

Digging Diary 2023–24

Summaries of archaeological work undertaken in Egypt and Sudan since spring 2023. Sites are arranged geographically from north to south. Field directors who would like reports of their work to appear in *EA* are asked to email the editor at ea@ees.ac.uk.



Plinthine: The bathroom of Building BAT1201 at Plinthine, featuring the hip-bathtub (top right), (© MFTMP, B. Redon).

LOWER EGYPT

Kom El Nugus: In 2023, at Kom El Nugus, work has continued on the levels dating from the Third Intermediate Period (c. 1069–664 BCE) and the New Kingdom (c. 1550–1069 BCE). These levels feature a group of mudbrick buildings arranged on either side of a street built of cobblestones. So far, the oldest levels reached date back to the Ramesside Period (c. 1295–1069 BCE), and levels from the 18th Dynasty (c. 1550–1295 BCE) may begin to appear.

Plinthine: In the Ptolemaic village at Plinthine, the work on the large 3rd–2nd Century BCE building studied last year was extended, in order to uncover the whole plan. The living quarters are organised around a courtyard with a deep well leading to a complex underground water system. It also comprises five rooms, of which a nicely built bathroom is equipped with a hip-bathtub. A staircase leads to a second storey.

Taposiris: At Taposiris, work resumed on Sector 20, a district redeveloped in the 7th Century CE near the Roman bridge, with a late Byzantine/early Islamic building of potential public and commercial character. The building covers more than 980 m² and features a multitude of rooms, some of which contain the remains of monumental structures, like a central staircase and interior colonnade. A new sector was opened on the artificial levee of the port (Sector 23), revealing buildings following the destruction caused by the rise of Lake Mariout and intensive work to build a

highway. Several buildings, including a large portico-house and a building with 42 pillars, probably a warehouse for wine amphora, were excavated. Additionally, seven Roman mooring bollards were discovered as well as a ramp used to pull ships from the canal to dry land.

The spring 2023 campaign of the French mission at Kom El Nugus, Plinthine and Taposiris were led by Bérangère Redon and Joachim Le Bomin. [@TapoPlinthine](https://taposiris.hypotheses.org/) or <https://taposiris.hypotheses.org/>

OASES

Dime es-Seba and Soknopaiou Nesos (Faiyum): The excavation and restoration of autumn 2023 were carried out in the *temenos* of Soknopaios, led by Paola Davoli. Two mudbrick buildings of the Roman Period (c. 30 BCE–395 CE) have been unearthed. They are large structures, one (13.5 × 18 m) for preparing food for offerings, in particular bread, and a *deipneterion* (4.5 × 13 m). A banquet hall with a triclinium made of mudbrick benches (3.5 × 7.6 m) was in the two-floor building, preserved to 3 m in height. Materials found include many dates, tableware connected to drinks, wine amphorae, and terracotta statuettes associated with fertility: Baubo, Aphrodite, Harpocrates, and Bes.

Building restoration started in 2021 thanks to a three-year grant from the AEF-ARCE fund. Some sectors of the mudbrick *temenos* in danger of collapse were consolidated. Some are preserved to 15 m in height,

making an impressive landmark in the desert north of Qarun Lake. The Ptolemaic temple is also under consolidation. During these works, a large mudbrick wall was found below the foundation of the temple, perhaps part of a pre-Ptolemaic building. www.snproject.org

UPPER EGYPT

Tell el-Amarna: Barry Kemp and Anna Stevens direct the Amarna Project. Work at the Great Aten Temple was partly at the stone-built Long Temple and partly at the rear of the temple enclosure where the East Gateway was situated. An area at the former, comprising the remains of the Fifth Court and half of the Fourth Court, was cleaned and recorded. The rebuilding of the temple outlines in new limestone blocks was continued across half of the Fifth Court. Excavation inside the East Gateway revealed an ancient ground surface into which many pits had been cut. These had been used for the disposal of broken pottery domestic jars and the mud sealings from amphorae. The soil also contained incense.

At the North Desert Cemetery, the team completed the excavation of two shaft-and-chamber tombs and a sample of pit graves. Significant finds included an assemblage of gold and steatite jewellery and a probable wooden shabti. In the Amarna Visitor Centre, two outreach workshops were held for local communities, in collaboration



Tell el-Amarna: Workshop at the Amarna Visitor Centre.