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A curious account of ancient Egyptian Treasure Trove in Scotland

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ABSTRACT

An ancient Egyptian object buried in the grounds of a historic house near Monimail in Fife was found by chance in 1952 and acquired at the time by the then Royal Scottish Museum (now National Museums Scotland). A second object from the same location appeared by chance in 1966 and was shown to the Museum but not accessioned. The revelation of a third object in 1984 prompted an investigation that produced clear evidence there had once been a larger collection of Egyptian antiquities at Melville House. This paper offers the first published account of how these events unfolded and discusses the possible origins of the collection through a visit to Egypt by members of the Leslie-Melville family in 1856–7. The third object and the finds made in 1984 during the investigation were claimed by the Crown as Treasure Trove and all are now in the collections of National Museums Scotland. They are apparently the only ancient Egyptian items to have been declared as Treasure Trove in Scotland. A catalogue of these objects, along with the original find, is provided. The main text of the paper is by Elizabeth Goring with additional comments by Margaret Maitland; the catalogue is by Margaret Maitland.

INTRODUCTION

In 1984 I (Elizabeth Goring) was the relatively new Curator of Mediterranean Archaeology at what was then the Royal Scottish Museum in Edinburgh. In March, a member of staff on the Information Desk in the Museum's Main Hall phoned to say some visitors had brought in an object for me to identify. At that time, curators dealt with public enquiries in a small room (or more accurately a large cupboard) beside the mail room. Waiting for me there was a large group of teenage boys who turned out to be from a special education school, a residential school for young offenders and children with behavioural issues, run by the then Fife Regional Council. The man accompanying them said the object had been found in the school grounds by a boy using a metal detector. The finder himself was not present.

The object the group showed me was a small Egyptian bronze figurine of a man, of a type that was unfamiliar to me. It was clearly authentic though and, despite its condition, I believed it was of some interest (Illus 1).

Further questioning revealed the school was based in Melville House, near Monimail, a fine stately home commissioned by the 1st Earl of Melville in 1697 (Illus 2). This location immediately rang bells: I knew Egyptian objects had turned up in the grounds of this house on two previous occasions. I had been told the memorable tale of their discovery soon after I arrived at the Royal Scottish Museum by one of my curatorial

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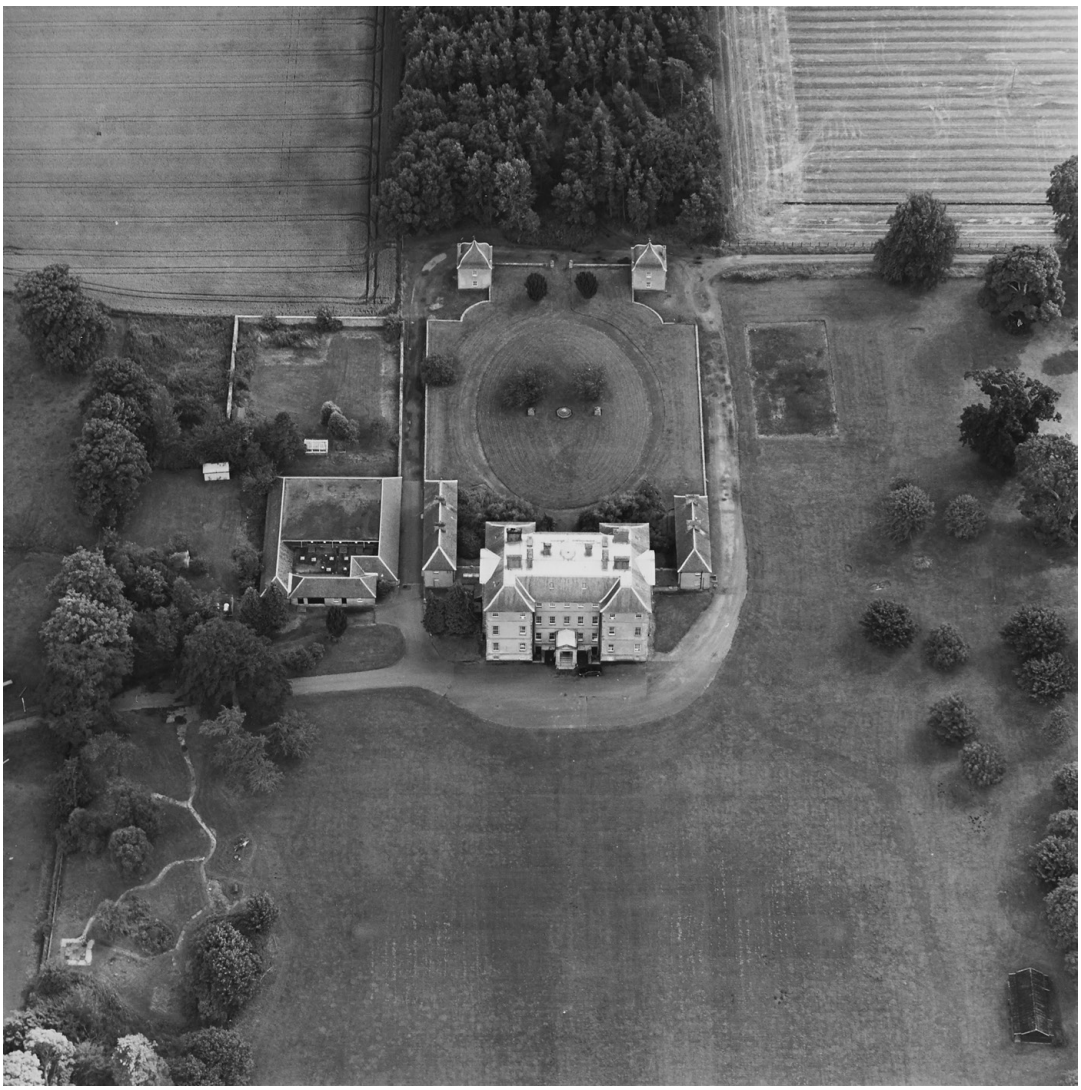
Illus 1 Leaded bronze figurine of a priest (front, side and back), Third Intermediate Period (about 1069–656 BC). NMS A.1985.210. H: 104mm, W: 33mm, D: 35mm. (© National Museums Scotland)

predecessors, the distinguished Egyptologist Cyril Aldred (1914–91), the former Keeper of Art and Archaeology. By then, he had long been retired and I was his successor-but-one. A written account of his story, which he repeated to me in March 1984, is in the Museum's files. The following is a summary.

In 1952, Melville House was occupied by the private Dalhousie Castle School. That year, a boy assisting a gardener in the grounds of the house found a fine mid-12th Dynasty red sandstone statue head (about 1922–1855 BC) while digging up potatoes as part of a punishment exercise. He initially mistook the head for a potato (Illus 3). One of the masters, Christopher Mylne, who was the son of the headmaster Kenneth M Mylne, brought it in to the Royal Scottish Museum, where Aldred identified it. It was subsequently acquired for the collections and registered on 20 November 1952 as A.1952.197 (Bourriau 1988: 27–8, cat no. 17). Aldred described it in the Art and Archaeology Department Yearbook as a 'Head of a statue, in hard haematitic quartzose sandstone, of a man wearing a wig of lappet type … XIIth Dynasty, probably reign of Senusret III [*c* 1874–1855 BC]. Given by K M Mylne Esq, Dalhousie School, Melville House, by Ladybank, Fife.' A further note in his hand



Illus 2 Aerial view of Melville House taken from the north-west showing house, garden, pavilions and lodges, 2000. (© RCAHMS)

reads: 'This specimen was found in a deposit of builders' rubbish removed from destroyed stables at Melville House. It is presumed to have been brought back from Egypt by a member of the Melville family in the 19th century. However, as the house has been occupied by several different tenants since 1939, there is no guarantee that this surmise is correct.' Aldred told me that, although the statue head had been donated to the Museum, he had sent the gardener ten shillings, both in recognition of the find and to encourage the reporting of any further items.

A brief article headed 'Egyptian Carved Head. Discovery in a Fife School Garden' appeared in *The Scotsman* on 24 January 1953. Drawing on information from 'an official from the Museum' (obviously Aldred), it records how the statue head 'was discovered by the school gardener among some rubbish which had been brought from an old stable, and came into the

Illus 3 Head of a statue of a man in sandstone, mid-12th Dynasty (about 1922–1874 BC). NMS A.1952.197. H: 110mm, W: 90mm, D: 87mm. (© National Museums Scotland)

Illus 4 Votive statuette of a bull comparable to the example found at Melville House in 1966 but not acquired. This example copper alloy, Late or Ptolemaic Period (about 664–30 BC). NMS A.1965.382. H: 91mm, W: 72mm. (© National Museums Scotland)

hands of the headmaster, who brought it to the notice of the Royal Scottish Museum'. The article adds that

> as the house was once occupied by a family, one of whose members had been an officer under Wellington and who had recuperated in Egypt before coming back to this country to die, the probability arose that it had been brought back by him with other examples of Egyptian art. It was hoped, therefore, that further specimens, perhaps buried, might be discovered. This theory has, however, been abandoned, since the property, before becoming a school, had many tenants.

Neither the school nor the house was named.

Fourteen years later, in 1966, an Egyptian bronze votive statuette of an Apis bull was found in the school grounds by pupils doing a PE class outdoors (for a comparable example, Illus 4). One of the boys taking part in a vaulting exercise landed awkwardly on a spike protruding from the ground. This turned out to be the tang of the statuette. The supervising teacher, a Mr McNie, brought the object into the Museum for identification. By a strange coincidence, McNie had been the very boy who had found the sandstone head in 1952. He had asked the gardener if he could keep it and, after washing the mud off, had put the object in his locker. However, Christopher Mylne had heard about it and confiscated it. McNie did not know Mylne had brought the head into the Museum and had always wondered what had become of it. Aldred identified the bronze as a fairly common figurine of the Late Period (664–332 BC) and told McNie the Museum was not interested in acquiring it as it already had similar pieces in the collection. Although it was of good quality, it needed conservation and Aldred offered to have it cleaned by Museum staff. This suggestion was declined and McNie took the bull away with him. Before McNie left, Aldred ascertained

that the bronze had been found near the foundations of a former outhouse. Aldred followed up with a letter to McNie on 13 October 1966, once again offering to have the object cleaned, but received no reply. The bull has not been seen again. No visual record was made of it at the time, and it presumably passed into the hands of a collector, who may have no notion of its unusual provenance.

INVESTIGATING THE LATEST FIND

When I saw the little Egyptian bronze figurine of a man in 1984, it was obvious the three objects must be connected. I confirmed with Aldred that it had come from the grounds of the same house. Its discovery established beyond doubt that there had once been some kind of collection associated with Melville House, but how had the objects got there, and how had they ended up buried in the grounds? Could there be other Egyptian pieces still to be found that might help establish the background to this curious story? It was time to dig a little deeper.

On 2 April 1984, I alerted the Crown Office to the possibility of a case of Treasure Trove (King's and Lord Treasurer's Remembrancer 2016). In Scotland, Treasure Trove is based on the Scots common law principle of *bona vacantia* (ownerless goods). Where there is no known owner or heir, all found objects, regardless of their age or material, are deemed to be the property of the Crown and must be reported. I therefore warned the school's Vice-Principal, a Mr Jones, that Treasure Trove legislation might apply, and he assured me that any further metal detecting would be discouraged.

Aldred was very interested in my description of the figurine, as he thought it sounded unusual. I arranged to visit the school to collect it for investigation and to clarify where in the grounds it had been buried. It was then I discovered that the finder was no longer at the school. Indeed, by the time the figurine was brought into the Museum the boy in question was in Saughton Prison in Edinburgh. Nevertheless, it proved possible for him to meet me at Melville House on 19 April under the supervision of his probation officer to show me the findspot.

Peter took us beyond a walled garden to a large patch of rough ground beside the school's allotments. This was about 50 yards from a new school block built on the site of the old stables and which incorporated some of its walls. He told me he had found the bronze two or three years earlier at the far end of the allotment area, about a foot below the surface. The delay in reporting the find was unfortunate; in the intervening period, the soil had been extensively cultivated and rotovated and bonfires had been lit in the area.

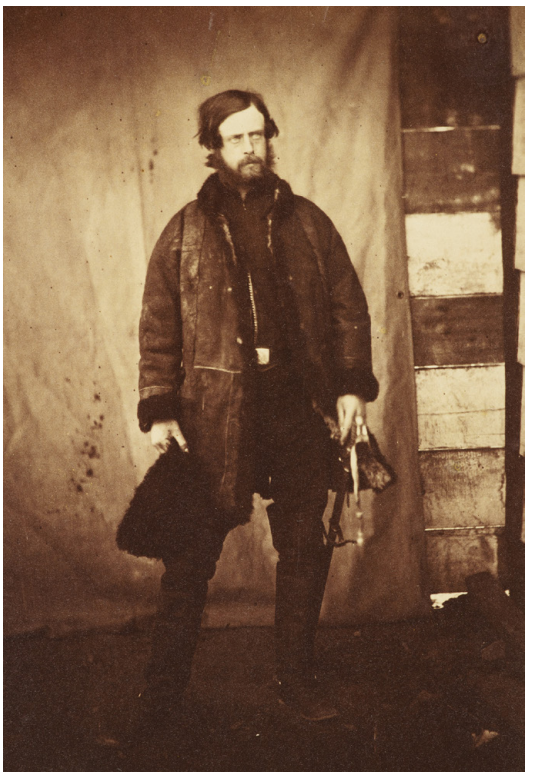
I took the figurine back to the Museum and Aldred came in to examine it on 24 April. He confirmed it was a rare type, for which he knew no parallels, and suggested I should take it to London to show Harry James (T G H James, 1923–2009), then Keeper of the Department of Egyptian Antiquities at the British Museum. James, Vivian Davies, his Deputy Keeper, and Aldred all agreed the figurine represented a priest bringing offerings, a rather unusual subject, and one for which the British Museum had no close parallel. None of them was entirely sure of its date. It was a difficult piece to value for Treasure Trove. Although rare, it was in very poor condition, having been inexpertly cleaned at the school using wire wool. This led the British Museum to suggest an appropriate valuation for Treasure Trove purposes would be £1,750.

Dr Alexander Fenton (1929–2012), then Director of the National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland, with whom I was liaising in his capacity as Chair of the Advisory Panel on Treasure Trove, agreed it would be desirable to investigate the context of the three known finds from Melville House in more depth. He suggested I should take a metal detector over the grounds. We both felt this could be helpful, given that two metallic objects had already appeared. He advised that I should do this before the valuation was announced, which seemed like a wise precaution.

It was decided it would be best to explore the site in the early part of August, when the school would be on holiday. My aims for the expedition were to see if there was any further evidence for a collection and, if so, to elucidate the

circumstances under which it had been buried. I gathered a small group of volunteers to help. Some of my Museum colleagues, from my own and other departments, offered to take part, intrigued by the story and interested in helping me establish some context for the objects. Looking beyond the Museum for additional assistance, I contacted Mr Gordon Barclay, an Inspector of Ancient Monuments with the Scottish Development Department (later to become Historic Scotland), who was then conducting an excavation nearby at Balfarg, a 4th–2nd millennium BC ceremonial complex in Glenrothes. I asked him if any of his diggers might be interested in helping us in their own time and a few generously volunteered. This part of the story was life-changing for me at a personal level: it was my first contact with Gordon, who was to become my husband a decade later.

For the purposes of Treasure Trove, it was important to address the question of the figurine's original ownership in the UK and I therefore began to research the history of Melville House and its occupants to try to identify a possible source for the collection. I carried out searches at the National Monuments Record of Scotland and the Scottish Record Office (now the National Record of the Historic Environment, Historic Environment Scotland, and the National Records of Scotland respectively), as well as the National Library of Scotland, to try to establish the identity of the collector. I found no reference to any Egyptian collection at Melville House. The family did have some history of collecting, but this had focused mainly on paintings, ceramics and textiles.[1] A member of the family in the 18th century had undertaken a Grand Tour of Europe but did not go to Egypt. It appeared that the only family member with a documented connection to Egypt was Viscount Balgonie (1831–57), the eldest son of David Leslie-Melville, 8th Earl of Leven, 7th Earl of Melville (1785–1860) (Illus 5). Balgonie had seen active service in the Crimean War, and the National Library of Scotland has a letter he wrote to his mother in 1855 on the eve of the siege of Sevastopol (MS.9814, f 134). However, nothing was found relating to his visit to Egypt, which took place over the winter of 1856/7.



ILLUS 5 Viscount Balgonie, 1855, by Roger Fenton (1819–57), albumen print. RCIN 2500273. (Royal Collection Trust/© His Majesty King Charles III 2023)

I also researched the original layout of the grounds. Plans of the estate from around the time of Viscount Balgonie's visit to Egypt indicated that the area where the objects had apparently been found had been open ground. It had evidently been used as a midden before it came to be a vegetable garden and allotments.

At Vivian Davies' suggestion, I arranged to have the figurine analysed to see if this might help with dating it. Dr Jim Tate at the Research Laboratory of the National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland carried out XRF analysis on it on 10 May. This showed it to be made of an inhomogeneous alloy of copper, lead, tin, antimony and iron. There was a higher percentage of lead in the base, which Tate suggested came from the dregs of the crucible when the figurine had been cast. Davies confirmed the composition was

consistent with bronzes of the Third Intermediate Period and Late Period (1069–332 BC).

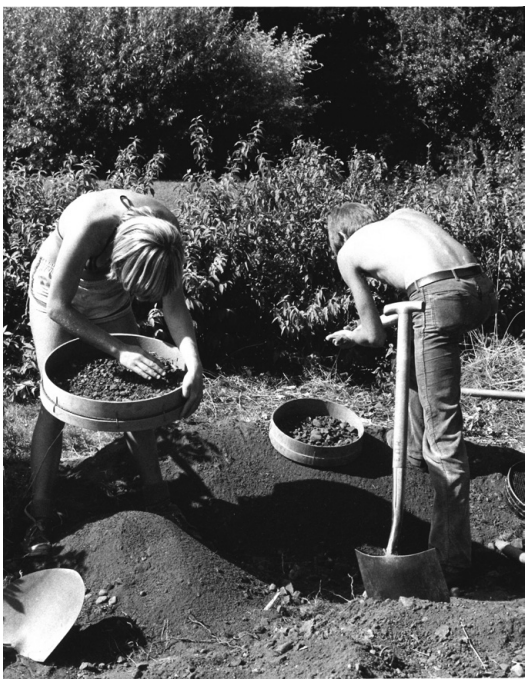
INVESTIGATING THE SITE

On Friday 3 August 1984, we arrived at Melville House with trowels, sieves, grid pegs and a metal detector. It was an unusually hot day, in what proved to be an exceptionally warm and dry month. We cleared an area of about 30 × 40m in the area Peter had indicated, laid out a grid and started work (Illus 6 & 7). We found nothing. We relocated, with the same result. Towards the end of the afternoon, just before we were due to leave, one of the geologists wandered off to the opposite end of the area. Far from the spot we had been directed to, on a patch of ground where there had recently been a large bonfire, he spotted a faience shabti figure lying on the surface. Deliberately or otherwise, we had been misdirected. But we now knew we were in roughly the right place and that there was indeed more to be found.

The following Monday we investigated the area where the shabti had lain and discovered the remains of a rubble-filled path. We followed it for some 2m, trowelling down to rotovator level, and started sieving. We found a small, fragmentary shabti; the top part of a very fine faience figurine of Isis suckling Horus; two faience beads; part of a faience plaque bearing the Eye of Horus; and a fragment of a bright blue faience pectoral. Most of these objects, like the shabti from the previous day, had been caught up by the rotovator and burned. The damage was very fresh: perhaps just a matter of weeks old.

The next Friday, the 10th, we followed the path round a corner and extended our search beyond its edges, taking up some raspberry canes as we went. Within the path fill we found three scarabs; another small fragmentary shabti; a second piece of the bright blue faience pectoral; and two more beads. Nothing turned up beyond the path. We worked on three further evenings, following the path in different directions, but found only one more bead, in sieving. We subsequently chose

ILLUS 6 Volunteers from NMS and Balfarg working in the grounds of Melville House, 1984. (© National Museums Scotland)



Illus 7 Volunteers from Balfarg working in the grounds of Melville House, 1984. (© National Museums Scotland)

not to detail the exact locations of the finds to deter treasure-hunting.

Enough had been recovered to confirm that there had indeed been a collection, and that somehow it had become buried in the fill of a path. The fill appeared to have come from a demolished outbuilding, supporting Aldred's note on the location of the sandstone statue head back in 1952. The expedition had achieved its aims.

INVESTIGATING THE POSSIBLE COLLECTOR

The next issue that needed to be clarified was that of legal title. Could it be established beyond doubt that the collection had been assembled by a member of the Leven and Melville family who had once occupied Melville House? If not, and its original ownership in the UK could not be proven, the Crown would be in a position to make a claim to it as Treasure Trove. In September 1984, the Crown Office asked Dr Fenton to enquire of the Earl of Leven if he could shed any light on the origins of the collection.

Aldred had already ascertained, and I had confirmed, that a family member had visited Egypt in the 19th century. This was Viscount Balgonie, who spent several months there in the second half of the 1850s. Dr Fenton therefore enquired if there was any record that Balgonie or any other member of the family might have been the source of the collection. Although I had found no evidence of this in the public archives, it was possible the family might have retained some relevant documentation, perhaps in the form of diaries or personal letters like the one Balgonie had written to his mother on the eve of Sevastopol.

The Earl of Leven wrote on 4 October 1984:

> I do not know of any member of my family apart from Balgonie … ever going to Egypt before Melville passed out of the ownership of the head of the family in 1860. Later on my grandfather visited Egypt in the 1890s but he lived here [in Glenferness House, Nairn] and in London and did not own Melville so that it would be unlikely that he had anything to do with the objects you have found. The only thing I can think of is that Balgonie brought these things home with him and they were taken to Melville after his death in Roehampton. Possibly they were thought to be valueless and thrown out.

There appear to have been no papers held by the family that might have cast some light on the question. No evidence was forthcoming from Lord Balgonie's will, as he died intestate on 29 August 1857, aged only 24.

There was a very slight possibility the collection might have come to the house through the Cartwright family. As the Earl of Leven wrote to Dr Fenton, Melville House passed out of the ownership of the head of the family in 1860. When David, the 8th Earl of Leven and 7th Earl of Melville, died that year, the Melville estates were inherited by his eldest daughter, Lady Elizabeth Jane Leslie-Melville. The inheritance resulted from a complex entail that came into effect after the death of Lady Elizabeth's

brother, Lord Balgonie (Fraser 1890: ix–xv), as the only other son of the family had predeceased Lord Balgonie. Lady Elizabeth had married Thomas Robert Brook Cartwright in 1858, two years before her father's death. She and her husband lived in Melville House for several years until her own death in 1892, when their daughter Elizabeth Harriet Leslie-Melville succeeded to the estate. Lady Elizabeth's husband died in 1921 and a short obituary appeared in the *Fife Free Press*.[2] Lady Elizabeth's father-in-law was Sir Thomas Cartwright, a well-travelled diplomat; her husband was his second son. The eldest son, her brother-in-law, was William Cornwallis Cartwright, an art collector and a scholar of ancient and medieval art, who travelled to Egypt in the 1870s. Northamptonshire Archives Service holds the Cartwright of Aynhoe Collection, a large collection of 19th-century and early 20th-century correspondence, photographs and official papers (C(A)Box, 1960/23, Accessions 1971/230). It includes William Cornwallis Cartwright's travel journals (for a useful description of the contents of this collection, see National Archives *Cartwright of Aynhoe Collection*).[3]

Nevertheless, Lord Balgonie seemed much more likely as a possible source for the collection than either the Earl of Leven's grandfather, who did not own Melville House and was living in Nairn and London when he visited Egypt in the 1890s, or the extended Cartwright family. Of the three possibilities, the last two had only a tenuous and indirect connection with Melville House, whereas Lord Balgonie had a direct link both to it and to Egypt. The objects could also potentially have been purchased through a UK dealer or auction house, or they could have been gifted to the family, but there is no evidence for this.

There is no evidence that anyone who owned or lived in Melville House after Lord Balgonie had ever brought Egyptian objects to it. After the death of Lady Leven in 1938, the house remained in the possession of the Melville family until it was sold in 1949, having been much neglected in the interim. During the Second World War it was used as the headquarters of British Auxiliary Unit resistance units and as a billet for Polish troops. An outline of its use between late 1941 and early September 1943 can be found on the website of the British Resistance Archive.[4] In 1950, Kenneth Mylne, who had founded Dalhousie Preparatory School at Dalhousie Castle, Bonnyrigg, in 1925, relocated the school to Melville House, where it remained until it closed in 1971. The house was then briefly owned by Mr Alex Green, who planned to develop it into a country house hotel, but the project foundered (McCraw 1983). In 1975 it was purchased by Fife County Council, who used it as a special education school until 1998. In the absence of evidence to the contrary, Lord Balgonie therefore remains the most likely source of the collection.

LORD BALGONIE AND HIS VISIT TO EGYPT

Alexander, Lord Balgonie, was born on 19 November 1831. In 1850, he enlisted as an ensign in the Grenadier Regiment of Foot Guards and was soon able to secure promotion to lieutenant by purchase, as was usual at the time (Fraser 1890: 379). As the *War Office Gazette* for 13 December 1850 announced, 'Grenadier Regiment of Foot Guards. – Alexander Viscount Balgonie, to be Ensign and Lieutenant, by purchase, vice Wilson, promoted.' He celebrated reaching his majority in November 1852, an event described in detail in the *Fifeshire Journal*.[5] The following year he travelled east with his regiment to fight in the Crimean War. During most of the 1854 campaign he served as aide-de-camp to General Sir Henry Bentinck, and he took part in the Battles of the Alma, Balaklava and Inkerman, where his horse was shot from under him. The campaign took a heavy toll on his health and he had to return home towards the end of 1855 after the conclusion of the Siege of Sevastopol (Conolly 1866: 326). A week after his return he was due to attend a civic dinner where he was to be presented with the Freedom of Cupar. However, he was suddenly taken seriously ill 'from the bursting of a blood vessel'[6] and the dinner had to be postponed. His health continued to cause great concern during 1856 and he remained 'in delicate health and unable to bear excitement'.[7]

The Freedom of Cupar was eventually formally presented to him at Melville House in September 1856, just before he left to spend the winter in Egypt in an attempt to recover his health (Conolly 1866: 326). He stayed in Egypt throughout the winter and spring of 1856/7. While he was there, he was promoted to the rank of major.

In 2022, I discovered that Lord Balgonie's departure to, and return from, Egypt had been widely reported in various newspapers. One of the earliest references to his journey was in *The Scotsman*: 'Lord Balgonie, we understand, is about to proceed to Egypt for the benefit of his health …'.[8] The story also appeared in numerous other publications including *The Field*: 'although considerably better, his Lordship will be compelled to pass the ensuing winter in a more genial climate'.[9]

The *London Evening Standard* later added an important detail:

> The Indus, belonging to [the Peninsular and Oriental Company] left at the same time [that is, the morning of 1 November] likewise for Alexandria, having on board, in addition to the passengers already reported as arrived by her from Southampton, Viscount Balgonie, Lady S. Melville, Miss Melville, Mr Smith and Mr Crockford.[10]

I now knew, for the first time, that Balgonie had not travelled to Egypt alone; he was accompanied by two close members of his family.

Balgonie had four sisters. The eldest was Lady Elizabeth Jane Leslie-Melville, who was born in May 1825, and was to succeed to the Melville estate on his death. Next came Lady Anne Maria, born in December 1826, who went on to marry Sir William Stirling-Maxwell. The third was Lady Susan Lucy, born in July 1828, who became a lady-in-waiting to the Duchess of Kent and subsequently to Princess Christian of Schleswig-Holstein (Illus 8). The youngest was Lady Emily Eleanor, who was born in May 1840. She married John Glencairn Carter Hamilton, later Baron Hamilton of Dalzell (Fraser 1890).

One of the sisters who travelled with him ('Lady S. Melville') was certainly Lady Susan. Later reports (see below) confirm that the lady referred to as 'Miss Melville' was another sister. Given the title and the order of the names, this was likely to have been the fourth sister, Emily, who would have been only 16 at the time.

Illus 8 Lady Susan Leslie-Melville, 1869, by Sergei Livitsky (1819–98), albumen print, acquired by Queen Victoria. RCIN 2907069. (Royal Collection Trust/© His Majesty King Charles III 2023)

I have found no information relating to their stay in Egypt, and no further reports referring to Lord Balgonie and his sisters until the following spring, when James, the 8th Earl of Elgin, met them in Malta on their journey home. On 2 May 1857, on board HMS *Caradoc* in Malta, the Earl wrote (Walrond 1872: 179):

> I … took a turn through the town, and went to the inn to breakfast … By way of conversation with the waiter, I asked who were in the house: 'Only two

> families, one of the Lord Balgonie and his sisters.' I saw the ladies first, and, at a later hour, their brother, in his bed. Poor fellow! the hand of death is only too visible upon him. There he lay; his arm, absolutely fleshless, stretched out: his large eyes gleaming from his pale face. I could not dare to offer to his broken-hearted sisters a word of comfort. These poor girls! how I felt for them; alone! with their brother in such a state. They go to Marseilles by the next opportunity, probably by the packet, which will convey to you this letter, and they hope their mother will meet them there. What a tragedy!

In mid-May several newspapers, including the *Edinburgh Evening Courant*, reported that 'Lord Balgonie, who has been during the winter in Egypt for the benefit of his health, which became greatly impaired by his military duties in the Crimea, is expected in London towards the close of the month.'[11]

His return was noted a few days later. The *Dundee, Perth and Cupar Advertiser* reported that 'Lord Balgonie has arrived safe in Marseilles, having stood the voyage well, and being very considerably improved in health.'[12] This, unfortunately, does not accord with what the Earl of Elgin had seen for himself in Malta. The *Daily News (London)* offered further details: 'Major Whitmore … takes passage home on the Indus; as does Lord Balgonie and his two sisters, the Ladies Melville. His lordship spent the winter in Egypt for the benefit of his health. He continues still very unwell.'[13]

Three months later, on 28 August, the War Office announced that 'Lieut. and Capt. and Brevet Major Alexander Viscount Balgonie has been permitted to retire from the service by the sale of his commission' (reported in the *Daily News (London)* and many other newspapers).[14] His retirement was vanishingly brief: he died the following day at Roehampton House, London, the home of his uncle John, on the eve of a county festival due to be held in his honour (Fraser 1890: 380).

Numerous papers reported on his death. The *Fife Herald* offered a fulsome account, noting, among other details, that it had occurred in the forenoon; that he had a 'naturally delicate' constitution; that his life since returning from the Crimea had been 'little more than an alternation of partial recoveries and relapses'; and that he had gone to Egypt.

> but the season proved unpropitious there, and in May last he returned to England weaker and more prostrated than he had left it. From that period he gradually sunk until Saturday last, when his solemn change came. In the full flush of autumn's beauty, gently and happily he died, in that quiet house, with all his friends around him.[15]

The paper added that his body 'had been conveyed to Melville House, where it presently lay, to be interred in the family burying ground of Monimail on Saturday first'.

Lord Balgonie's death certificate records the cause of his death as pulmonary phthisis (TB), which had lasted nearly two years. On 1 November 1857, the 8th Earl of Elgin wrote (Walrond 1872: 206), 'Poor Balgonie too. It is another loss; very sad, though different in its character. When I saw him at Malta, I had not a conception that he would last so long.'

These details raise further questions about the acquisition and disposal of the Egyptian antiquities from Melville House. Was Lord Balgonie well enough to have assembled these curiosities on his own during his stay? At this period, consuls and dealers with shops selling antiquities would also visit hotels or passing boats with their goods, so it is possible the objects were brought to him. It is also possible that it was his sisters who assembled the collection. There are many examples of Victorian women who built collections of Egyptian antiquities (for example, Jackson 2013; Hardwick 2018). Although by that date the export of antiquities was banned in the absence of a permit (Hagen & Ryholt 2016: 135–6, 140), many small objects of the kind found at Melville House will have left the country undeclared in tourists' baggage.

If one or all of the family members had acquired these pieces during the winter of 1856/7, how had the objects ended up buried in the grounds of Melville House? I can only add speculation to speculation. As the *Fife Herald* reported,

Lord Balgonie's body had been brought home to Fife from Roehampton House, where the gravely ill young man had clearly stayed since his return from abroad. Had his sisters remained there with him? Perhaps Balgonie had kept with him at least some of his belongings from the voyage home, later to be returned to Scotland with his remains. Could it be that the collection of curiosities was left, unpacked, in a case abandoned in an outhouse or stable block and thereafter forgotten? I think it unlikely that, as the Earl of Leven suggested, 'they were thought to be valueless and thrown out' as they would certainly have been viewed as valuable items at that time.

Another possibility is that they were kept for a time after they reached Melville House and only later consigned to an outbuilding. The earliest known examples of stories of 'the mummy's curse' date to the 1860s, so Egyptian antiquities could potentially be associated with ill fortune from at least that time (Day 2006: 46–7, 52–5). However, if superstition lay behind their disposal, it might have been preferable to remove them from the estate altogether, rather than simply out of the house. Perhaps the most likely explanation is that they were either forgotten in the immediate grief of the occasion or abandoned as too painful a memory of the trip. Eventually, at some later date, the outhouse in which they had been deposited was demolished. Those long-forgotten objects were then caught up, unnoticed, in the building debris and subsequently incorporated into the fill of a path.

CONCLUSION

Some 127 years later, on 29 November 1984, Dr Fenton notified me that the Treasure Trove Panel had agreed the Melville House finds should be treated as Treasure Trove, everything having reasonably been done to establish their ownership. They recommended that the objects should come to the Royal Scottish Museum. The reward for the bronze figurine was paid to the boy who had found it, while £50 was paid to the school for the fragmentary material our expedition had found in August. These pieces, registered as A.1985.210, 211 + A–N, apparently comprise the earliest, and only, instance of ancient Egyptian objects being formally declared Treasure Trove in Scotland (Illus 9, 10, 11 & 12*)*. A single non-Egyptian object was found during the 1984 investigation: a fragment of what appears to be a terracotta ocarina, or mouth flute, of unknown date and origin, registered as A.1985.211 O. Given the highly disturbed nature of the investigated area, this anomalous object could have been deposited at any time and might have had no direct association with the otherwise exclusively ancient Egyptian pieces.

The Melville House finds are not, however, the only Egyptian objects to have been found in the ground in the UK. In England, Wales and Northern Ireland the declaration of Treasure Trove depends on different criteria, and the reporting of non-Treasure finds, as defined by the Treasure Act 1996, is voluntary. Only two Egyptian objects (not including coins) seem to have been reported to the Portable Antiquities Scheme, which records reported finds. Both are small bronze figurines, isolated finds discovered by metal detectorists in southern England. One, HAMP-420491, was reported in 2004; the second, SOM-184D04, in 2009.

NMS itself has two other examples of Egyptian objects discovered in unusual circumstances in Scotland, though neither was claimed as Treasure Trove. One, A.1961.1069, is a 21st Dynasty limestone relief, probably from Giza, bearing part of the figure of a sphinx and the cartouches of King Amenemope (about 993–984 BC). This was found reused in a dry-stone wall in Oban. The other, A.1966.385, is a late Middle Kingdom limestone stela (about 1874–1700 BC), probably from Abydos, which was dug up in a garden in Juniper Green, Edinburgh. Pleasingly, its inscription relates to a gardener, Renseneb, and his family.

The items retrieved from Melville House remain the only Egyptian finds that belonged to a more extensive collection. However, they probably represent only part of that original collection. As it stands, the objects within the group range from rarities to fakes. The unusual bronze figurine of the priest and the high-quality

ILLUS 9 Upper half of a faience shabti inscribed for a man named Hor-sa-Iset (front and back), Late Period (about 664–332 BC). NMS A.1985.211. H: 81mm, W: 37mm, D: 29mm. (© National Museums Scotland)

ILLUS 10 Faience amulet of Isis, Late or Ptolemaic Period (about 664–30 BC). NMS A.1985.211 A. H: 60mm, W: 28mm, D: 23mm. (© National Museums Scotland)

ILLUS 11 Fragment of a faience plaque depicting the Eye of Horus, Late or Ptolemaic Period (about 664–30 BC). NMS A.1985.211 B. H: 84mm, W: 97mm, D: 15mm. (© National Museums Scotland)

Illus 12 The other fragmentary Egyptian objects excavated at Melville House (L to R from top): faience pectoral (about 1295–1069 BC, NMS A.1985.211 C); two faience shabtis (about 1069–656 BC, NMS A.1985.211 E, F); faience amulet of a Son of Horus (about 664–332 BC, NMS A.1985.211 D); hexagonal bead (about 30 BC–AD 641, NMS A.1985.211 M); tubular faience beads (about 1069–30 BC, NMS A.1985.211 J, K, L); flattened barrel-shaped bead (about 30 BC–AD 641, NMS A.1985.211 N); and three modern scarabs of steatite and faience (mid-19th century AD, NMS A.1985.211 G, H, I) with an inset showing their bases. Dimensions in catalogue. (© National Museums Scotland)

12th Dynasty statue head sit somewhat oddly alongside the much commoner (and now-missing) bronze bull statuette. The faience objects, a figurine of Isis and Horus, a plaque depicting the Eye of Horus, beads, amulets and shabti figures, are also common. The scarabs are probably 19th-century fakes, given their nonsensical use of common hieroglyphic signs, likely formulated to appeal to the tourist market. Such a selection of objects, perhaps unsurprisingly, suggests a lack of discrimination and knowledge. If they were acquired in the mid-19th century, as seems likely, the understanding of Egyptian antiquities was still in its infancy, but demand for objects from travellers and collectors was such that the production of and trade in forgeries were increasingly common (Rhind 1862: 253–6).

Most of the object types represented in the collection could have come from the Theban tombs opposite the modern town of Luxor, the most popular site for tourist purchases. The Middle Kingdom statue head seems more likely

to have come from somewhere near the Middle Kingdom capital of Itjtawy, near Lisht, and the bronzes possibly from the Memphis region, which was the site of the Apis bull's worship. However, as Rhind noted, objects were sometimes transported to Luxor in the hope of finding a better market there (ibid). In the mid-19th century, a collection such as this would most likely have been acquired through purchases from consular agents based at Luxor, such as Mustapha Aga Ayat (Britain) and Todros Bolos (Germany), who used their diplomatic immunity to double as antiquities dealers (Hagen & Ryholt 2016: 32–5, 102, 105). The collection appears to focus on small, portable items, with a preference for aesthetic appeal rather than inscribed material. In particular, it seems to focus on object types that were particularly evocative of ancient Egypt and had already achieved an iconic status among collectors, such as shabtis and scarabs. All of this would be in line with an aristocratic, but non-specialist, collector.

No finds were reported in the wake of a fire at Melville House in January 2012 that destroyed an outbuilding believed to have once been used as a stable and gym hall (*Courier and Advertiser (Angus and Dundee)*), Saturday 14 January 2012: 11). However, I remain hopeful that more information, perhaps in the form of letters or diaries, might still resolve the questions raised by this curious story.

CATALOGUE OF EGYPTIAN OBJECTS FOUND AT MELVILLE HOUSE

NB: The chronology follows that of Spencer (2007: 284–7).

A.1952.197

Head of a statue of a man in hard red quartzose sandstone, broken at the neck

Probably from near Lisht, mid-12th Dynasty, reign of Amenemhat II or Senusret II (about 1922–1874 BC). Dimensions: H: 110mm, W: 90mm, D: 87mm.

Although Cyril Aldred originally attributed this statue to the reign of Senusret III, it is likely slightly earlier in date. The facial features are distinctive with its broad shape, wider than it is long, a short nose, and fleshy-lidded, almond-shaped eyes. They are extremely similar to the features of a sphinx inscribed for King Amenemhat II (Louvre A 23: Oppenheim et al 2015: 69, fig 54) and a colossal seated statue attributed to either King Amenemhat II or Senusret II, later reinscribed for Ramses II and Merneptah (Berlin 7264/MMA L.2011.42: Oppenheim et al 2015: 300–1, cat no. 221). The styles of the hair and beard are also somewhat unusual. The figure wears a tripartite wig with a central parting, a style more typically worn by women than men (for example, Copenhagen AEIN 1662 excavated at Abydos: Oppenheim et al 2015: 263–4, cat no. 199). The wavy locks of the wig are indicated by striations and ridges, similarly indicated on the small, square beard. There is no chin strap to indicate that this is a false beard, so it likely represents a natural goatee. The ears are large, low set, and detailed. It was probably originally part of a seated statue of a high official. The quality of the carving and its subtle modelling suggest it may have been sculpted in a royal workshop near Lisht.

Published in: Aldred (1955: plate 5); Aldred (1961: 251, plate 32); Bourriau (1988: 27–8, cat no. 17); Malek et al (2008: 432, no. 801-447-225).

A.1985.210

Leaded bronze figurine of a standing priest making an offering

Third Intermediate Period (about 1069–656 BC), possibly 25th Dynasty (about 747–656 BC). Dimensions: H: 104mm, W: 33mm, D: 35mm.

This standing figure of an Egyptian priest is shown striding forward with his left leg; on this foot is a tang that would have originally served to attach the figure to a base. The priest's head is shown as shaven for reasons of purity, with a prominent forehead. The figure was produced by casting and the top of the head is flat, likely the

remnant of a casting sprue which was cut off but not polished out. He wears a long kilt, reaching almost to his ankles, with a projecting triangular apron or sash. The modelling of the figure is relatively simple and undetailed; an incised line on the upper torso implies the breasts and there are two incised lines on either side of the kilt's apron/sash. The toes are differentiated. The right arm is broken at the wrist, and the left arm is broken at the elbow. The breaks appear ancient. The arms are slightly raised and bent at the elbow, a position that suggests he originally held something, perhaps a censer and a *hes*-vase for pouring libations (compare MMA 47.105.3, a leaded bronze statuette of a priest holding a censer and a vessel: Hill 2007: cat no. 28, 206, fig 30). The statuette was likely part of a composite arrangement with the priest shown offering to a deity. It likely dates to the Third Intermediate Period, when the donation of votive metal statuary as gifts to temples proliferated, including from non-royal individuals. Figures of the gods were most common, as well as kings and royal women, but there are also examples of non-royal men, particularly priests (Hill 2007: 51). The statuette's facial features are relatively large and broad compared to earlier examples that have a smaller face (Hill 2007: cat nos 30, 32–4), which may suggest a possible dating to the reign of the Kushite kings during the 25th Dynasty. XRF analysis conducted in 1984 by Jim Tate on seven points across the figurine gave an overall average composition of 80.2% copper, 14.1% lead and 5.5% tin, with traces of antimony and iron (Tate 1984). Only a few examples of leaded bronze alloys are known from before the Third Intermediate Period, but leaded bronze statuary appears with greater frequency and with increasingly significant amounts of lead in the first millennium BC onwards (Hill 2007: 191). Initially lead levels were still usually under 5%, but by the Late Period levels of over 20% were common, and examples of over 30% are reported (Ogden 2000: 155).

A.1985.211

Upper half of a shabti in blue-green faience, inscribed in hieroglyphs for a man named Hor-sa-Iset

Late Period (about 664–332 BC). Dimensions: H: 81mm, W: 37mm, D: 29mm.

Shabtis were intended to serve as substitutes in case the deceased were called by conscription to do physical labour in the afterlife, and they were inscribed with a magical spell to activate them. Originally just one shabti was placed in a burial, but the number grew over time. By the Third Intermediate Period, there could be 365 in a single burial, one for each day of the year, plus 36 overseer shabtis (Maitland 2017: 36, 51). This shabti figure is mummiform and wears a plain lappet wig and a long divine beard. The arms are crossed right over left on the chest and the hands protrude from a shroud to hold two hoes, and a basket slung over its shoulder. The left hand is usually shown holding a pick in this period, so the depiction of two hoes is somewhat unusual and reminiscent of some earlier New Kingdom examples. The hieroglyphic text is crudely incised in horizontal lines on the front. It is Chapter 6 from the Book of the Dead for an owner named *Ḥr-sȝ-ȝst* ('Horus, son of Isis', sometimes transcribed as Harsiese), introduced by the address *i wšb.ty ipn ir ip.tw*, 'O these shabtis, if one counts…'. A probable parallel is a shabti in National Museums Liverpool inscribed for *Ḥr-sȝ-ȝst* son of (*Tȝ)-di(t)-Ḥr* (Liverpool 56.22.671: Janes 2016: 465–6, cat no. 243, see reference for further examples). The figure is broken at the legs after the first three lines of the inscription and there is also damage to the top of the figure's head and back pillar. It is blackened with soot from the bonfires lit in the Melville House grounds to burn garden waste. The back pillar is uninscribed; a line delineates the separation between wig and back pillar.

A.1985.211 A

Upper part of an amulet of the goddess Isis nursing the infant god Horus in light blue-green faience

Late Period or Ptolemaic Period (about 664–30 BC). Dimensions: H: 60mm, W: 28mm, D: 23mm.

This amulet fragment depicts the goddess Isis wearing a broad collar and a striated lappet wig terminating in two horizontal bands. She wears a uraeus, or protective royal cobra on her brow, surmounted by a headdress in the form of the throne-hieroglyph that represented her name. Isis is shown holding her left breast with her right hand. She would have originally been seated on a throne with her infant son Horus on her lap (compare similar amulets, Berlin ÄM 4535: Priese 1991: 179, cat no. 107; BM EA66681: Andrews 1994: 22, fig 18b; Eton Myers ECM.1717–2010: Spier & Cole 2022: 42–3, fig 3.1). The back pillar is uninscribed. The head is somewhat blackened with soot from the Melville House bonfires and the colour of the faience headdress has become purplish from the heat (compare faience with similar discoloration due to exposure to fire in antiquity, NMS A.1956.1485: Friedman 1998: 100, 199, cat no. 59). Isis and Horus amulets were used to protect women and children, but also appear regularly in funerary contexts, particularly from the Third Intermediate Period onwards (Friedman 1998: 243).

A.1985.211 B

Fragment of a rectangular amuletic plaque of blue-green faience depicting the Eye of Horus

Late Period or Ptolemaic Period (about 664–30 BC). Dimensions: H: 84mm, W: 97mm, D: 15mm.

The Eye of Horus, or *wedjat*-eye, was one of the most popular motifs for amulets in ancient Egypt. It derives from a myth that the eye of the god Horus was injured by his usurping uncle Seth, and then restored (Andrews 1994: 43–4). This amulet was intended to protect and heal through apotropaic magic; *wedjat* means 'the healthy one' or 'the sound one'. It takes the form of a human eye with stylised falcon eye-markings, since Horus was frequently depicted in falcon form. This example is rectangular with the eye executed in raised relief surrounded by a raised border. The eye itself is detailed with an incised iris. The drop below the eye has vertical line detailing. The eyebrow has a central raised ridge with incised lines on either side in a right-facing V-shape. There are several Eye of Horus amulets (for example, BM EA29222: Andrews 1994: fig 46a) in which the drop and curl markings are shown as symbolically transformed into a falcon's wing and tail, evoking feathers through the use of incised V-shaped lines, similar to those used on the eyebrow here. The plaque is pierced in the top-right corner for attachment to the wrappings on a mummified individual. The size and shape of this plaque suggests that it may have served as an incision plaque, intended to heal the incision made in the torso by the embalmers to remove the internal organs. These are more normally found made of precious metals, for example, NMS A.1965.432, a plaque in chased silver (Maitland 2017: 59). The surface of the plaque is blackened by soot from the Melville House bonfires.

A.1985.211 C

Fragments of a pectoral in bright blue faience

Probably from Thebes (Luxor), New Kingdom, probably Ramesside (about 1295–1069 BC). Dimensions: H: 39mm, W: 30mm, D: 13mm.

These two adjoining fragments were found and reattached. They derive from the edge of the pectoral, which would have been shaped like a temple pylon or shrine with the top in the form of a cornice. The decoration was painted in black (probably manganese oxide) prior to firing and represents a block border that would have originally surrounded a funerary scene, probably involving protective deities. This style of decoration on bright blue faience suggests that it probably dates to the Ramesside period and

may come from the Theban necropolis (compare with 19th Dynasty faience stelae excavated at El-Assasif, Thebes, NMS A.1956.152 and A.1956.153: Friedman 1998: 156, 250, cat nos 166–7). The reverse of the pectoral would probably have been pierced with holes at the top and the bottom to attach it to wrappings on a mummified individual's chest. The most comparable provenanced example is MFA Boston 56.315 from the former Hilton Price collection, said to have been discovered in the Deir el-Bahari royal cache at Thebes in 1879, decorated with two *djed*-pillars flanked by *tyet*-knots, and the deceased kneeling before Anubis on the reverse (D'Auria et al 1988: 226, cat no. 180). Other similar, but unprovenanced, examples of Ramesside faience pectorals include BM EA7849, which depicts the deceased worshipping Osiris and, on the reverse, Anubis (Seipel 1989: 240, cat no. 400), and MMA 26.7.906, the faience pectoral of Mutnefret, which shows Isis and Nephthys adoring a scarab in a boat and, on the reverse, a boat with *djed*-pillars flanking a scarab (Hayes 1978: 422–3, fig 269).

A.1985.211 D

Fragment of an amulet in blue faience representing one of the Sons of Horus

Probably Late Period (about 664–332 BC). Dimensions: H: 22mm, W: 19mm, D: 5mm.

Only the legs and feet of the figure remain. The amulet is flat and plain, an abbreviated form representing a highly stylised profile silhouette (compare BM EA13719: Andrews 1994: 13, fig 7g; Petrie LDUCE-UC55206i-iv: UCL Culture Collections Online[16]). The feet are pierced with a hole for attachment to mummy-bandages or possibly a faience bead-net shroud. The four Sons of Horus were ancient Egyptian funerary deities who were believed to be responsible for protecting the organs of the deceased (generally the stomach, lungs, liver and intestines) after they were removed during the mummification process (Andrews 1994: 45–6). These gods were depicted as mummiform human figures, each with a different head: jackal-headed Duamutef, baboon-headed Hapi, human-headed Imsety and falcon-headed Qebehsenuef.

A.1985.211 E, F

Two upper-half fragments of faience shabtis

Probably Third Intermediate Period (about 1069–656 BC). Dimensions of A.1985.211 E: H: 35mm, W: 18mm, D: 18mm. Dimensions of A.1985.211 F: H: 33mm, W: 18mm, D: 9mm.

With the large increase in the number of shabtis included in Third Intermediate Period burials, the quality of many figures declined. Miniature mummiform shabtis, only a few centimetres high, were mass-produced from mud or faience in open moulds (Maitland 2017: 51). These shabtis wear lappet wigs and have their hands crossed on their chests but are otherwise crudely modelled, undetailed and uninscribed. They were made in open moulds from relatively poor-quality, grainy blue faience, as seen in these examples. Their reverse is flat and plain. Shabti E has become purple in colour from the heat of the Melville House bonfires (see entry for A.1985.211 A).

A.1985.211 G

Scarab, probably steatite (forgery)

Mid-19th century AD. Dimensions: H: 17mm, W: 11mm, D: 7mm.

The earliest scarabs were used as amulets, but a later development – inscribed bases – allowed them to be also used as seals (Wilkinson 2008: 16). The triangular features at the base of each wing case represent the beetle's humeral callosities, a more naturalistic feature typical of New Kingdom examples (Wilkinson 2008: 18). The base is incised with a nonsensical hieroglyphic inscription. At the top, a sun-disc with a *nefer*-sign written horizontally below, then three signs in a row (left to right): a *netjer*-sign, a falcon with extended wings, and vertical *nefer*-sign. The fact that the two *nefer*-signs are stylistically different rather than consistent further suggests that

they were used for their visual appeal rather than written by a scribe. Pierced longitudinally for suspension.

A.1985.211 H

Blue-green faience scarab (forgery)

Egyptian, mid-19th century AD. Dimensions: H: 17mm, W: 11mm, D: 7mm.

The back of the scarab is simplified with the wing-cases indicated using only two incised lines. The base is inscribed with two *ankh*-signs, the hieroglyph for 'life', facing in opposite directions, in an arrangement devised to appeal to modern aesthetic sensibilities. Pierced longitudinally for suspension.

A.1985.211 I

Scarab, probably steatite (forgery)

Mid-19th century AD. Dimensions: H: 14mm, W: 11mm, D: 6mm.

The back of this scarab is more detailed, but not overly naturalistic. The base is crudely incised with hieroglyphic signs that do not represent a coherent inscription. On the left-hand side are a sun-disc, *neb*-basket and scarab arranged in a vertical column; to the right of this is a *was*-sceptre and a *heka*-sceptre, symbols of divine power and royal authority respectively. There are visible tool marks that appear to still contain traces of metal. Pierced longitudinally for suspension.

A.1985.211 J, K, L

Three tubular blue-green faience beads

Possibly Third Intermediate Period to Ptolemaic Period (about 1069–30 BC). Dimensions of A.1985.211 J: L: 17mm, D: 3mm. Dimensions of A.1985.211 K: L: 19mm, W: 2mm. Dimensions of A.1985.211 L: L: 11mm, W: 5mm.

Tubular-shaped faience beads were commonly used in amuletic jewellery and bead-net garments across most of pharaonic history. As such, it is difficult to date these beads and ascertain their precise use. Blue and blue-green faience was typically used to imitate lapis lazuli and turquoise, and to evoke the protective, healing symbolism of the colour's association with growth and rebirth. Beadwork garments include dresses dating as early as the reign of Khufu (2551–2528 BC: MFA Boston 27.1548.1), as well as girdles or aprons (MMA 08.200.29: Oppenheim et al 2015: 239–40, cat no. 177), and jewellery, particularly broad collars (MMA 40.3.2: Oppenheim et al 2015: 137–8, cat no. 69A). Shrouds made of faience beadwork strung in a diamond-pattern net came into use from the 21st Dynasty onwards (for example, NMS A.1906.384: Manley & Dodson 2010: 114, cat no. 43; Maitland 2017: 58–9).

A.1985.211 M

A hexagonal green bead, possibly made of beryl

Possibly Roman or Late Antique period (30 BC–AD 641). Dimensions: L: 15mm, W: 10mm, D: 8mm.

The colour, texture and shape of this bead suggest that it might be green beryl. The surface of the bead is also abraded, possibly from use-wear, but perhaps more likely post-depositional. During the Roman and Late Antique periods, green beryl (including emerald) was mined in the Gebel Zabara region of Egypt's Eastern Desert (Mons Smaragdus in Roman sources). Beads were made using the naturally occurring hexagonal shape of the crystals, cleaved and drilled along the crystal's long axis (compare BM GR 1814,0704.1203: Harrell 2012: 2, 8, fig 2). Visual inspection of the bead by Rachel Walcott and Emily Brown, Earth Systems curators at NMS, suggested that it could be a portion of beryl crystal. XRF analysis of the bead by Bob Gooday, Earth Systems analyst at NMS, detected the elements Si and Al in significant amounts with trace Fe, Mn, Cr, Ti and Ca also present (Gooday 2023). The XRF setup cannot detect elements lighter than Al (including Be, Na, Mg), so this analysis cannot in itself confirm the mineral as

beryl, but it rules out other candidates, including many commonly used Egyptian stones, such as turquoise, olivine (peridot), malachite, garnet, amazonite, apatite, jasper and chrysoprase. Geochemical analyses of the beryls from eastern Egypt (Abdel Gawad et al 2022) give similar trace elements; however, quantitative comparison is not possible with our qualitative data. Visually, the bead is not unlike other beryls from the area (Khaleal et al 2019: fig 8), especially the dull grey-green crystals associated with phlogopite schists at Wadi Zabara. Thus, it is possible, but by no means certain, that this bead may be a beryl from eastern Egypt.

A.1985.211 N

A flattened barrel-shaped bead of translucent brown glass

Possibly Roman or Late Antique period (30 BC–AD 641). Dimensions: L: 18mm, W: 10mm, D: 6mm.

This bead was made using a method similar to the technique known today as 'lamp-work', in which a rod of glass was melted over a flame and wound around a rod (Nicholson & Henderson 2000: 202; Hodgkinson 2018: 98, 229). Its form is an imperfect, slightly flattened barrel-shape, which is reminiscent of name-beads (Andrews 1990: 196–7), though this may be coincidental. The colour suggests a later date, as brown glass became more commonly used in the Roman and Late Antique periods (Swift et al 2022: 85).

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