



THE ANCIENT EGYPTIAN HERITAGE AND ARCHAEOLOGY FUND

Deir el-Ballas Report for Qena Inspectorate Office

The Ancient Egyptian Heritage and Archaeology Fund and American University in Cairo, under the direction of Peter Lacovara and Nicholas R. Brown, began work at the site of Deir el-Ballas on January 4, 2025 and worked until February 4, 2025. We continued our efforts to protect and restore the important Palace-City of Sekhenre Taa II and Ahmose, with the assistance of the Qena Inspectorate and the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities. We are working towards developing strategies for site protection, conservation, and management, in order to stabilize, preserve, and (minimally) restore the standing monuments. In addition, we are working on the completion of recording of the areas excavated by the original George A. Reisner Expedition as well as those areas threatened by the expansion of the modern village of Deir el-Gharbi and the development of the Western Desert Highway to the west.

Site Management and Maintenance

Nicholas Brown consulted with Abdelrahman Said Abelhanan from the Qena *tafteesh* to define the proper boundaries of the North Palace for the planned construction of protective barriers around it. We are working with officials from Qena to annex a section of the site which does not belong to the Antiquities Land. This area is northeast of the North Palace and includes Late Antique Period archaeological remains, as well as a *kom* that contains pharaonic pottery deposits on the surface as well as mud brick structures visible in some profile sections from illicit diggings. We hope to add this area to the site in order to preserve the archaeological remains that are still present for future study.

The Expedition continues its efforts to build a demarcation wall around the North Palace to protect the archaeological area from further urban expansion. We have worked with AB for Engineering Works in Qena to submit the Architecture Safety Report to the Qena Inspectorate to get official permissions from the Architectural Office in Qena Governat. Currently we are waiting on these permissions before we can proceed to build the site wall, which will take place during our next season. In addition to our site guard house at the South Palace, the Expedition plans to build a site guard house in the north near the North Palace and North Suburb.

The Expedition is pleased to report that the manufacturing of our site signs to install in the area are completed. Written in both Arabic and English, these signs give an overview of two major monuments at the site: the North Palace and the South Palace. We worked with our colleagues at the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities in Cairo to design and format the signs to the Ministry's guidelines. Due to ongoing excavation, documentation, and restoration efforts in the areas we would like to install the signs, we had to delay their installation until next year. They are currently finished being printed and are in storage in Cairo until the forthcoming season on site.

Archaeological Works

We were able to continue work on the survey, cleaning, documentation, and restoration for the North Palace with the assistance of mud brick conservation specialist Ahmed Mohamed Abdel-Gawad Refai and Late Antique Period archaeologist Gillian Pyke. This included cleaning, capping, and filling of some of the casemate foundations; this work will prevent trash dumping there and ultimately restore the original casemate foundations to their original height, to make a platform for tourist visitation. We are also rebuilding the original enclosure wall of the palace to act as a protective barrier for the structure and to help demarcate the antiquities area. This will join up with a modern protective wall which we have already begun building. The Romano-Coptic additions to the North Palace were investigated by Gillian Pyke to gain a better understating of the later occupation of the structure. Additionally, Gillian Pyke studied pottery sherds that were collected from the area for documentation and future publication.

In the ancient houses to the west of the North Palace, Hassan Elzawy and Ana Olivieri continued the excavation of Houses E, F, and G, including a well-preserved silo next to House E. Once fully cleared and mapped these structures will be partially restored to protect them from the expansion of the modern cemetery. During the January 2025 season, the team began the production of smaller, modern mud bricks to use in the restoration and conservation of House F for our next projected season on site.

In the North Wadi Settlement neighborhood, we have cleared the overlying debris in a wide area (ca. 1,925 square meters) and have found five more mud brick structures than previously noted by the Reisner Expedition in 1900 and the Lacovara excavations in the 1980s. Matei Tichindelean, Karim El-Eita, Sara Ahmed Aziz, Waleed Hawatky and Victoria Shakespeare worked cleaning and mapping the structures, while Bettina Bader and Claire Malleson processed the ceramic and botanical remains from the site.

Our team additionally conducted some cleaning and maintenance to the “South Palace,” where we successfully completed restoration efforts in 2023. This included minimal cleaning of the north and south corners of the Upper Terrace’s façade, as well as cleaning the mud plaster floor out in front on the Lower Terrace. The work was all documented by our site surveyor, Piet Collet, in preparation of our forthcoming preliminary report publication on the South Palace for December 2025.

Lastly, Piet Collet is also working to complete a new map of Deir el-Ballas, which will help in our joint efforts with the Qena Inspectorate to protect the archaeological remains in the area. The map will be published in our future reports on the site and illustrates our work within the area.

Magazine Transfer

On Monday, February 3, 2025, three objects were transferred to the Qift Magazine from Deir el-Ballas. These are Deir el-Ballas Expedition (DeB) Object Numbers (#) 187, 396, and 355. Please see the attached appendix for photographs, measurements, and detailed descriptions of each item.

Acknowledgments

We look forward to future collaboration with the Antiquities Inspectorate in Qena and the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities to find additional ways to protect and preserve this important site.

We would like to thank:

Minister of Tourism and Antiquities, Sherif Fathi,
Secretary-General of the Supreme Council of Antiquities, Mohamed Ismail Khaled,
Supervisor of the Permanent Committee of the Antiquities Department, Hani Abdullah el-Tayeb,
General Director for the Egyptian Committee, Mostafa Hussein Abdelrahman,
Head of the Egyptian Antiquities Sector, Mohammed Abdel el-Badiya,
General Director of Qena Antiquities, Sayed Gad el-Rab,
Supervisor of Conservation for Qena, Abdelrahman Kanawy Hussein Mabrook,
Head of Foreign Missions and Excavations of Qena, Amr Gad el-Karim,
and our Inspectors, Esmā Gaber Mourad, Mohammed Ahmed Hussein Ahmed,
and Mohammed Mohammed Shahat Shamroukh.

Figures:



Fig. 1 Restoration work on the North Palace and Enclosure Wall, to preserve the archaeological remains and act as a protective barrier to the site (Photograph Nicholas Brown)



Fig. 2 Work in the Houses North of the North Palace (Photograph by Nicholas R. Brown)



Fig. 3 Work in the North Wadi Settlement (Photograph by Nicholas R. Brown)



Fig. 4 The restored “South Palace” (Photograph by Nicholas R. Brown)

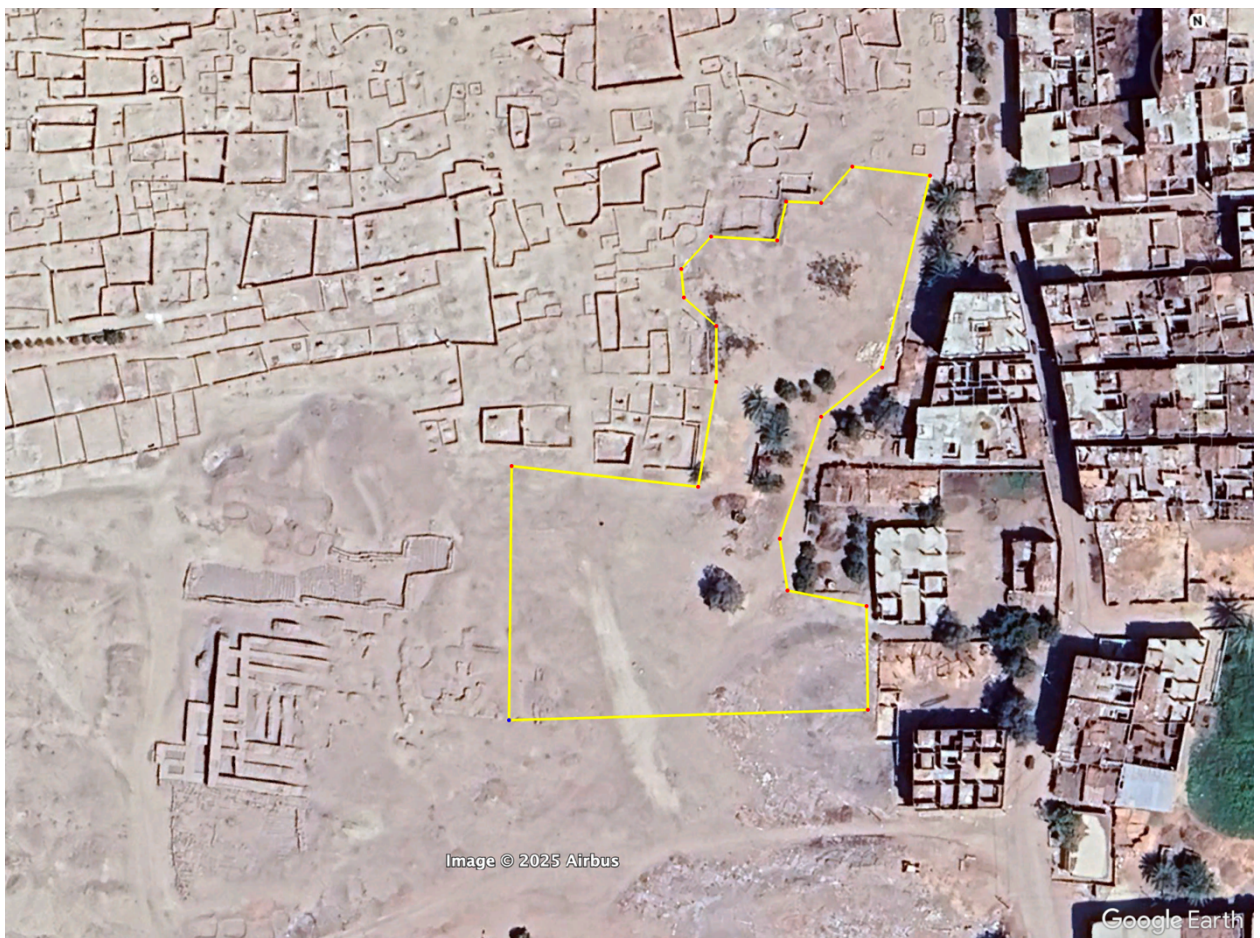


Fig. 5 Proposed extension of the archaeological land northeast of the North Palace (Photo courtesy of Google Earth)



Fig. 6 Rough Draft of a new site map by Piet Collet, which will illustrate the areas we have worked in at Deir el-Ballas since 2017.

The UCLA logo consists of the letters "UCLA" in a white, bold, sans-serif font, centered within a solid blue rectangular background.

NICHOLAS BROWN <nb4326@g.ucla.edu>

Updated: Completed Signs for American Mission at Deir el-Ballas

NICHOLAS BROWN <nb4326@g.ucla.edu>

Wed, Jan 22, 2025 at 11:07 AM

To: development@mota.gov.eg, bassem.ibrahim@mota.gov.eg

Cc: Peter Lacovara <lacovara.peter@gmail.com>

Dear Dr. Bassem-

It is my pleasure to write to you to notify you and your colleagues that our signs for Deir el-Ballas are complete. After working with your office to format the panels to your standards, we had the signs printed.

The areas we would like to place the signs are still being excavated and documented. This, along with the late production time of the printing company, has unfortunately caused us to delay their installation. The signs are ready in Cairo and we look forward to installing them at Deir el-Ballas during our 2026 season.

If you have any questions or concerns please do not hesitate to let me know.

Cheers,

Nicholas Brown

Co-Director, the Deir el-Ballas Expedition



NICHOLAS BROWN <nb4326@g.ucla.edu>

Updated: Completed Signs for American Mission at Deir el-Ballas

التطوير المؤسسي - المجلس الأعلى للآثار <development@mota.gov.eg>

Thu, Jan 23, 2025 at 9:58 AM

To: NICHOLAS BROWN <nb4326@g.ucla.edu>, باسم ابراهيم ابراهيم محمد <bassem.ibrahim@mota.gov.eg>

Cc: Peter Lacovara <lacovara.peter@gmail.com>

Dear Dr. Nicolas

I Hope my mail finds you well and sound.

Thank you for your message. It is always a pleasure to cooperate. We are looking forward to seeing the two panels installed in situ next season 2026.

regards.

General Administration of Services for Touristic, Archaeological Sites and Museums

Ministry of Tourism & Antiquities

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From: NICHOLAS BROWN <nb4326@g.ucla.edu>**Sent:** Wednesday, January 22, 2025 11:07:40 AM**To:** التطوير المؤسسي - المجلس الأعلى للآثار; باسم ابراهيم ابراهيم محمد**Cc:** Peter Lacovara**Subject:** Updated: Completed Signs for American Mission at Deir el-Ballas

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Deir el-Ballas Magazine Inventory – February 2025



Scarab Beetle Amulet, Black Steatite (DeB Object #396)

Dimensions: 10 x 13 x 5.5 millimeters (mm)

Dating: 17th-18th Dynasties

Description: Small amulet steatite scarab. Inscribed on the reverse side. Drilled through center to be worn as a piece of jewelry. Found in House F.

Condition: Complete.



Bronze Curler (DeB Object #187)

Dimensions: 63 x 17 x 6 millimeters (mm)

Dating: 17th to 18th Dynasties

Description: Bronze curler as part of toiletry set. Found in House F. Composed of three parts and still moves.

Condition: Complete, but very fragile.



Roman Amphora (DeB Object #355)

Dimensions: 55 x 25 x 25 centimeters (cm)

Dating: Roman Period

Description: Found in Reisner spoil heap on the south side of the North Palace while clearing debris. Roughly in the area of Room 302. Missing the diagnostic features from the top and bottom of the amphora.

Condition: Incomplete Vase (missing the top and bottom), but in sturdy condition.