

# SUDAN & NUBIA

The Sudan Archaeological Research Society

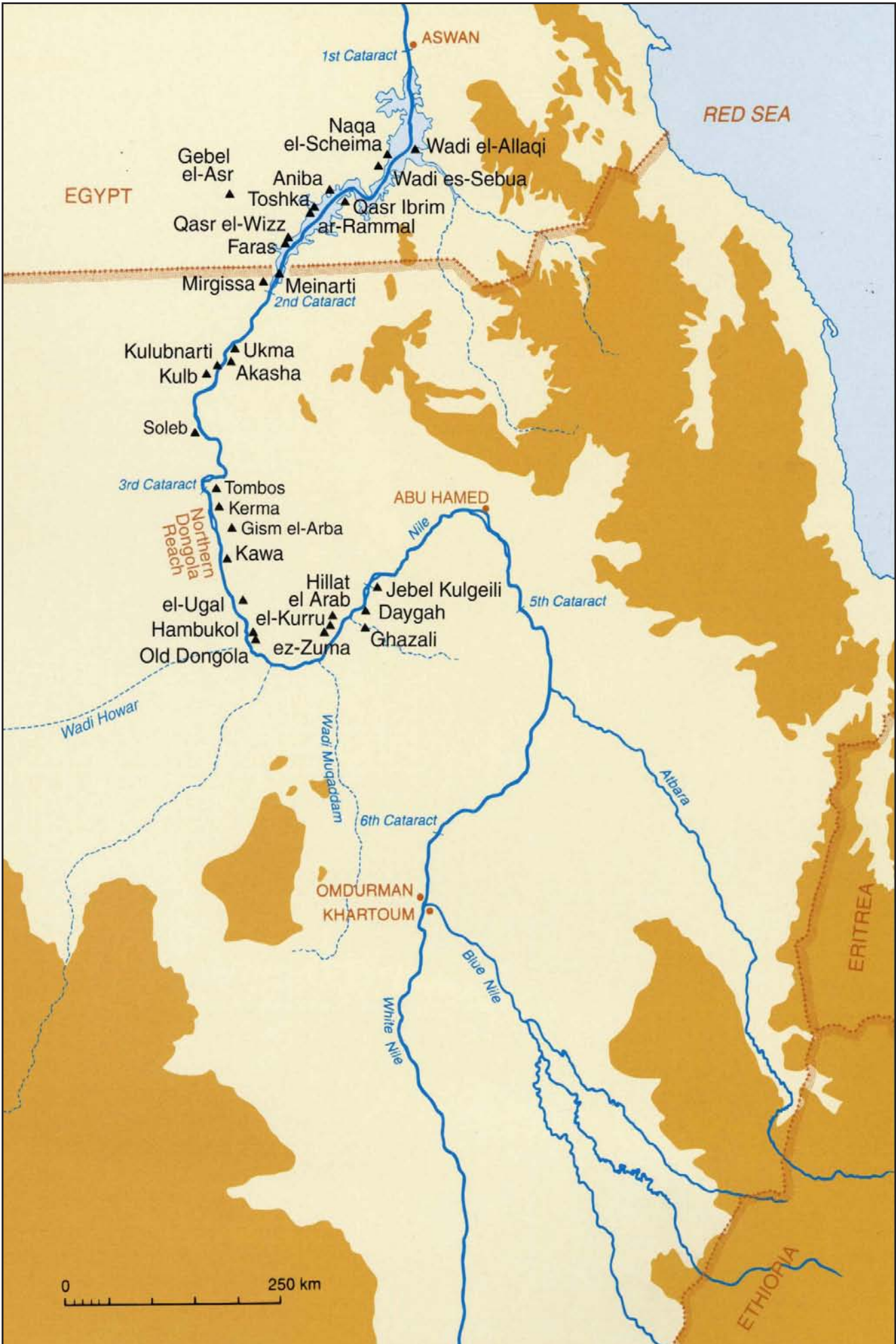


*Bulletin No. 3*

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*Front Cover:* Temple of Amenophis III at Soleb visited by  
F. W. Green in 1909 (Photo D. A. Welsby).

## Introduction

As the contents of this year's issue clearly demonstrate, *Sudan & Nubia* goes from strength to strength with a developing international profile. The Society's own work in the Dongola Reach is represented by two papers; the first, based on the analysis of human remains, provides fascinating insights into living conditions during the Kerma Period (Judd); the second outlines progress on the continuing research into the geomorphology of the region (Treves *et al.*). A complementary project, carried out in the same region by a French Expedition, has among other things identified a rare native settlement dating to the period of Egyptian conquest (reported on by Gratien). At Kerma itself, exciting new work, uncovering remains of the Napatan and Meroitic Periods, is dramatically extending the history of the site (Salah Ahmed), while of equal importance historically are the results from Hillat el-Arab (near Gebel Barkal), a cemetery with elite burials of the New Kingdom and very earliest Kushite Period (Vincentelli). Research into quarrying and stones receives fresh impetus from work at Gebel El-Asr in Lower Nubia (Shaw and Bloxam) and in Tombos and Daygah at the Third and Fourth Cataracts respectively (Harrell). Surveys in the latter region, threatened by a new dam, are confirming its great archaeological potential (Abdel Rahman and Kabashy Hussein). Among other possibilities, sites in the Abu Hamed Reach can be expected to shed important new light on Nubian monasticism, until recently a neglected subject (Julie Anderson). Further north, Qasr Ibrim, which has long been partially submerged, continues to repay the Egypt Exploration Society's commitment under difficult circumstances (John Alexander). Far from the Nile Valley, museum basements can also be a source of significant 'discoveries' (Wardley and Davies), as may unpublished archival material and archaeological diaries (Welsby Sjöström).

During the course of the year, SARS suffered a serious blow with the passing of its distinguished President, Sir Lawrence Kirwan. Larry was a source of encouragement, support and inspiration for us all. We salute his memory and his contribution to Sudanese and Nubian archaeology (see Obituary, by Harry Smith). We also regret the loss of Prof. Jack Plumley, a specialist in Christian Nubia, who for many years directed the EES excavations at Qasr Ibrim (see Obituary, by John Alexander).





# A New Statue of the Kushite Period

*Karen Wardley and Vivian Davies*

This paper concerns the recent discovery of a Kushite statue (Colour Plates XIV-XVII and Back Cover) - not in the Sudan or Egypt, but nearer to home, in a museum in Southampton. Karen Wardley presents here the background to this story; a preliminary description of the piece is given below by Vivian Davies.

## Introduction and Background

Early in 1995, Southampton City Council museum staff decided to put on a small exhibition about ancient Egypt at Gods House Tower Museum of Archaeology. Most of our collection relates to local archaeology (from the Roman, Saxon and mediaeval towns of Southampton), but we do have some ancient Egyptian artefacts: mainly scarabs, amulets and other small items. At the time, we knew little or nothing about the provenance or background of these objects. We assumed that they had either been part of the original collections at Tudor House Museum, which was Southampton's first civic museum, founded in 1912, or that they had been acquired soon afterwards.

As my background is in British archaeology, I needed some help with identifying the objects and preparing the exhibition. I approached two local specialists in Egyptology, Hilary Wilson and Peter Funnell, who kindly agreed to help me. On one of their visits I showed them a stone statue, which had been tucked away in the basement of Gods House Tower. They immediately recognised the exceptional quality of this statue and urged me to contact the British Museum for an expert opinion. A visit from Vivian Davies followed and he was able to confirm Hilary's and Peter's suspicions that this was indeed an important piece of Kushite sculpture. Further visits from the British Museum team and Edna Russmann from the Brooklyn Museum followed, to photograph and record the statue.

Meanwhile, I wanted to find out more about the background to the statue and how it came to be in our museum. The statue itself had no label attached to it or any other sort of museum identification, nor did any of my colleagues know anything about its history, so I decided to search through the archives for clues. The earliest museum records relate to the Hartley Collection, which was the foundation of Southampton's Museum. Then there are Receipt Books, which run from 1912 until 1937. There are no records for the period 1938 to 1946, and then rather sketchy documentation until the post of Curator was created in the 1960's. Before this there had only been an Honorary Curator position, which was held by a member of the Borough Council.

I found this entry in a Receipt Book, dated 3rd August

1912, for an "Egyptian Black Marble Figure" from a William Humphrey Williams Esq. This is the only record I can find relating to any Egyptian material. Is this our statue? I think it likely, because the only black stone Egyptian figures in our collection are this one and a small, unremarkable figure of a seated scribe, which is also unlabelled and unprovenanced. The statue stands out as an exceptional piece amongst the rest of our Egyptian material and we have nothing else of this period or this quality. It seems likely, therefore, that it was a single donation. Mr Williams is not credited with having given anything else to the Museum, so his figure was a "one-off" too, not part of a collection.

So, as Mr Williams could be the original donor, I have tried to find out more about him. Thus far I have discovered that he worked for Southampton Docks. He started off as Clerk of Works in 1890, later becoming Engineer in 1903. He had the more prestigious title of Docks Engineer from 1905 to 1910. He had probably retired by 1912, when he gave his "Egyptian Figure" to the Museum. He continued to live in Southampton until his death in 1918. How he may have come to have such an interesting statue in his possession is still a mystery, but one which I hope to unravel eventually.

As for the history of the statue since it has been in Southampton's collection, again I can find out very little. Before being placed in Gods House Tower basement in the 1980's, it was kept in the cellars at Tudor House Museum. We do not know if, or when, it was ever exhibited there.

The statue had pride of place in our recent exhibition in Gods House Tower Museum, but we did not publicise it because of concerns for its security. Since then it has been back in store, currently at Southampton City Art Gallery. However, it will go on display at the Art Gallery early next year, to coincide with an exhibition of modern sculpture. We aim to give it more publicity this time and hope that a lot more people will be able to see it. Meanwhile, it is possible to view it in the store now, by appointment.

## Description

The figure (Colour Plates XIV-XV) is that of a striding god, left leg advanced and bent at the knee, holding on his chest the crook and flail, his body inclined forward, his head slightly upwards; he is supported at the back by a thick, tall pillar, itself engaged into a wider back-slab. The figure is in good condition but missing some parts, including the feet, lower left leg and pedestal, much of the left arm, and most of the headdress. There is also damage to the god's beard, the tip of the nose, the rims of the ears, and the handle of his flail (Colour Plate XVII and Back Cover). The maximum surviving height of the piece as a whole is about 692mm, the maximum width about 255mm, and maximum depth about 230mm. It is made of grano-diorite, very finely worked and polished all over except for the rear of the back-slab (Colour Plate XVI), which indicates that in its original situation it



was placed against a wall, very probably in a shrine. There is no visible trace of paint. A thin even band of discolouration observable on the side of the back-slab at the rear (Colour Plate XV), quite possibly the remains of a mortar, almost certainly arises from a secondary usage, as it continues under the break at the bottom.

The piece is superbly sculpted. The god's torso is elegantly slim, muscular and broad-shouldered, his head rounded with bold but subtly modelled features. There has been careful rendering of certain of the body's anatomical detail: the clavicle, the deltoids (on both shoulders), the right nipple (the left is covered by the handle of the crook), the finger nails, the navel positioned at the base of a deep tear-shaped furrow, and the underlying musculature and bone of the leg(s), which are strongly emphasised. The face is round and the cheeks fleshy though not full. The ears are large and slightly splayed; they are positioned asymmetrically. The eyes are medium sized with bulging orbs; the upper lids are rimmed, the lower rendered as narrow shelves. The eyebrows, plastically rendered, curve very slightly above the eye and taper to a point at the outer ends. The mouth is relatively small and its line horizontal. There is a little hole made by a drill at each end. The lips are quite thick and well shaped. The philtrum, between nose and mouth, has been indicated. The nose, broken at the tip, is wide and, to judge from the profile view, may have been quite prominent when complete. The characteristic 'Kushite fold', the distinctive furrow running between nostril to corner of mouth, is present but not strongly marked.

In addition to the divine beard with chin straps, the god wears on his head a tight-fitting skull-cap and head-band surmounted by what was once probably a tall feathered headdress (cf. perhaps Macadam 1955, pl. lxxii, a), only the bottom of which now survives. It is possible that the detailing of the feathers may never have been completed or that it may once have been done in paint or some other material, now disappeared. Shown as attached to the rear of the head-band, on the right-hand side of the back-pillar, is a long, narrow streamer, extending all the way down nearly to the feet and widening towards the bottom. This detail is not reproduced on the left-hand side of the pillar.

The god's body is naked except for an archaic form of divine dress attested on only a small number of other sculptures in the round. It consists of a belt secured by a large central knot, the two ends of which curve down along the thighs to end just above the knees; hanging down directly from the bottom of the knot is a rectangular central piece of equivalent length, though wider and thicker; a narrow tab of cloth extends up from the knot to the left of the navel. Earlier depictions of this form of costume show clearly that this central piece represented a penis-sheath (Wildung 1972, 146-50, figs 6 and 10, and 154-6; Russmann 1989, 77, no. 34, 95-7, no. 43; cf. also Breccia 1932, 17, 1, pl. vii, 24); if this is what is meant here (and not simply a covering strip of cloth), it would seem that the sculptors were not entirely

familiar with the sheath's traditional shape and function (cf. Baines 1975, 9, n. 28, and *passim*).

The precise identity of the god is a puzzle. There is no identifying inscription (it may well have been contained on the pedestal, unfortunately lost) and, among the published figures of deities, the elements of his formal iconography appear to be unique in this particular combination. Pending, therefore, the discovery of a parallel representation (preferably labelled), all we can confidently say at present is that the figure embodies a composite deity: a god with solar, Osirian, and (re)creative associations.

The date of the piece is not so problematic. The style and configuration of the features are typically Kushite, finding close parallels in the royal portraiture of the 25th Dynasty and early Napatan Period (Russmann 1974, 11-24, figs. 1, 5, 7, 8, 9, 11; Wenig 1978, 49-53, figs 25-7, 166ff, nos 75-6, 81-2, 84; Russmann 1989, 166-8, no. 76; Davies 1991, 317-8, pl. 14, 2; Wildung 1997, 218-9, no. 229; Davies and Friedman 1998, 98). If the features here reflect the portraiture of the reigning king, a dating to the reign of Taharqo (690-664 BC) would appear, on first consideration, to be arguable for the Southampton figure, although the case remains to be made in full.

In the meantime, despite the uncertainties, we may welcome the 'discovery' of this remarkable new statue, a magnificent work of art, which forms an important addition to the corpus of early Kushite sculpture.

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*Plate XIV.*



*Plate XV.*



*Plate XVI.*



*Plate XVII.*

*Plates XIV-XVII. Divine statue of the Kushite Period.*