

# THE ANTINOUPOLIS ORACLE

**The Newsletter of the Antinoupolis Foundation**

*Number 4 — Privately Circulated — Summer 2014*

## ***President's Note***

The field work at Antinoupolis is directed by Dr. Rosario Pintaudi on behalf of the Istituto Papirologico "G. Vitelli" of the University of Florence, Italy, with additional funding for targeted projects by the Antinoupolis Foundation, Inc. We are very grateful for our fruitful collaboration of many years which continues to yield such varied and useful information about one of Hadrian's most famous city foundations.

As you will read in these pages, in the past year in spite of considerable obstacles, the archaeological mission at Antinoupolis met with success. You will also read about our plans for the coming season. We are optimistic that as the political situation in Egypt continues to normalize, we will be able to work for longer periods at the site in the coming year. I am also extremely pleased to



*Above: Fig. 1, Hamada Kelawy (L) and Fathy Awad work out wall sequences in the North Roman Necropolis excavation. Below: Fig. 2, the new guard house.*



inform you that at this writing the mission's next publication *Antinoupolis Scavi e Materiali II* is at the printers, and we will have copies in hand in a few months. This multi-authored work will feature chapters by many different specialists working on different aspects of the site, and it is the first volume to include work funded by the Antinoupolis Foundation: a chapter on the results of geophysical test season of 2012.

We would like to hear from you. Please be in touch with us to make a donation, to receive future or past copies of the *Oracle*, or to leave suggestions or comments. You will find our contact information at the end of this newsletter.

*James B. Heidel*

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

### November 2013 Site Visit

We were not given permission to work for our fall season in October/November 2013 by the government of Egypt due to security concerns. After negotiation, Dr. Pintaudi and Fathy Awad were

allowed to be on the site for ten days in November to check that the dig house had not been breached or damaged, to review continued looting and destruction of the site, and to initiate the construction of a small guard-house (Fig. 2). In the last year, the widespread looting and damage of large areas around many parts of the



From top: Fig. 3, the team at work. Fig. 4, Hamada (on ladder) photographing a feature before it is removed.



site has decreased in scope to a smaller, but steady, effort of pitting and bulldozing. We have pressed the government for increased guards and guardhouses for years, and ultimately Dr. Pintaudi dedicated a part of the mission's budget from the University of Florence to build the site's first guardhouse. His and Fathy's time on the site in November oversaw the completion of the foundation and most of the walls. (The photo shows the structure as finally finished in February.) The location chosen was atop the spoil heap from the mission's historic excavations in the North Cemetery, a conspicuous location higher than the surrounding archaeological area, but not on top of any stratified archaeological remains. Part of the agreement struck with the Egyptian government was that if we provided the guardhouse, they would provide the guards. In February we did, in fact, encounter new guards on the site who introduced themselves to us, and after a good deal of negotiation, we were able to convince them to patrol the site and to occupy the guard house, even at night. There seemed to be no local oversight to compel them to do so, but we hear they are continuing to guard the site in our absence through the summer.





The guards' (and our) presence in February decreased, but did not stop, the looting. Looting continued on the site every day during our February season of work. Each time we approached the children with sieves, shovels, and hoes digging into the mounds of the archaeological remains they (and the adults present directing their work) would scatter. With a telephoto lens we managed to get a few decent photos of one of the adults directing the work, but even after providing his name and photo to the authorities nothing was done. The site guards (who are not armed) have the same effect on the looters that we do: they are scattered temporarily as the guards pass, and they regroup and continue working shortly after. There is a section at the end of this newsletter with additional discussion of looting, vandalism, and damage at the site.

We were surprised and grateful that we got to do any work at all at the site last winter. Indeed, as the start date for our field season passed in January without any permission granted for our work, I imagined that (except for constructing the guardhouse), an entire year of site work might be lost. Most everyone who works



*Note: all figures in newsletter noted L to R and top to bottom. Fig. 5, Fathy is excited to excavate in situ pottery. Fig. 6, Hamada and Fathy triangulate measurements for drawing the plan. Fig. 7, general view of ongoing work.*





on archaeological digs is a professor or a student with responsibilities at their universities, a technician with closely booked obligations on a series of projects, etc. This means it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to simply extend the finish date of the allotted time of a field season, but this fact has no bearing on the Egyptian authorities' decision-making process. Thus we received permission to work almost four weeks after our applied-for start date, and little more than a few weeks before its scheduled end. This meant that many components of the mission's work - geophysical survey, topographical mapping, ceramics and small finds analysis - did not happen at all in this limited two-week window. In fact, other than Dr. Pintaudi, who purchased a plane ticket and flew to Egypt

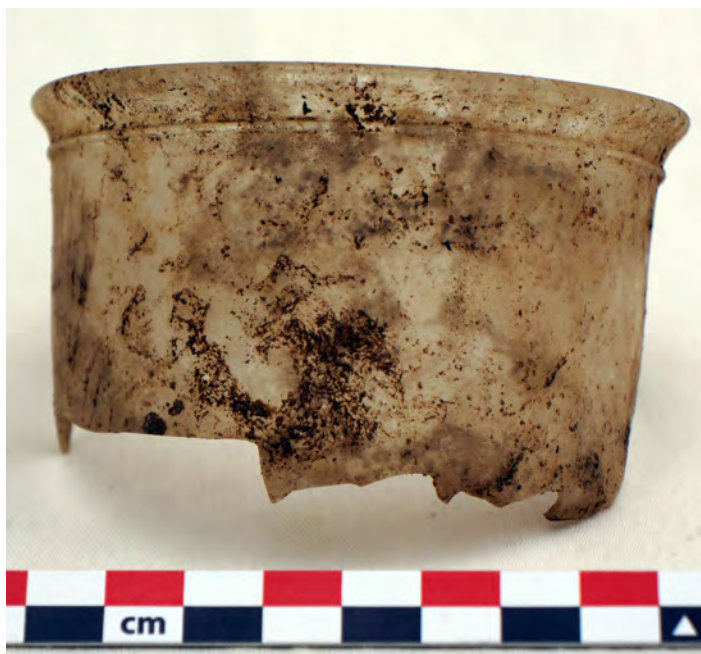


within three days of our permission being granted, the only team members with us this year were those already in Egypt at the time. This also meant there was a scramble to figure out what it was possible to accomplish in the approximately two weeks left to us. On the whole, however, those who were able to come were able to organize and execute a productive, if shortened, season.

The focus of our work was to complete our sample of the North Roman Necropolis, and it yielded interesting results. Last year we explored a discrete area of intact plinth tombs, and we broadened a sample square over a large multi-room family tomb complex to find the limits of one building. We did in fact

*Figs. 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12, a sample of the amphorae and pottery from the February 2014 excavation.*





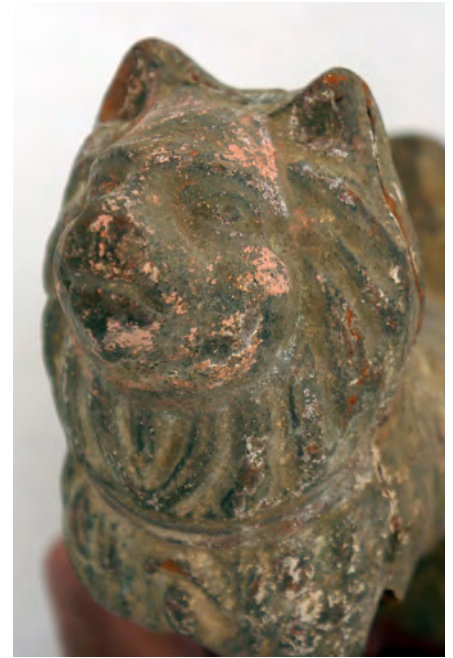
completely finish the one building last year, but it was clear that part of our excavated area included a second building. And it was this second building on the east edge of our work that we finished excavating this season. With the conclusion of the excavation of this second building we have finished our three-year sample of the North Roman Necropolis and look forward to putting together a monograph on the material to be published in the Istituto Papirologico "G. Vitelli" publication series.

February's work also completes our excavation sample in another way. The plinth tombs of last



Figs. 13 and 14, glass vessels. Fig. 15, glass beads. Fig. 16, lamp showing a pair of Osiris-Canopus figures. Fig. 17, lamps.





year belonged to individuals of more limited economic means than the multi-chambered family tomb complex of last year. And last year's family tomb belonged to individuals of more limited economic means than the family tomb complex we finished excavating in February. Though nothing we have found belonged to the poorest residents of Antinoupolis (who probably had simple burials in clean sand or perhaps no burial at all) and nothing we have found indicated (with inscriptions or objects) that in February we had found tombs of the very top elite of Antinoupolis, we nonetheless have - between the plinth tombs and the two separate family compounds - three distinct Antinoite income levels.

The variety and quality of items found in this most recent season are greater than the previous year. In addition to many amphorae (Fig. 8), the ceramics included a wide variety of smaller vessels, many whole (Figs. 9-12) and *in situ* (Fig. 5), left on the beaten earth floor after their last use. Some even contained seeds. The types of glass vessels were also more varied this year, including not only blown examples (including quite a large beaker mostly intact, Fig. 13), but some vessels which were blown into molds as well. There was also a



Figs. 18-22, the "Sothic dog." Fig. 19 shows a detail of the pendant, perhaps a bulla hanging from its neck.





selection of glass beads (Fig. 15), some containing gold and some still on their bronze wire. We found a wide selection of terracotta lamps, both single-wick (Fig. 17) and fragments of multi-light lamps. One of the single-light, molded examples portrays two tiny figures of Osiris-Canopus in what seems to be a shrine (Fig. 16). As before there were many fragments of small painted terracotta horned altars which must have been used to burn incense. But unlike previous years, we found fragments of a wide variety of terracotta figurines. There is a terracotta figure of a type called a "Sothic dog" with traces of pink paint on its very human-like face and a bulla hanging

*Figs. 23 & 24, fertility figurines. Fig. 25, Harpocrates riding a sphinx.*





around its neck (Figs. 18-22). Its face compares very closely with the much larger terracotta face we found in February 2013 (see “Oracle” 3, Fig. 37). There were also found many fragments of fertility figurines; after much piecing together of fragments, the one which is most complete is shown in Fig. 23. But the terracotta figure that required the most effort and patience in its reassembly was also the one which provided the most interesting result. Assembled from more than a dozen pieces found in different levels all over the excavation, this group of Harpocrates riding a sphinx is unusual (Figs. 24-31). The figures are presented foreshortened, much flatter in reality than they appear frontally, with the sphinx’s paws and head turned toward the viewer. The sphinx is wearing a *nemes* headdress with striped lappets and a *uraeus*, and his painted eyes are all that are preserved of his face. Harpocrates is seated forward-facing on the sphinx with his large pink-painted leg and haunch projecting toward the viewer at the center of the piece. His torso is twisted to allow his head to turn around backwards towards the sphinx’s rump, and he holds the index finger of his right hand to his mouth in his characteristic gesture. His sidelock, painted black, emerges from beneath his headgear. There were also fragments of terracotta from plaques or objects that are not so easily deciphered and will require additional study to figure out.



Figs. 26-31, details of terracotta figurine portraying Harpocrates riding a sphinx.





There were many fragments of nearly pulverized painted gypsum plaster and painted mud plaster in the excavation debris, almost none of which were large enough or sturdy enough to bring in from the field. But they make it clear that many surfaces in the tomb were painted with very high quality decorations including figures of humans and gods (Fig. 32), and at



Fig. 32, fragment of painted plaster. Fig. 33, fragments of painted gypsum tondo. Fig. 34, faience Bes figurines.







Fig. 35, fragments of a large faience ewer. Fig. 36, fragments of three wdjat eye (eye of Horus) plaques.







least one panther. There were also an unusual number of fragments of objects made in unfired mud including pieces of very large bowls with lug handles and a hollowed oval object which might be a mold of some sort. In addition to many small fragments of textiles and of painted gypsum mummy masks (as in other years), another luxury item we had not encountered before was fragments of a gypsum tondo carved or molded in low relief with blue painted drapery. The painted and outlined body parts indicate it depicted a heroic nude male figure in the classical style (Fig. 33). Among the many fragments of faience this year (many more than previous years) we found a large blue and green ewer of a known type with both applied and incised foliate motifs (Fig. 35) and copious fragments of faience bowls and small vessels. A number of votive faience Bes figurines were also found (Fig. 34), one in a fairly complete state. More unusual were the parts of three faience plaques that we recovered, all depicting *wdjat* eyes (eyes of Horus, Fig. 36). There was even a nib of blue pigment probably left from the decoration of the tomb.

The metals found this year were also prolific, including an iron stylus (for writing on wax tablets, Fig. 37 at center), numerous iron knives (Fig. 37), an iron needle, iron nails and small fittings in bronze, an iron ring, the base of an iron cup, a bronze cymbal (Fig. 38), a bronze spoon, a lead cup, and a lead ingot (Fig. 39). Seashells were also particularly numerous (Fig. 41), but quite rare were the pinecone scales (Fig. 42).

Fig. 37, iron stylus (at center) and two iron knives. Fig. 38, bronze cymbal. Fig. 39, lead ingot.







These must have been imported from somewhere outside Egypt. Also rare and imported were two complete plus two partial slender ivory implements that might be styluses, hair pins or cosmetic spoons (Fig. 40). In addition there were many fragments of gessoed and painted wood boxes. One fragment of which features painted feather patterns in a manner found on coffins. There were also a half dozen leather sandal fragments and many patches of woven plant fiber matting. We



Fig. 40, ivory tools. Fig. 41, seashells and coral. Fig. 42, pinecone scales. Fig. 43, limestone pilaster capital.





also found a limited number of “alabaster” (Egyptian calcite) fragments, including part of a small chalice and four small turned cylinders. These seem (though there are no joins) to belong with a beveled square of “alabaster” found nearby and may have gone together to form a votive object. As is typical with these tombs the stone items were sparse, but include a composite pilaster capital (for a door surround, Fig. 43) whose detail compares quite closely with one found the year before (“Oracle” 2, Fig. 10). Unprecedented was a limestone slab that formed a bench support and features a crudely carved animal leg such as is found on benches in bath buildings at Pompeii. In addition, we found a torso of a tiny enigmatic stone figurine and a single stone loom weight. There was also a beautifully simple and well used grinding palette in a dark stone (probably slate, Figs. 44 & 45) and a fairly large and well preserved horned altar in limestone (Figs 46 & 47). Altogether, it is a collection of grave goods of very high quality - higher than that of their neighbors to the west or of the plinth tomb group we explored to the north. Indeed, these items must have given an even greater impression of wealth and status at the moment of deposition if one considers the (anciently) disturbed nature of the find, and that those rifling the tomb must have taken the best bits for themselves.



Figs. 44 & 45, grinding palette (Note scratches from use.)  
Fig. 46, limestone horned altar. Fig. 47, altar at the moment of discovery.



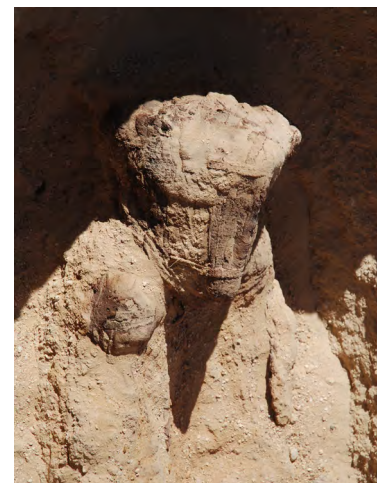




### ***Additional Work***

Though our season was shortened, it afforded the opportunity for work in other parts of the site as well. Our architect Peter Grossmann continued his investigations of the large church near the city's east gate, a monument the mission first uncovered in the 1960's. In his ongoing effort to reveal and draw the complete plan of the basilica, Peter uncovered the north side of the peristyle.

In another focus of work the mission's director, Dr Rosario Pintaudi, oversaw the clearance of a small ancient pottery dump in the area of the Collutus church where the mission has worked for many years. Unfortunately this February we discovered that locals had potholed and looted one of the site's small ancient dumps to the west of the church itself. Rather than allowing further damage to occur after we left, Rosario decided to clear the shallow (about 50 cm deep) dump to collect any remaining ostraca or papyrus pieces the locals had left behind. This is near an area where Albert Gayet (a 19th century excavator) removed a large number of mummies, and the dump clearance revealed about a dozen more. Their appearance initially suggests a date range of the fifth to seventh century CE, and they await study by our physical anthropologists for a more precise analysis.



*Figs. 48, 49 and 50, details of mummies recovered from west Collutus dump area.*





### ***Recent Site Damage***

As mentioned above, the scope of the looting has lessened in the last year, but the frequency has not. And the distinction must be made between the looting perpetrated by individuals (often poor) looking for trinkets to sell and the vandals who wantonly destroy archaeological material for no apparent purpose. A new example of the former is the area of the modern (around 100 years old) excavator's dump - maybe belonging to Albert Gayet (see "Oracle" 2, p.



*Fig. 51, new looting pits near North (Christian) Necropolis in background.*

*Fig. 52, recently smashed talatat. Fig. 53, talatat removed from medieval church foundation by vandals, decoration bashed, and scattered.*





3) - which helped us to find the current North Roman Necropolis where we have been working, but which has become since last year a pitted moonscape of looters' pits (Fig. 51). The villagers must have noticed our interest in the location, and their pits go right through to undisturbed desert, and farther. An example of the latter - pure vandalism - is the smashed talatat in Fig. 52 showing (now mutilated) cartouches of the Aten. Within the last year a few dozen talatat were ripped from the church foundations where they lay in a secondary use context (The early medieval



church builders quarried them from the Ramses II temple.) and were scattered and smashed around the vicinity of the church in the north part of the city (Fig. 53). (This is a church where the mission is not currently working, but where we had worked previously some years ago.) The portability of talatat is both their blessing and their curse. We have removed hundreds from their contexts and stored them in the dig house magazine and at the government's magazine at Ashmunein across the river. But thousands more remain in foundations of the churches around



the city and in the foundations of the Ramses II temple. This year there are fewer since some have now been reduced to limestone chips. There is indiscriminate pitting and looting ongoing in many parts of the city. As a further example I include new and quite deep holes dug in a long-exposed tomb structure just beyond the north wall of the city (Fig. 54). Since one of the stone vaulted chambers in the photo still contains a stone sarcophagus sitting on what must be the floor level, there was little to be gained for the looters by digging the approximately two-meter deep holes



*Fig. 54, looted tomb structure. Fig. 55, illegal housing near Ramses II temple. Fig. 56, additional bulldozed section of hippodrome. Fig. 57, new bulldozing in hippodrome reveals hippodrome seating casemate platform.*

both in the floor under the vaults and in front of the structure (visible in the photo). Their frustration at not finding anything may have been what led them to smash many stone courses off the leading edges of the vaults as the bright newly exposed edges and *voussoirs* littering the ground testify.

We also face encroachment from illegally built housing. The housing compound under construction in Fig. 55 is atop ancient architecture which (at the moment of the photo) seemed to have intact stratigraphic layers, in the middle of a scatter of monumental red granite columns and limestone papyrus lobed column capitals and within sight of the Ramses II temple just out of the photo frame on the





*Fig. 58, view from south of newly bulldozed ancient cemetery in foreground. In background: new guard house at right, irregular mounds of part of remaining ancient cemetery at middle, and new tomb structures, less than two years old, at left. Bulldozed area is prepped for new tombs.*

left. Indeed, this is the area which two hundred years ago Napoleon's surveyors marked as probably a tomb or a temple. If the Egyptian government does not stop this illegal building, we might never know what urban monument was located here as a part of Hadrian's city. But the largest threat to the ancient city in terms of archaeological material being destroyed is the modern cemetery. Each year vast new swathes of ancient cemetery, parts of the ancient city wall, and in the last two years even half of the ancient hippodrome, have been bulldozed flat, raked with a front loader and marked out with white blocks for new cemetery plots. Fig. 58 shows this year's newly bulldozed area - a huge zone on top of a part of the ancient cemetery which Gayet partly excavated. Two years ago fully half the hippodrome was leveled, and in spite of our protests to the Ministry of Antiquities, no protections were put in place. This year a further, smaller area of it was bulldozed flat (Fig. 56), and the construction of walls for tomb plots were completed (shown in photo) which were the year before only marked out with pebbles. We try to learn what we can from these tragic events, and Fig. 57 shows two rubble concrete walls (marked with arrows) emerging from the newly bulldozed area. These confirm that the supporting foundations for the seating of the hippodrome were built as a casemate platform where the rough stone walls were filled in with clay, sand and gravel/rubble from the adjacent wadi.

We call, once again, upon the Ministry of Antiquities and Heritage and its new minister, Dr. Mahmoud el-Damaty, to increase site protection and safeguards and to stop the ongoing destruction and looting of archaeological material.

### ***The Coming Season***

The geophysical survey, led by our able geophysical engineer, Kris Strutt from the University of Southampton, England will resume this winter. We hope to have finished the areas where magnetometry is an applicable technique either this winter or perhaps the following year. In addition we are planning with Kris a series of investigations using different techniques to try to gain a better understanding of where the city's major stone monuments are located around this enormous site and also where the line of the city's Nile-front stone quay runs beneath the modern village.

Concurrent with the geophysical pivot from blanket magnetometry to locating individual monuments, our archaeological investigations will turn from our three seasons' work locating and sampling the North Roman Cemetery to investigating some of the city's major stone monuments. We are considering a number of sites in the city's monumental core for the beginning of this work, and we will begin this autumn (Fig. 59). We are also looking forward to sharing with you the results of these exciting endeavors. As we continue our efforts to explore and document the urban features of Antinopolis before they are destroyed and to bring official attention to bear on the difficult problem of site destruction, won't you please make a contribution to help us succeed? A donation form is on the next page. Thank you for your help!





Fig. 59, one area where we are considering working this autumn.



## Make a Donation to Fund Work at the Site

The Antinoupolis Foundation is funded by private and corporate donations, and we rely on your tax-deductible contributions to support our continued efforts to preserve the ancient city of Antinoupolis through excavation, documentation and conservation.

To make a donation with any major credit card, simply click the "Donate" button on our website located at <http://antinoupolis.org>. No PayPal account is required. After you enter the donation amount, click "Continue" next to "Don't have a PayPal account?" Or you may complete and mail the form below to make a donation with a credit card or a check. Provide your email address to continue to receive this newsletter. Thank you!



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