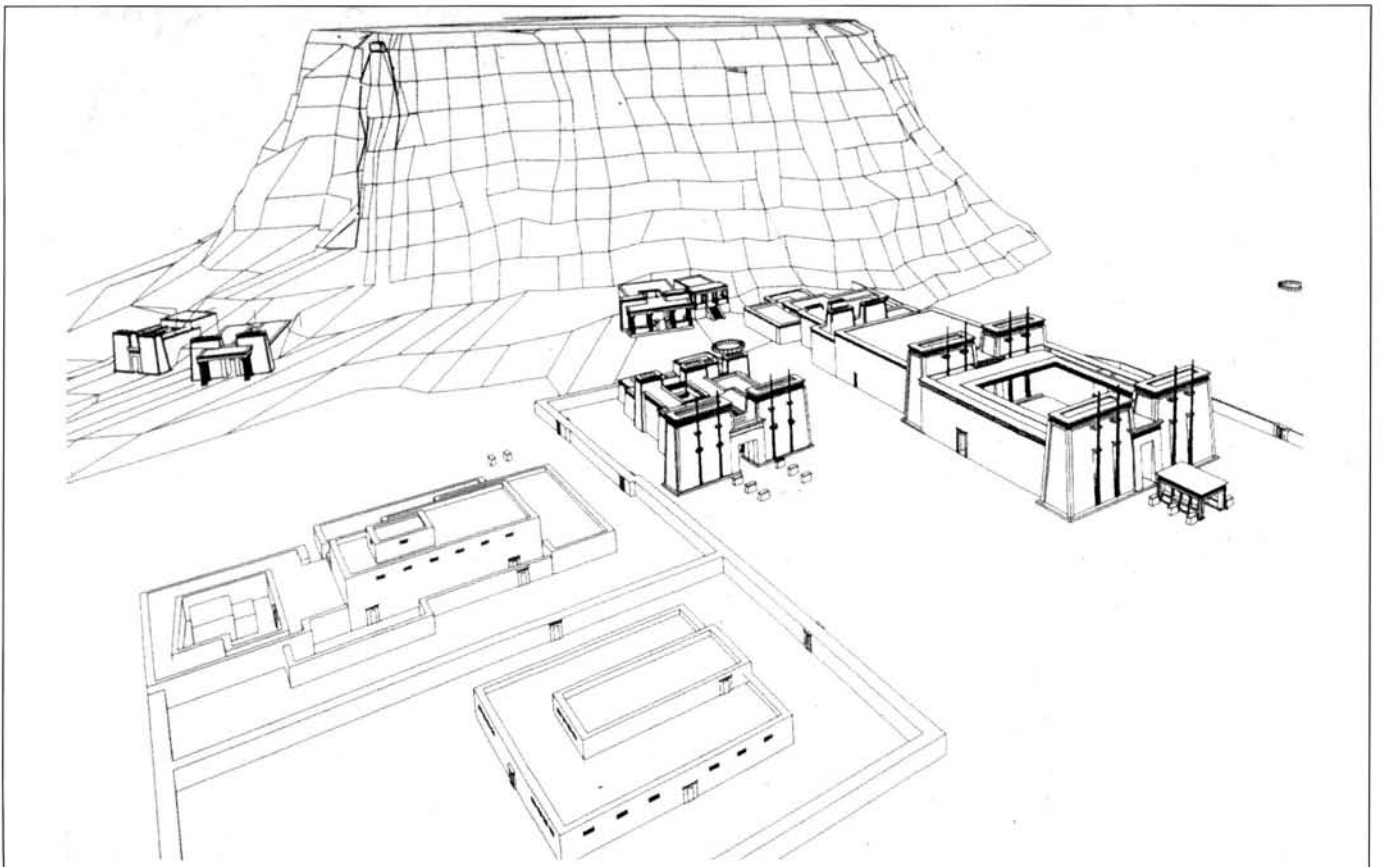


Plate 3. Plan of Gebel Barkal





that he negotiated for them with the Pasha in Khartoum but there is apparently no record. Nor has any record been found as yet of how Lord Prudhoe arranged the transport to Alexandria apart from rather cryptic notes suggesting that they were near Wadi Halfa in January 1830 and at Thebes in March 1830.³

J Bonomi, writing to James Burton on 12 January 1830, says that Sr Niccola who was to arrange transport for the lions from Wadi Halfa to Thebes had at that date not been able to find a large enough boat or hire enough men to drag them from Assoka to Wadi Halfa and had therefore left them on the river bank until the next high Nile.

In March of 1830 John Barker, the British Consul-General wrote to Bonomi at Thebes saying that he had

‘procured the necessary Firman & letters for the settlement of Yani’s affairs, and in particular for his being permitted to carry off the Grand Sphinx still in Thebes, and the Lions of Lord Prudhoe. Should you be at Thebes at the time it is removed & embarked, I shall be much obliged to you to make a drawing of it, as you kindly did of the former one.’

Another letter, also written in March 1830 from Lord Prudhoe to Bonomi, also clearly implies that the lions were still at that time in Egypt.

We have to assume that the removal was not unlike the transport of one of the rams from Gebel Barkal by Lepsius in 1844, who has left a description and indeed a sketch of the scene (Lepsius 1853, 223) (Colour Plate LI).

‘I consider these rams so remarkable ... that I have determined to carry away the best of them. The fat wether probably weighs nearly 150 cwt. However in the space of three sultry days, it has been safely dragged on rollers to the river bank by ninety-two fellahs and there it waits for embarkation. Several other monuments besides are to accompany us from this spot, as we need no longer fear their weight since the desert is behind us.’

Nor are we entirely certain where the lions were first placed when they arrived in London. The first mention in the British Museum records is in the Trustees Minutes for 12 July 1834, p. 3842–3, recording Lord Prudhoe’s ‘willingness to consent to the transfer of the Lions presented by His Lordship some time ago to the National Gallery, from that Institution to the (British) Museum..’, and the lions entered the British Museum in 1835. Apart from this we have no information about their acquisition and the National Gallery’s records contain no reference to them.

In these days when we are overwhelmed with administration it seems impossible that two granite lions each over 2m long and weighing in at a couple of tons each could man-

³ The letters are in the collection of Mrs Y Neville-Rolfe. Copies were kindly made for me by Niel Cooke.

age to cross London from Westminster to Bloomsbury with no paperwork to record the fact. I can imagine the transfer today – the preliminary enquiries, the search for sponsorship, the conservation reports, the regulation three quotations, the contract, the condition report, the invoice and receipt, not to mention the designers’ fees for plinths and lighting, internal requests for help from building works and of course the file copy of the invitation to the unveiling party.

One clue as to their whereabouts was suggested in the *Gentleman’s Magazine* of February 1832, which records that on Feb. 13 of that year at the Royal Academy,

‘Mr. Westmacott, the professor of sculpture, delivered the first of his series of lectures for the present session. In the course of his review of Egyptian, Etruscan, and early Greek sculpture, the Professor exhibited several very interesting specimens and took occasion to congratulate the Royal Academy and the country, in the possession, through the zeal of a nobleman, not less distinguished for his high birth than for his taste and indefatigable researches in Egypt, of a monument, whether considered for attention to nature, feeling, and grandeur of form, surpassing any other known to exist...’

‘The country owes this valuable acquisition in ancient art to Lord Prudhoe, who, in his journey up the Nile, discovered two statues of lions, of heroic size, both in red granite, near Jibbel Birkel, on the banks of the river of that name, and about eighty miles above Dongola etc etc. ... Lord Prudhoe describes, that on their discovery, these lions were as perfect as in the hour they were finished, and were, no doubt, wilfully broken, probably for more easy conveyance, by the individual who was sent expressly from Alexandria to take charge of their removal.’

However, a search through the archives of the Royal Academy has revealed no trace of lions anywhere there and it would be interesting to learn of any reports of a sighting of two granite lions prowling around London any time between 1829 and 1835.

Lord Prudhoe is remembered by Egyptologists for his lions but he went on to greater things. In 1847 his elder brother, the IIIrd Duke died, and he succeeded him as Duke of Northumberland. Amongst his many activities he found time to maintain his interest in Egypt and built up a significant collection of Egyptian antiquities at Alnwick. He had already bought extensively at sales in the 1830s. He was undoubtedly encouraged and advised by Sir Gardner Wilkinson, who made several visits to Alnwick and whose *Manners and Customs of the Ancient Egyptians* was dedicated to the IIIrd Duke, Hugh, Prudhoe’s elder brother, and by Edward Lane, whom he met in Cairo in 1826 and whose Arabic Lexicon he funded.

The collection contains a number of fine and important items but also many small but interesting pieces, which bear out Mr Westmacott's remarks about the Duke's discerning eye and discriminating taste. One of these pieces is yet another lion, or at least part lion (Colour Plate LII), a handsome sphinx which bears a dedication to Ronero, a royal and military scribe.⁴ In fact this appears to have been added some time after it was first made. Careful examination of the base shows that it is suspiciously narrow and has in fact been cut back along both sides, thus removing the original inscription and allowing substitution of the dedication to Ronero. There is on the chest a cartouche of Tuthmosis IV which was originally read as a cartouche of Tuthmosis III and for this reason it seems to have been chosen as the model for G Vulliamy's design of the sphinxes which guard the emplacement of the obelisk of that king on the Victoria Embankment. Later still those sphinxes in turn appear to have formed the model for the mascot which for many years adorned the radiators of Armstrong Siddeley cars (Harris 1983, 77).

It seems appropriate that a paper on Lord Prudhoe and his lions should have a tailpiece, although this more properly relates to his companion, Major Felix. His letters to his CO in Malta are very informal, telling him of their adventures and asking about the mess gossip. One of them coolly recounts the following encounter with yet another lion.

'We were awakened at Midnight by ferocious barking & wild cries and soon scrambled through tangled underwood, to a spot where eight or ten wild looking men armed with lances were standing over a large sheep, which the lion had just killed, and scared by the noises had abandoned. We left 2 Sheep as a bait and waited with the Arabs crouched by our sides and all kept the stillest silence – The moon had set, but by the Starlight we could distinguish the Sheep. A low deep growl announced the approach of the Enemy – We strained our eyes but could see nothing -the growls became louder – and at length there was a sudden grunt & I saw a shadow spring on the sheep – I fired and the Arabs said the lion had fallen – all we knew however was that he had a second time abandoned his Prey and returned no more that night – It was altogether a scene of much interest –

The following morning early I followed some deer up a valley, and was led rather far, and on my return saw neither Arab nor Dromedary (whom he had left to await him) -thinking he was near, I fired first one, and then the other barrels, as a signal – but when four hours passed and I still found myself alone in this trackless desert I felt rather forlorn but determined to make in the direction of the River which I knew could not be many hours distant and get on to Khartoom

as well as I could – just as I passed a large heap of granite which rose in the Plain I saw a Lion sitting under the shade of one of the stones – I would have given my majority for the two Balls I had so uselessly thrown away, as I had neither powder nor shot – there was however nothing for it, and I walked steadily forward; glancing my eyes anxiously to the left – The Lion turned his head and looked at me, but took no farther notice – soon afterwards I fell in with a Goat track and followed it, hoping it would lead to some Arab huts, and in bursting through some thick bushes saw to my infinite delight Lord Prudhoe & the Servants – he had turned back on missing me, but if I had gone twenty yards to the right or left we never could have met' –

– And presumably if the lion had shown more interest in Major Felix, Lord Prudhoe's expedition would have had other things to think about and the Prudhoe Lions might still be at Gebel Barkal, or taken by Lepsius for the Berlin Museum.

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⁴ Durham University Oriental Museum Acc. no. N 379.



Plate L. The Pinnacle at Gebel Barkal (Photo D. A. Welsby).



Plate LII. Prudhoe's Sphinx, N.379.



Plate XLIX. One of the Prudhoe lions in the British Museum (EA. 2) (Photo British Museum).

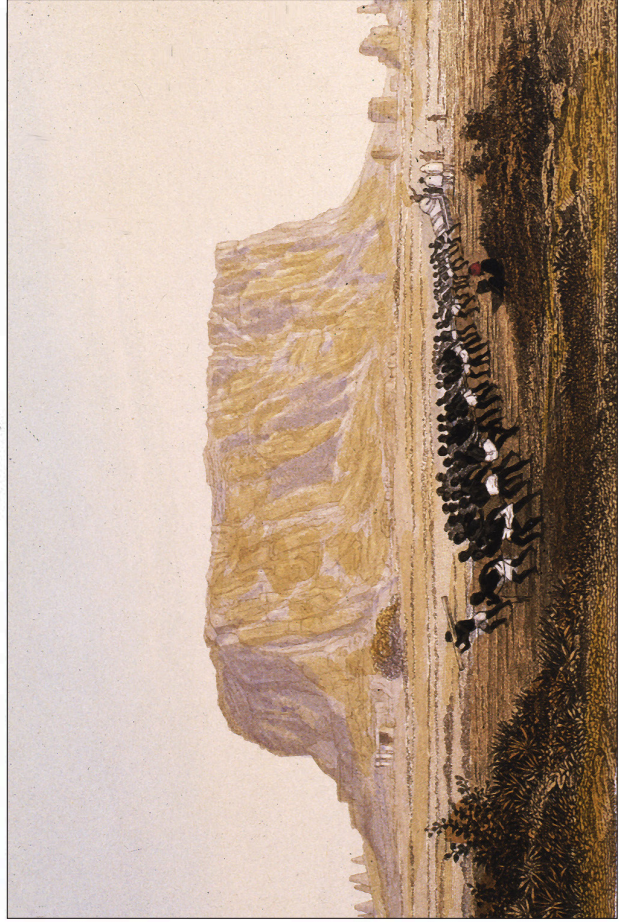


Plate LI. Frontispiece from Lepsius 1853 showing the removal of one of the great rams from Gebel Barkal.