

Report on survey and restoration at Deir el-Ballas
From December 11 – 31, 2018

The Ancient Egyptian Heritage and Archaeology Fund conducted a season of survey, cleaning, recording and restoration to protect and restore the important Palace-City of Sekhenenre and Ahmose at Deir el-Ballas from December 11 – 31, 2018 (fig. 1).

The site was originally excavated by the Phoebe A. Hearst Expedition of the University of California under the direction of George A. Reisner in the years 1900 to 1901. Unfortunately, the excavations were never published and the field notes were so brief that any in depth study of the excavation was impossible. In order to clarify the records of the expedition and enable publication of the site, Peter Lacovara undertook four seasons of survey and clearance there in 1980, 1983, 1984 and 1986 under the sponsorship of the American Research Center and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. The results of these seasons were published in a Preliminary report by the American Research Center in Egypt.

At the request of Mr. Mustafa Waziri and the Qena Inspectorate of Antiquities, in response to damage at the site, new work was conducted at the site from January 10th to the 24th 2017 to survey, photograph and planning to assess the condition of the site, the perimeter of the antiquities area, and possible ways to protect and restore the standing structures.

For the second season continued the survey work and restoration was begun on the “South Palace.” The team consisted of Peter Lacovara as Director along with Piet Collet, as surveyor and Tom Hardwick and Victoria Jensen, archaeologists along with Salima Ikram and architect Nicholas Warner. The work was greatly facilitated in every way by Hassaan Mohamed Ail.

We began restoration efforts this season on the “South Palace,” which had suffered from looters emptying out some of the casemate foundations and digging holes in the façade of the eastern wall of the platform, which has caused significant parts of the brick facing to collapse (fig. 2). This was filled in with modern, unbaked mud bricks stamped with an AUC logo and made in the same size as the other “South Palace” bricks. [ca. 47 x 22 x 12 cm.] (figs. 3-4).

A layer of geotextile mesh was added between the modern and ancient courses (fig. 5). We are most grateful to Mohammed Hussein, Conservator of the Qena District for his help and advice on the restorations.

The top of the eastern façade of the “South Palace” was also capped with mesh and new bricks to restore those that had been torn down by vandals. The stairs were cleaned, planned and photographed and covered with sand to protect them for next season. To record the current condition of the structure, it was photographed and surveyed by Piet Collet. Vicky Jensen and Tom Hardwick recorded the sherds and wooden debris recovered from the cleaning of the façade.

At the North Palace (fig. 6) we endeavored to clean up modern trash and debris littering the area. We are very thankful to the office of the Governor of Qena for his help in cleaning the debris in the area. We surveyed the area around the North Palace with the Inspectorate Office of Qena as to where best to build a protective wall around the Palace.

Many of the ancient houses, the workmen’s village and associated chapels have been entirely destroyed. We also worked with the Inspectorate to determine where we might have a boundary to keep the modern cemetery from encroaching into the area of the ancient settlement. We cleared and surveyed one house in the area that had been exposed and recorded it and then recovered it (fig. 7). Fortunately, much of the other parts of the settlement have so far been preserved for the time being under the stacks of hay used by the village potters. These will need to be mapped and cleared and recorded in future seasons.

We look forward to collaborating with the Antiquities Inspectorate in Qena and the Ministry of Antiquities, find additional ways to protect and preserve this important site. We would like to thank Dr. Khaled El-Enany, Minister of Antiquities and Heritage, Ayman Ashmawi, Director of the Antiquities Department, Dr. Nashwa Gaber, Supervisor of the Permanent Committee of the Antiquities Department, Mostafa Hassan, General Director for the Egyptian Committee, Lyman Hindy, General Director of Qena Antiquities, Ashraf Nasser, Director of Qena Area, Maryanne Danielle, Director of West Bank Antiquities of Qena, Amr Gad el Rab, Head of Foreign Missions and Excavations of Qena, Mohammed Hussein Conservator of the Qena Area,

and our Inspector, Mohammed Shahat Shamrouk. We would also like to thank Dr. Salima Ikram, Mr. Magdy Aly and the American University in Cairo for their help and support and to Dr. Pearce Paul Creasman and the University of Arizona Egyptian Expedition and to Dr. Sergej Ivanov and Natasha Kharlamova for their kind and generous hospitality.

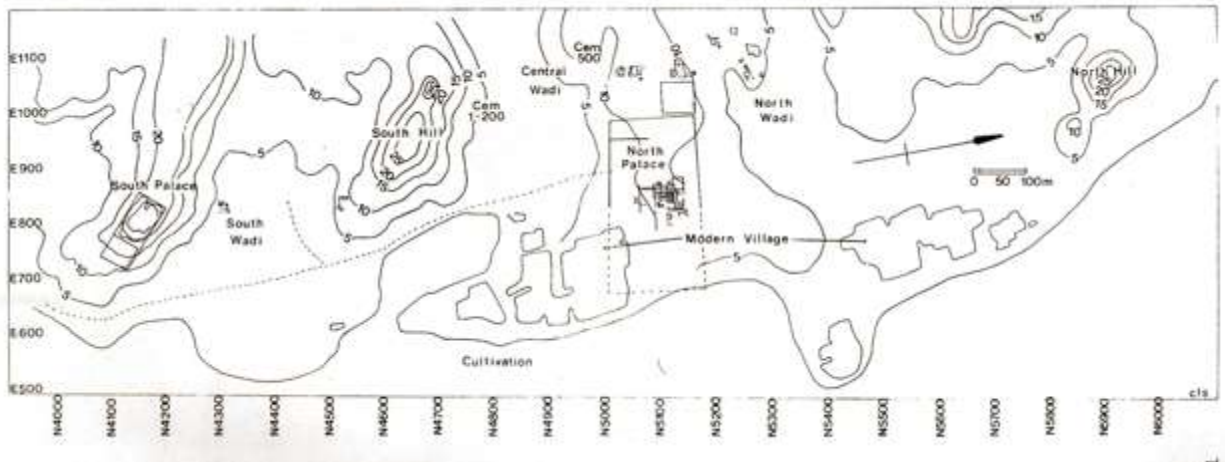


Fig. 1 Map of Der el Ballas



Fig. 2 Façade of the “South Palace” with hole caused by looters at beginning of work in 2018.



Fig. 3 Façade of the “South Palace” during filling of losses caused by looters.



Fig. 4 New mud bricks made for the restoration of the “South Palace.”



Fig. 5 A layer of geotextile mesh was added between the modern and ancient courses in the “South Palace” restoration.



Fig. 6 Modern trash dumped beside the North Palace.



Fig. 7 House A by North Palace being encroached upon by modern cemetery.