

THE ANTINOUPOLIS ORACLE

The Newsletter of the Antinoupolis Foundation

Number 2 — Privately Circulated — Winter 2012-13

President's Note

We are very pleased to report that TAF's field work in October 2012 was successfully completed. As you will find in this newsletter, our "ground-truthing" of the magnetometry results in Test Area 2 (see "Oracle 1") produced very interesting results. This newsletter will also detail ongoing damage being inflicted on the site by the local villagers and the efforts of TAF and the Istituto Papirologo <<G. Vitelli>> to stop it. And finally you will read about our plans for work in February 2013 which is part of our ongoing effort to define the area and scope of the antiquities present and to impress upon the Egyptian Supreme Council of Antiquities / Ministry of State for Antiquities the strong need for increased site protection measures.

Since this issue of the "Oracle" is being put together in Luxor, Egypt, it will be primarily distributed by email with no print run. If this is your first issue of the "Oracle" and you would like to receive "Oracle 1" - our premier number - with an introduction to the site, the Foundation, and the Istituto Papirologico, please simply let us know. Please

feel free, also, to pass this newsletter along to anyone who may find it interesting, and if you are not already on our email distribution list and would like to receive future numbers, simply ask to be added to the list. Though donations by check (mailed to our Chicago address) are still welcome, we are very pleased to report that we are now set up to accept credit card donations as well! To make a donation by credit card please follow the instructions under the "Donate" tab on our website at <http://antinoupolis.org>. Further contact information is at the end of this newsletter.

As Egypt continues to move forward through momentous political changes, we stand with our Egyptian friends and colleagues who seek to chart their own political destiny. We are extremely grateful for the opportunity to help our Egyptians friends reveal and celebrate their own history, and we are hopeful that this fruitful collaboration will continue unabated through political events to come.

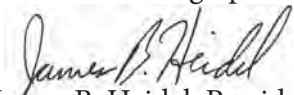

James B. Heidel, President
The Antinoupolis Foundation, Inc.



Fig. 1: Panoramic view of Antinoupolis. The ever-growing modern cemetery is at far left, the remains of the city of Antinoupolis are in the background with the green Nile plain beyond, the North Necropolis is at central right, and the new sondages in the new North Roman Necropolis are in the foreground at lower right.



October 2012 Season

In order to create a fuller picture of the subsurface architectural remains of the city and thus direct future archaeological excavation, the Foundation's central focus at the site will be geophysical survey for the next several years, but in October the Foundation assisted with the Istituto Papirologico's sondages (test pits) to verify the presence of a Roman-period cemetery north of the mission's long-term work site, the North Necropolis which is mainly fifth to seventh century CE in date. These new sondages, in the area newly dubbed the North Roman Necropolis, were made in the wadi directly north of the North Necropolis in magnetometry Test Area 2 of the geophysical survey completed in February 2012. The area in question is shown in figure 1 (previous page) with the new sondages in the new North Roman Necropolis in the foreground at lower right.

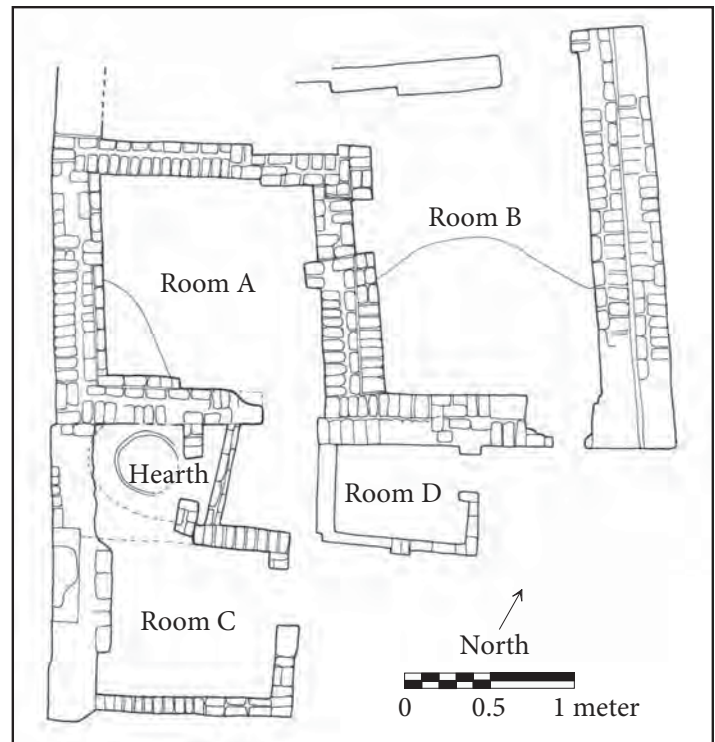
In this area two test squares were made as can be seen in the closer view in figure 2. With this work we sought to answer two important questions resulting from the excavations of Albert Gayet over one hundred years ago. The first centers around the location of the cemetery (or cemeteries) of the city's earliest inhabitants from the mid-second to the mid-third century CE, but more on that in a moment. The second question we sought to resolve is a claim made by Gayet in numerous of his published reports regarding the "Field of Offerings of Antinoupolis:" in short, a solid "pavement" of amphorae intentionally buried standing upright, containing every kind of foodstuff and wines, carpeting the wadi "northeast" of the city for a "length of a kilometer, varying in width between 200 and 300

meters." He maintained that these amphorae, all of the same form, were buried "at a depth of three meters." (See "Further Reading" near the end of this newsletter for reference to Gayet's reports.) If Gayet's description is accurate, it would be an important feature of the sacred landscape of Antinoupolis, the newly founded cult center of Osiris-Antinous, since a reasonable conclusion is that it mimics the Umm el Qa'ab (the field of millions of offering pots) at Abydos placed by pilgrims as offerings to Osiris near the location that was understood, since the Middle Kingdom, to be the location of Osiris's tomb. Our first attempt to locate this offering field is the test pit which can be seen to the left in figure 2, and the location was chosen based on Gayet's descriptions of the location of the field of amphorae. Figure 3 shows members of our valiant team who worked extremely hard to cut through the rocky wash in the wadi trough to Gayet's stated three-meter depth.



From top: Fig. 2, the test squares of October 2012 - amphora test square at left and North Roman Necropolis test square at right. Fig. 3, our team beginning the amphora test square. Fig. 4, the amphora test square completed to a depth of 3.2 m.

Figure 4 shows the balk from our completed pit, and in the top half the careful viewer can discern mud brick tumble and the occasional pot sherd, helpfully indicating post-antique, post-occupation wash. About half way down the viewer can also see an extremely thick couch (or layer) of clean, fine sand with no pebbles, sherds or mud brick. This might have been a hopeful sign, indicating clean sand fill atop the amphorae, but unfortunately as we carried the pit to a depth of 3.2 meters, we entered gravelly wadi wash in the final half meter, also clean of sherds or mud bricks. Since it is unlikely the Romans would have dumped rocks atop the amphorae (rather than burying them in clean sand or clay), the inescapable conclusion is that for our last meter or so we were cutting through virgin desert. In the end no buried amphorae were located, and we must now reassess Gayet's claim. It is hoped that the "Field of Offerings" Gayet describes - if it exists - might be located in a future season.



However, our second square met with much more complicated - and interesting - results. On-site examination last year revealed an approximately 100-year-old "modern" excavation dump in this area. This dump contains a large quantity of broken second-third century pottery, including a large number of amphorae and offering vessels, and its location correlates with Gayet's (rather inexact) description of the location of the city's Roman-period cemetery along whose edge he wrote he found the "Field of Offerings." When last February we located a magnetometry test area (Area 2) next to this dump (See "Oracle 1."), it indicated the presence of small rectangular sub-surface mud-brick structures. We knew there was a good chance this area may contain the Roman cemetery of Gayet's descrip-

tion, and our second sondage square was made in an attempt to find it.

We are very pleased to report that we have positively located a Roman (pre-Christian) cemetery dating at least as early as the mid-second to mid-third century CE. We expanded our initial five-meter square test area twice to get a good sample of the architecture and remains of this necropolis. Figure 5 shows the plan of our finished work with four rooms of varying sizes and a central raised terracotta hearth. This hearth was filled with about 40 cm of ash, and many pottery vessels, some broken, some whole, some burned, some not. Since nowhere in the excavation were we able to



From top: Fig. 5, plan of necropolis test square. Fig. 6, hearth. Fig. 7, work crew, necropolis test square.



locate indications that any part of the structures were re-inhabited by the living (after ceasing to be used as a cemetery), we can only conclude that this hearth (fig. 6) was used in the preparation of food associated with the celebration of the feast days of the dead where the living family ate a meal “with” their deceased relative, a ritual well-attested in texts from Greco-Roman Egypt.

The large wall west of the hearth seemed to be the edge of the structures our work revealed, but walls clearly continued out the north end of the pit and may have continued to the east as well. To the south - toward the city - was an open area with small sporadic indications of ash for fire, perhaps the entrance to the complex. As can be seen from the plan, the structure

had a complex building history marked particularly by the following: the addition of Room D (a tomb), the blocked door between Rooms A and B (at north), the lining of walls with new walls (for strengthening? - discoverable by finish lime plaster visible between unmated wythes (layers) of brick) as in the west and south walls of Room A and the west wall of Room B, and finally by the addition of Room C and the hearth (whose walls are unmated with Room A) as a later event. In addition the east wall of Room B was doubled in width at some point; perhaps cracking and settling necessitated shoring up this wall with additional thickness. Figure 7 shows our work team for this square (with our trained excavator Fathy Awad Reyad third from right) and a view from the east of the general work in progress. More views of the work in progress include figure 8 (from the south) and figure 9 which shows at left our director, Dr Rosario Pintaudi, discussing a point with our excavator Fathy.

In addition to mud-brick walls the architecture of the complex included lime plaster wall finishes, limestone thresholds, limestone blocks at key structural points, carved limestone pilaster capitals and bases at door jambs, and - likely - mud-brick vaulted

Figures 8 (above) & 9 (below): North Roman Necropolis test square work in progress.





superstructures as will be discussed below. Figure 10 shows a limestone pilaster capital and base, two of several such pieces recovered from Room B. This capital and base are both from a right-hand door jamb since at right, as seen in the photo, they return into a flat limestone block which undoubtedly keyed into the adjoining mud-brick wall. At left both capital and base return their full depth with profiles, indicating their left sides faced an opening. They probably formed a pilaster at the right hand jamb of the entrance door to Room B. Since no limestone pilaster shafts were found, we must conclude that the pilaster shafts were of plastered mud brick.

The contents of the individual rooms were varied. Though the most solidly surrounded by walls, the contents of Room A were slight. This suggests that objects or burials located in Room A were more thoroughly removed at the time the complex was disturbed



than in other rooms. Or, equally likely, since no sealing layer of collapsed mud brick vault was found in A as in B (see below), A may have been originally a small court open to the sky with very little contents. Or it may have been robbed in more recent times - after the widespread collapse of walls and superstructure - and had its collapse and contents more thoroughly removed as part of the robbery. Figure 11 shows a general view of the work from the west with Room A in the foreground.

The hearth, as mentioned, contained a good deal of ash, but also many pottery vessels, some whole. Many broken and burned vessels appear to have been dumped to the side of the hearth into the location of Room C (before it was constructed) which was later built and used as a preparation, offering, or storage area as numerous whole unburned vessels contained in it attest. Some of these vessels in Room C at the moment of discovery can be seen in figure 12. Room C does not seem to have been used as a tomb since



Top left: Fig. 10, limestone pilaster capital and base. Top right: Fig. 11, Room A in foreground. Above: Fig. 12, Room C showing intact ceramic vessels at the moment of discovery.

no fragments of cartonnage, stucco or painted plaster were found there.

Room D, though added later to the adjoining structures, was clearly a tomb with painted plaster walls and when excavated, produced not only glass and pottery vessels - as can be seen in situ in Figure 13 - but the most complete stucco mummy mask we were able to reassemble, figure 17. Oddly however, though we excavated it to virgin desert, no human remains were found in Room D.



All of the human remains recovered, as well as the majority of small finds, were found in the largest room of the complex: Room B. Figure 14 shows Room B excavated to the level at which we found collapsed mud brick vaulting. An intact section of collapsed vaulting can be seen near the center of the photo, and the blocked door to Room A is at top center. The intact section of running-bond bricks at the photo's center demonstrates that the room was vaulted because they are curved and because in their collapsed position they are lying east-west which would vault the room across the shorter of its dimensions (as is usual for vaulting). This shows that when Room B was constructed it was finished with a simple barrel vault bearing on its long east and west side walls. At top right at the edge of the sondage is a doorway into Room B from a corridor or from the exterior (unexcavated beyond). The collapsed vaulting is significant because it carries several implications. First, this room (and perhaps the others) featured vaulted superstructures. Second, it indicates that the disturbed finds

sealed beneath the collapsed vaulting were disturbed and pillaged at a very early date, i.e. when the tomb still had its vaulted superstructure intact, or mostly so. And it may also indicate, since no sections of collapsed vaulting were found over the other rooms, that the other rooms may have been pilfered twice, once before their superstructure

collapsed - concurrent with the pillage of Room B - and again after (removing the collapsed material in the process), which would explain their relative paucity of small finds. There is also the possibility that some of the other rooms, particularly Room A which is roughly square and had the fewest small finds of the four, may not have been tombs and may not have been roofed



From top: Fig. 13, Room D with in situ objects. Fig. 14, Room B excavated to level of collapsed vaulting. Figs. 15 & 16, human remains from Room B.



originally.

Sealed beneath the collapsed vaulting of Room B was also the only location where we found human remains in any quantity. Though all had been disarticulated and scattered - undoubtedly in the search for amulets or other small items - the remains indicate there were at least four to five individuals interred in Room B, some men and some women (Figures 15 and 16). Once our physical anthropologists have finished their study, we will know much more about these individuals, their ages and relationships to each other, and their causes of death. It is clear that all individuals were mummified and buried in the Roman period.

Important Note:

Throughout this newsletter all images of the site and of finds from the October 2012 archaeological work are shown in color. In the following section the black and white inset illustrations are comparanda from museums and publications shown to corroborate initial dating conclusions. These comparanda are clearly identified in the figure caption, and we stress that the conclusions contained herein are preliminary.



Figure 17, Reassembled plaster mask of female mummy from Room D. Dating of comparanda range from second century CE (far left excavated at Antinoupolis by A. Gayet, now in Dijon Musée des Beaux-Arts, no. 228 and published in Aubert, 1998, cat. 36) to 120-140 CE (right from Hermopolis Magna, now in the National Museum of Denmark, inv. no. 4993, photographed by W. Raymond Johnson, used by permission). Our mask still has ringlets in front of her ears, had forehead ringlets as indicated by black paint on her forehead, and has an earring which matches the comparandum at right.



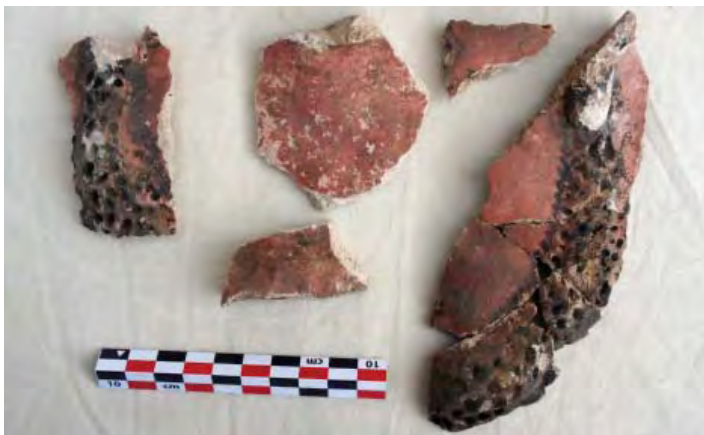


Above: Fig. 18, fragment of painted wall plaster from Room D showing ostrich plumes, solar disk and horned crown of Egyptian diety.

Below: Fig. 19, fragments of male mummy mask and pectoral from Room B. Black and white comparandum from 120-140 CE (from Hermopolis Magna, now in the National Museum of Denmark, inv. no. 4994, photographed by W. Raymond Johnson, used by permission).

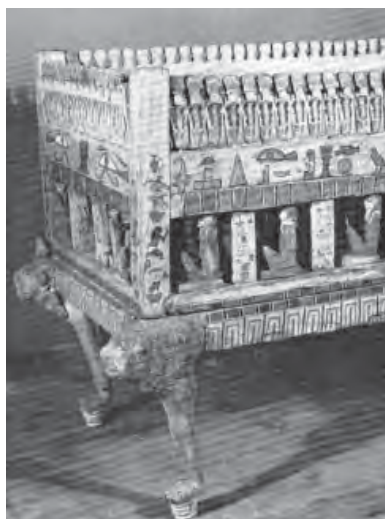
Above: Fig. 20, fragmentary female plaster mask from Room B, inset comparandum with similar incised hair-style found at Tuna el Gebel, now in Frankfurt, inv. no. M. 458, dated to second century CE, in Grimm, 1974, taf. 85.1.

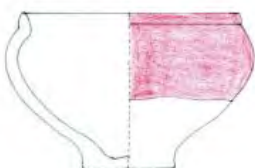
Below: Fig. 21, additional Room B fragments, including five of black hair with incised design (chignon fragment at lower right), all similar to comparandum inset, excavated by A. Gayet at Antinoupolis, now in Musée des Beaux-Arts, Calais, France, inv. no. 51.742, published by Aubert, 1998, cat. 8, dated to 100-150 CE.





Other small finds clockwise from top left: bronze earring with glass beads imitating pearls (inset 2nd c. CE gold and pearl earring, British Museum GRA 1872.6-4.602, published by Walker, 1997, cat. 195), fragments of a terra cotta incense burner in the form of a horned alter (black & white comparandum dated 3rd c. CE, excavated by A. Gayet at Antinoupolis, now in the Louvre, inv. E 12385, published by Aubert, 1998, cat. 98), a leather sandal, a fragment of plaster mummy casing with hieroglyphic inscription, and two furniture appliqué - a lion's head and a cobra's hood - both carved wood covered in painted gessoed linen. Black & white comparandum "Roman period" canopied funeral bed from Akmim (East Berlin inv. 12708, pub. Grimm, 1974, taf. 137.1.)





This page: pottery and glass from the October 2012 season. The glass vessels contain traces of their original contents, and the broken pot is shown as found with its contents of charcoal intact. Initial analysis indicates that all date to the second / third century CE. Special thanks to Maria Cristina Guidotti for the drawings!

Conclusions from the October 2012 Season

It is very exciting to have located a Roman-period cemetery adjacent to the city of Antinoupolis. Equally exciting is to begin to provide parallel material for the beautiful plaster funeral masks found in museums around the world, but which - due to their removal from Egypt before the advent of scientific archaeology - must be dated on stylistic grounds alone. The opportunity to obtain datable archaeological deposits containing comparanda for these masks is important. However, as diagnostic as the finds from the newly found cemetery are, they pose certain questions which will require further study, and further site work, to answer.

All of the excavated material this season was found in a disturbed context, so dating can be discussed only in the most general way. The ceramics seem uniformly to be second to third century which is a satisfactory bracketing date for all the material, except one of the masks, the female mask with the Flavian hairstyle, Fig. 17. In marble sculpture and other representations of the Roman era, we have not found any revival of this hairstyle after the Flavian period. Indeed all comparanda in museum collections are dated on stylistic grounds to the Flavian period, the mid-first century CE. It is reasonable to expect a stylistic lag between cultural expression of the capital and the provinces, but not the sixty to eighty years which separate the Flavians from the first burials of the citizens of Antinoupolis (founded in 130 CE).

We know that Antinoupolis was settled by colonists, but even colonists who arrived at Antinoupolis as mature adults in the 130's (and who perhaps had their funeral portraits made as soon as they reached adulthood decades before) cannot explain such a lengthy time lag. There seem at present to be three possible explanations: we may have a cemetery containing citizens from an unknown settlement which occupied the site of Antinoupolis and which was removed when Antinoupolis was created; we may have mummies and funeral equipment of long-dead relatives of colonists who were transported to and reinterred at Antinoupolis with the arrival of the first colonists; or local cultural trends may diverge from those of the capital and persist long after the trends in Rome have moved on. Only more site work can begin to address these questions.

Upcoming Work

The dates of our upcoming season of work have recently been finalized. The Foundation will be sponsoring three and a half weeks of geophysical survey beginning 10 February 2013 and ending on 7 March. The priority for this survey is, first and foremost, the north east area of Antinoupolis which has suffered so much recent damage at the hands of the local villagers. We will also seek to expand magnetometry from last season to the entire north wadi to attempt to determine the extent of the North Roman Necropolis. Concurrently the mission will continue to conduct sondages in this area to search for more firmly datable, and perhaps more intact, tombs, so that we may know whether this is the cemetery of Antinoupolis's first residents or if perhaps this cemetery served a settlement nearby that predates Antinoupolis altogether.

We look forward to sharing all our results with you in upcoming issues of this newsletter!



Also from the October 2012 season: a folded lead sheet with a bronze nail driven through it with the reverse of incised Greek characters barely visible on parts of its exterior. From Room B, this artifact may be a "curse tablet" on which a petitioner inscribed a request to be carried out by the dead. They then deposited it in the cemetery (in Room B). Though such petitions to the dead and to gods are well-attested in the Greco-Roman world, the bronze nail driven through its center gives this tablet a particularly visceral quality. If it is legible when the tablet is opened, we look forward to seeing what it is written on it!



An Important Word about Site Damage: We are disturbed to report that since the January 2011 Revolution in Egypt, damage to the site inflicted by the local villagers in the form of looting; encroaching cemetery expansion, agricultural reclamation, new houses, and sand/gravel mining; and wanton destruction of architectural elements has increased dramatically. Above left is a section of the east gate area of the city in January of 2012 showing Hadrianic architectural elements: an in situ granite base and three column shaft segments. Originally these were around 5-7 meters tall and formed part of the colonnade in magnetometry test Area 4, the massive east peristyle entryway to the city. The photo at the upper right is the same view taken in October of 2012 and shows that a large hole, roughly 3 meters deep, was dug beneath the in situ base which was then dumped into it afterward.

Below is a photo of a large area in the eastern city which has been deeply turned, pitted, and looted for artifacts since January of 2012. It is the dark area in the center of the photo covering about 2.5 acres or 1 hectare. The villagers report that a cache of papyri was found there and sold on the black market. We had planned to do magnetometry in this area this season, but the potholed surface now renders that technique impossible.





The images above show that the damage is not limited to looting of salable artifacts, nor is it limited to areas where the mission is not working. At left is shown an area of the North Cemetery (fifth to seventh century CE) where the mission has worked for many years, and at right is the same view in October of 2012. The mission has repaired and restored major damage in this area three times in recent years, and each time villagers destroy the same areas again. Below is a satellite photo of the entire site with the modern village of el Sheikh Abada and the Nile at the lower left and north at the top. We are working with the police and the Egyptian Ministry of State for Antiquities to try to get better protection for this extremely large site. Though there are over 600 acres (243 hectares) of antiquities, the MSA provides only one gaffir (guardian) and no armed guards. It is beyond our current budget to build a guard house or to pay for increased site protection, but these are things we would very much like to add to our program.



ONGOING DESTRUCTION



1790's



2006



2012

Top left: engraving of the Antinopolis triumphal arch (destroyed in the 1810's) as it appeared in the 1790's in the *Description de l'Egypte* showing almost no modern village with two columns circled which are still in situ. Top right: the same two columns in 2006 in front of a pink house marking the (until recently) eastern limit of the village and western limit of the antiquities zone. Above: the same two columns (circled) as they are engulfed by new illegal housing on top of the antiquities zone. The foreground houses are being built on top of the triumphal arch location.

Works referred to in this newsletter for further reading:

Aubert, Marie-France and Roberta Cortopassi. *Portraits de l'Egypte Romaine*. Editions de la Réunion des musées nationaux, Paris, 1998.

Gayet, Albert. *L'Exploration des Ruines d'Antinoë et la Découverte d'un Temple de Ramsès II enclos dans l'Enceinte de la Ville d'Hadrien*. Annales du Musée Guimet, vol. 26, part 3, Paris, 1897. (The "Field of Offerings" is discussed on pages 50-54.)

Gayet, Albert. *Antinoë et les Sépultures de Thaïs et Sérapion*. Paris, 1902. (The "Field of Offerings" is discussed intermittently on pages 8-16.)

Grimm, Günter. *Die Römischen Mumienmasken aus Ägypten*. Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Franz Steiner Verlag, Wiesbaden, Germany, 1974.

Parlasca, Klaus and Hellmut Seemann. *Augenblicke: Mumienporträts und ägyptische Grabkunst aus römischer Zeit*. Munich, Germany, 1999.

Walker, Susan and Morris Bierbrier. *Ancient Faces Mummy Portraits from Roman Egypt*. British Museum Press, London, 1997.



And finally from the October 2012 season: left, fragments of cartonnage from Room B and right, a faience amulet of Apollo with harp - drilled on its back for hanging on a necklace - also from Room B.

Contacting the Antinoupolis Foundation

We would love to hear from you. Our projects are conducted in coordination with the Istituto Papirologico of the University of Florence, Italy and with the kind permission of the Egyptian Ministry of State for Antiquities Affairs for one month each January / February with a shorter follow-up season in October / November of each year. But you can always reach us by email or regular mail as shown below. And please let us know if you would like to receive future newsletters by email or regular mail.

**Find us on the internet –
<http://antinoupolis.org/>**

**Or by email –
info@antinoupolis.org**

**Or by mail –
The Antinoupolis Foundation, Inc.
4522 S. McDowell Ave.
Chicago, IL 60609**

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The Antinoupolis Foundation: seeking to create a complete archaeological picture of the ancient city from its founding by Hadrian as the cult center for Osir-Antinous to its abandonment in the medieval period.*

