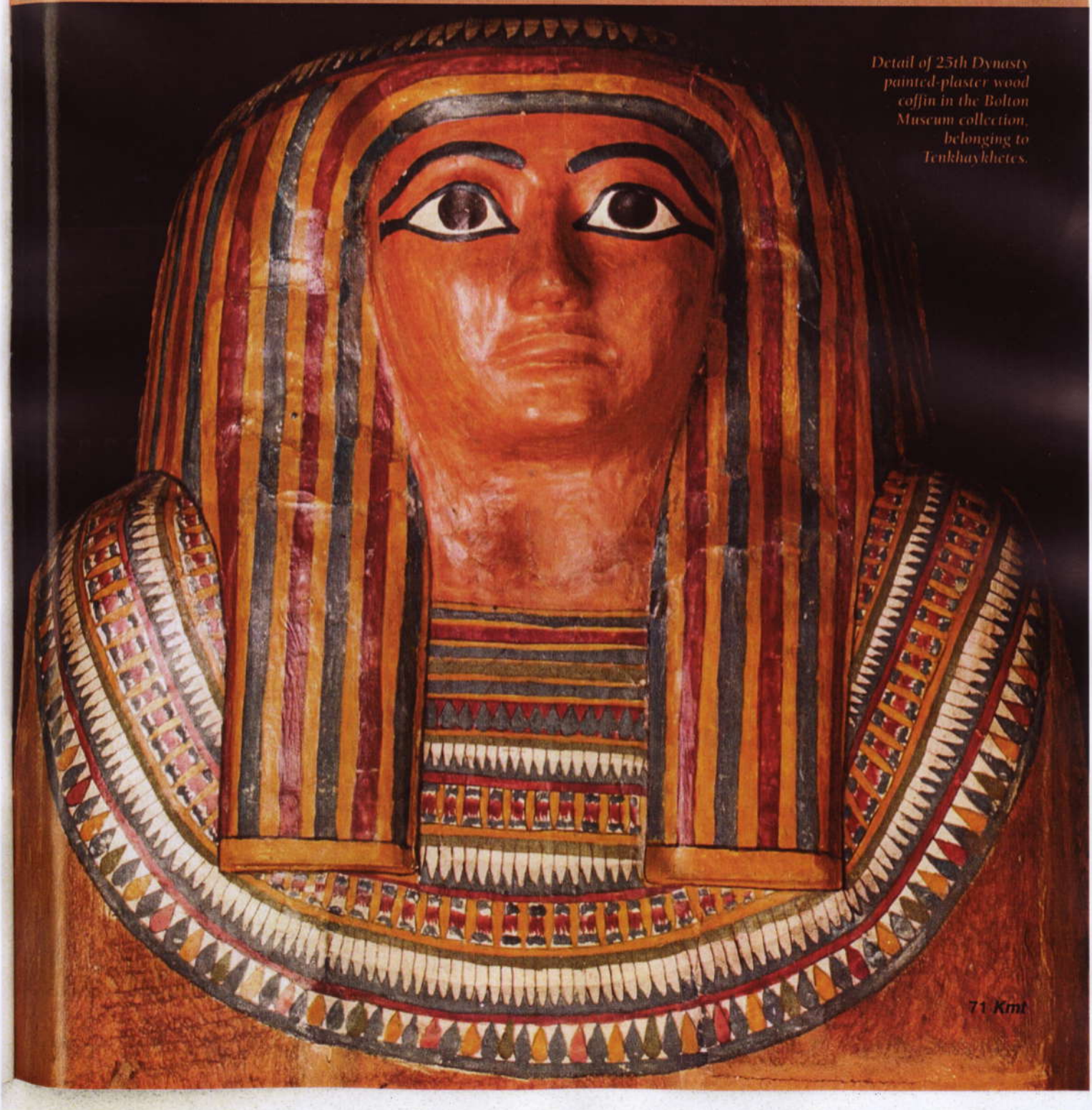
EGYPT IN BOLTON, UK

by Lucy Gordan-Rastelli

BOLTON IS ONE OF THE MANY ONCE-INDEPENDENT TOWNS known today as boroughs, which make up Greater Manchester in the northwestern part of England. Ten miles northwest of Manchester's city center, Bolton is easily reached by both highways and frequent trains from Manchester's Piccadilly station.

Like Manchester, Bolton was an important mill town. Textiles were produced there since the Fif-



Detail of 25th Dynasty painted-plaster wood coffin in the Bolton Museum collection, belonging to Tenkhaykhetes.

Bolton's Fifth Dynasty pink-granite column fragment dating to King Sahure, but inscribed with sunk-relief figures & cartouches of Rameses II, & the barely etched (botton left) cartouche of his son, King Merneptah. The second half of the same column in the collection has a palm capital.

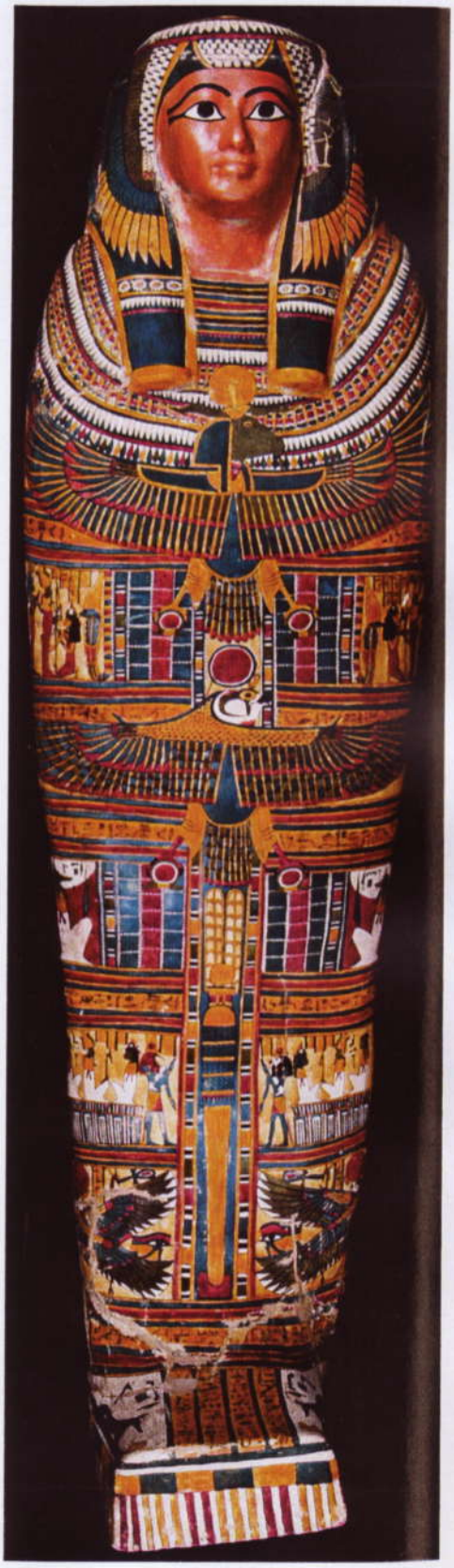
teenth Century, when Flemish weavers settled in the area and developed a wool and cotton-weaving tradition. Due to textile manufacturing, during the Industrial Revolution it was a boomtown, reaching its zenith in 1929, when its 216 cotton mills and twenty-six bleaching-and-dying works made Bolton one of the largest and most productive centers of cotton spinning in the world. Like Manchester's, Bolton's cotton industry started declining after World War I and virtually ceased by the 1980s, the borough becoming one of England's most deprived, according to the *Indices of Deprivation 2000*. Nonetheless, another national survey, for the Advancement of Science, named Boltonians the friendliest people in Britain and several important films and television series have been shot in its city center, particularly on the beautiful street called Le Mans Crescent, home to the public library, town hall, magistrates' court, aquarium, and Museum and Art Gallery (Open 9 AM-5PM Monday-Saturday, Closed Sunday and Bank Holidays, entrance free, 011-44-01204-332211, www.boltonmuseums.org.uk

As was the case with the Manchester Museum, Bolton's museum was not intended to display art, originally. Planning to open a public library, the borough adopted the Libraries and Museum Act in 1852 (only the third city council in England to do so); but the first donation to the library committee was neither books nor art, but a collection of fossils. Over the next two decades the library, located in nearby Victoria Square, accumulated a respectable collection of scientific specimens and ethnographic objects. Pressure grew to set up a museum separate from the library, but the City Council was unwilling to provide the funds.

"Deus ex machina": In 1876 Dr. Samuel Taylor Chadwick, a local doctor and philanthropist, left a bequest of 5,000 pounds sterling for the *"building, furnishing, and maintenance of a Museum of Natural History."* Construction began two years later; and in 1883 the Council employed William Waller Midgley as the first curator of the Chadwick Museum, which officially opened on June 12, 1884.

Inspired by Chadwick's bequest, it wasn't long before other local citizens flooded the Museum with donations; and Midgley expanded the holdings with nationally important collections of textile machinery, textile

25th Dynasty elaborately painted-cartonnage coffin of a man named Tahkenmes, which entered the Bolton collection in 1895. The mummy it contained was removed & unwrapped by E. Naville; no amulets were found.



21st Dynasty painted-wood coffin basin of Chantress of Amen Tawhenut, containing a partially unwrapped anonymous male mummy that is 300 years older.

samples and Egyptian antiquities — because of the borough's support of the Egyptian Exploration Society. The Chadwick Museum had three levels: the basement housed minerals, rocks and fossils; the ground floor zoology; and the first floor objects created by human hands: anthropology, Egyptology and other antiquities.

Like the library before, the Chadwick Museum soon became overcrowded. Thus during the late 1930s, the Le Mans Crescent Civic Center was built; but, because of World War II, it was not opened to the public until October 18, 1947. At first this new museum housed only the natural history and art collections; however, *"since the Council couldn't afford to run two museums,"* according to Matthew Constantine, the present senior manager of the Bolton Museum and Archives Service, *"in 1956 the Chadwick Museum building was condemned and the Egyptian collection was moved here too."*

Bolton's collection of Egyptian and Sudanese antiquities is probably the most important Egyptian collection in a British local-authority museum (i.e. a non-national, non-university institution) and numbers around 10,000 artifacts. It includes objects from all periods of ancient Egyptian history, from Neolithic times (ca. 5,000 BC) to the Arab period (Seventh Century AD). *"The fact that we can show a complete sweep of an ancient culture's history,"* said Constantine, *"and how it evolved over the centuries makes Bolton's Egyptian collection special. Not all Egyptian collections have artifacts from every period of ancient Egyptian history like us. We may not have a large number of spectacular items from religious sites, but we have lots of domestic objects that give you an idea of what daily life was like."*

Bolton's 2nd Intermediate Period Meday slip-painted terracotta steatopygous figurine of a standing female

Just as Manchester owes much of its Egyptian collection to the indefatigable enthusiasm of cotton industrialist Jesse Haworth, most of Bolton's Egyptian artifacts arrived thanks to Annie Barlow (1863-1941), the youngest and unmarried daughter of Bolton's most successful cotton industrialist and generous philanthropist, James Barlow. Following in her father's footsteps, Annie Barlow was a generous supporter of many local charities and — after a trip to Egypt with her brother John Robert in 1888, during which they visited Tell el Yahudiyeh, Tell el Maskhutah, Tanis, Nebesheh, Tell Basta, Defenneh and Naukratis — she began subscribing to the Egyptian Exploration Society. Soon appointed the EES's "local secretary" for Bolton, she raised money for excavations and — as a matter of local pride and in competition with Manchester — made sure that her share of the finds was given to the Chadwick Museum. These include: to the left of the gallery entrance, a pink-granite slab from Bubastis showing officials and female offering bearers from the Festival of Osorkon II, Twenty-second Dynasty; to the right of the gallery entrance, two pink-granite fragments of one column from a temple of the ram-headed god

13th Dynasty limestone stela of Iy, son of Keki (seated at top left), who is shown in sunk relief with his wife, sons, mother & several others of his male & female relatives.

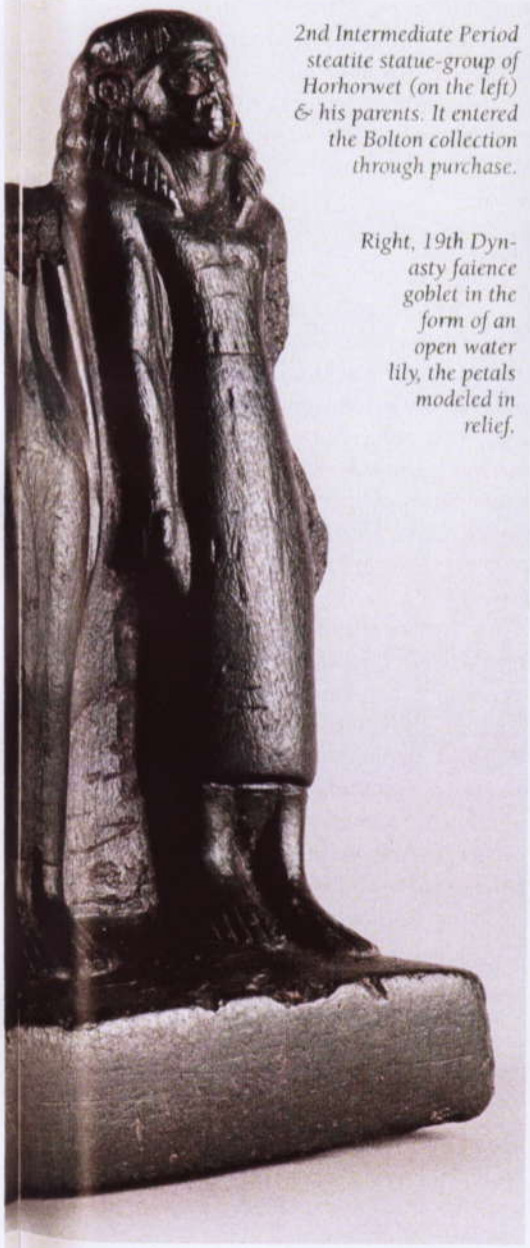
Herishef at Heracleopolis, inscribed during the reign of Rameses II; and the group of coffins.

According to the Museum's website, the Chadwick Museum (subsequently the Bolton Museum) has been a major supporter of the Egypt Exploration Society ever since Annie Barlow's "initiative," and a significant proportion of its Egyptian collection derives from EES excavations. In the 1920s and 1930s, the Museum also supported the excavations of Flinders Petrie in Egypt and Palestine. Thus, like Manchester's, Bolton's collection is special because, thanks to the British excavators, it deliberately covers all periods of ancient Egyptian history; and because the provenance of its artifacts, which come from a wide range of excavation sites, can be documented making it an unusually good teaching and research collection.

Pierrette Squires, conservator for Bolton Museum and Archive Service reports, *"a particular highlight of the collection is a group of material from the site of Tell el Amarna, the short-lived capital of Egypt under Akhenaten (ca. 1350 BC).... The Amarna material offers a snapshot of a city at a single moment in time, from richly decorated palaces to laborers' houses; and some of these objects — which include painted plaster pavements, jewelry, everyday household utensils and faience pottery — were on display in a temporary exhibition about*

Akhenaten in Turin during the spring of 2009."

Stars of Bolton's Egyptian collection are — not surprisingly — its textiles, which in its chronological coverage and quality, and its range of securely provenanced archaeological material are unique in Britain, if not the world. For example, although EES acquisitions have diminished in recent years, Bolton was fortunate enough to acquire through the EES a large collection of ancient textiles (although some are Coptic and early Islamic) excavated from the site of Qasr Ibrim in Lower Nubia, the only important monuments along Lake Nassar still in their original location. Textile collections larger than Bolton's exist — for example those of the Victoria and Albert Museum — but these are mainly formed of unprovenanced fragments purchased on the art market.



2nd Intermediate Period steatite statue-group of Horhorwet (on the left) & his parents. It entered the Bolton collection through purchase.

Right, 19th Dynasty faience goblet in the form of an open water lily, the petals modeled in relief.

Of course, as a textile town with most of its raw cotton coming from Egypt, Bolton had a serious interest in also receiving ancient textiles from Egypt, where the dry desert sand had preserved these organic materials very well. Egyptian linen was renowned even in antiquity for its high quality, but few well-preserved garments survive from before 300 AD. This is partly due to the technique of mummification: bodies were wrapped in bandages, often produced by tearing up old clothes. Certainly a star (others being Coptic tunics and Predynastic textiles from the Badari region) within this star collection is the likely oldest fragment of linen ever discovered. From the Fayum and dating to ca. 5,000 BC, it is kept in the Egyptian collection's stable climate-controlled and conservation-approved storage, usually off limits to visitors, except researchers with appointments. In fact only a small portion of Bolton's textiles are on display at any one time, inasmuch as ancient textiles are damaged by exposure to light and changes in temperature and humidity. According to Dr. Gillian Vogelsang-Eastwood of the Textile Research Center in the Netherlands, *"the Bolton collection of archaeological textiles is one of the most interesting and yet least appreciated collections in Britain."*

Bolton's ancient Egyptian artifacts (although less than ten-percent of the Museum's total holdings) are displayed in one large gallery. The layout — which dates to the 1980s — is in chronological order, starting on the wall to the left of the entrance. *"We hope to refurbish it soon,"* offered Constantine, *"probably in about two years from now, and to follow a more thematic approach. People seem to be more interested in a specific subject, like jewelry, pottery or daily life, rather than in chronology — which is rather dry. With around 300,000 visitors a year, mostly locals, although some come from outside the UK, the Egyptian collection is the most visited part of our Museum and will stay open during the renovations to other parts of the building, which will start in early 2010. Its weakest content area is sculptures; its dated layout with its very poor lighting is another limitation."*

Besides the EES contributions, Bolton's collection has grown through purchases and gifts. In 1977 the Petrie Museum, University College, London, donated a collection of largely unprovenanced Egyptian linen. Most of it is in poor condition and still awaiting study, but it includes two unique bundles of fossilized bones.

Four years later the Wellcome Museum for the History of Medicine donated over 300 objects. *"At the beginning of the Twentieth Century,"* recounts the collection's information handout, *"the pharmaceutical millionaire Sir Henry Wellcome began collecting objects on a gargantuan scale to illustrate the history of medicine from Neolithic times to the present day; he was especially interested in collecting Egyptian objects, as many can be related to mummification and bur-*

Late Period bronze-copper alloy statuette of Isis & Harpocrates.

ial. After his death in 1936, large parts of his collection, including the Egyptian objects, were not deemed 'relevant," kept in storage and dispersed from the 1960s onwards. The material assigned to Bolton comprised a large collection of fabrics and more miscellaneous objects, including material from the Frederick George Hilton Price (1842-1909), MacGregor (1848-1937) and Robert de Rustafjaell (1876-1943) collections. The fabrics include samples of mummy cloth cut off as souvenirs during public unwrappings of mummies in the Nineteenth Century, several rare ancient painted cloths and many mummified animals, particularly birds, still in their wrappings."

Most recently, in 1992, the Museum acquired a portion of the Tamworth Castle collection, which included some interesting faience pieces; the rest went to Birmingham.

Recent purchases include the "Amarna Princess" from a local collector in 2003 which, although authenticated by the British Museum, turned out to be a forgery; a small statue-group from the Second Intermediate Period in 2006; and a decorated faience vessel (ca. Eighth to Sixth Century BC) in 2008. A highlight of Bolton's collection, *"This vessel,"* says its exhibition card, *"showing dwarves hunting in the marshes, is a unqiue example of early Egyptomania. Covered with a pale blue-green glaze, now largely missing , with the ducks' wings highlighted in black, it would have originally been more striking in appearance. The relief decoration of the vessel is an Egyptian technique. The shape of the vessel, however, is not Egyptian, while the relatively poor state of preservation suggests that it was buried in damp soil outside Egypt. The closest known parallel to this vessel was purchased in Cyprus, but may not have been found there. It is still uncertain whether this piece was made in Egypt for export, or made in Cyprus or the Eastern Mediterranean as an Egyptian-style object."*

According to Constantine *"Another highlight donated at the turn of the Twentieth Century is the coffin inscribed and decorated for a woman called Tawhenut, a chantress of the god Amun-Re. She lived and was buried at Thebes during the Twenty-first Dynasty. The mummy — our only adult mummy (our one other is a fully-wrapped little girl, in a coffin) — is not that of Tawhenut, however. It barely fits in the coffin, even though it has been partially unwrapped. X-rays reveal that the remains are those of a man."*

A research team from the University of York studied the mummy. A documentary of their findings was shown on Discovery Channel in early 2008. The CT scans revealed that the individual was between twenty and thirty years old and that he probably died from a wasting disease. His shaven head may indicate that he served as a priest; but the documentary suggested that, from the shape of his head, he could have been an illegitimate son of one of the Rameses.

The body is about 300 years older than the coffin, dating it to the New Kingdom. The most likely explanation for how this unknown man ended up in the coffin of a woman — who died long after him — is that they were brought together in the Nineteenth Century by tomb robbers, in order to fetch a higher price from a European buyer.

Other Bolton highlights include coffins. *"We have far more of them than mummies. One of our sets of coffins belonged to a Twenty-second Dynasty priest named Duaneteref and consists of a wooden outer coffin and cartonnage mummy case. These are currently part of a traveling exhibition in the United States. Due to water damage, they were in very poor condition and so had not been displayed even here for many years. The American borrowing museums agreed to meet the costs of specialist conservation if they were loaned."*

"Still other highlights, but not artifacts," explained Constantine, *"are the related materials: casts of sculptures and reliefs, excavation photographs, 100 years of correspondence about how our artifacts arrived at Bolton, manuscripts about our textiles by Thomas Midgley, and an inventory of all the textiles found at Karanis in 1924-1925. The only other copy of this inventory is at the University of Michigan, which sponsored the excavations there."*

About the Author Lucy Gordan-Rastelli is a Rome-based free-lance journalist & European correspondent to this journal.