



# THE ANCIENT EGYPTIAN HERITAGE AND ARCHAEOLOGY FUND

## **Deir el-Ballas Report for Qena Inspectorate Office**

The Ancient Egyptian Heritage and Archaeology Fund and the American University in Cairo, under the direction of Dr. Nicholas R. Brown, conducted archaeological, conservation, and site management work at Deir el-Ballas during the 2026 field season, from January 3 to February 3, 2026. Our continued collaboration with the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities and the Qena Inspectorate focused on the long-term protection, conservation, documentation, and management of the Palace-City of Sekhenenre Taa II and Ahmose. The Expedition's goals this season included stabilizing standing monuments, completing restoration in key architectural areas, advancing archaeological documentation, expanding survey infrastructure, and improving on-site storage and collections management facilities.

### **Site Management and Maintenance**

Throughout the 2026 season, the Expedition continued to prioritize site protection, heritage management, and infrastructure development in close coordination with the Qena Inspectorate.

Conservation and stabilization work progressed across the site. Restoration at House F was completed, including the capping of walls, stabilization of architectural features, and protection of floors with clean sand. These efforts will safeguard the structure from further deterioration and modern encroachment while preserving the architectural integrity of the house. At the North Palace, restoration work continued on the casemate walls and enclosure features, with teams capping exposed mudbrick and filling losses to stabilize standing remains.

At the North Palace Enclosure Wall, workmen completed the stabilization of the wall's foundations and capped remaining mud brick to protect underlying archaeological deposits. This capping will also function as the foundations in preparation for the construction of a wall storage facility for archaeological materials in a forthcoming season. This represents a critical step toward improving on-site conservation and long-term storage of archaeological materials, such as broken pottery, charcoal, flint debris, and botanical remains. Mud brick production also began in preparation for a future season's planned conservation efforts.

In the North Wadi Settlement, two protective mudbrick walls were constructed to restrict vehicle access and prevent agricultural encroachment into the archaeological area.

The Expedition also undertook extensive backfilling of trenches opened during previous seasons and earlier in the 2026 campaign, ensuring that exposed architecture and deposits were protected at the end of the field season. Additional site tidying and maintenance included clearing debris from previously excavated structures and repairing damage to capped walls in the settlement areas west of the North Palace.

As part of ongoing efforts to improve site security and protect stored materials, the Expedition installed exterior security lighting at the South Palace workroom. These lights provide

nighttime illumination of the immediate surroundings, enhancing visibility and helping to deter unauthorized access during periods when the mission is not present on site.

The Expedition also completed the design and printing of two permanent aluminum site signs in Cairo, one for the South Palace and one for the North Palace. Written in both Arabic and English, these panels were produced in consultation with Dr. Basem Ibrahim and the Site Development Department of the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities and conform to the Ministry's signage guidelines.

In coordination with the Ministry, it was agreed to delay the installation of the permanent metal signs until the site is formally opened for tourism and appropriate locations can be selected following further archaeological investigation and excavation. In the interim, a temporary panel was installed at the South Palace workroom as a test case to evaluate how the signage performs on site during the off-season while the Expedition is absent (Fig \_\_\_\_).

A major milestone this season was the establishment of a permanent site grid and fix point system. Under the supervision of Sarah Sowerby, the team installed and recorded 31 permanent survey nails across the site using a Trimble GNSS R12 system. These fixed reference points provide the foundation for accurate mapping, photogrammetry, and future planning and will support all subsequent archaeological and conservation work at Deir el-Ballas. A complete list of coordinates for these fix points is provided in **Appendix A**.

### **Archaeological Works**

Archaeological and documentation work continued in multiple areas of the site, integrating excavation, conservation, and recording. At House F, Ahmed Abdelgawad and his team completed restoration and capping of walls, while Benjamin Johnson documented several newly identified mudbrick walls uncovered this season on the structure's north and south sides. These architectural features suggest changes in circulation and room use within the building and will be incorporated into future publications. Restoration work at House F is now substantially complete.

At the North Palace, Ahmed Abdelgawad continued conservation work on the casemate walls and enclosure features. Cleaning, capping, and stabilization of exposed mudbrick progressed throughout the season. Gillian Pyke initiated targeted fieldwork east of the casemate core to investigate Late Antique occupation layers in an area that appears largely unexcavated on earlier maps. This work has begun to clarify the later history of the palace and its reoccupation phases.

Work also continued along the North Palace Enclosure Wall. Sarah Sowerby and Fiona Burdette supervised the clearance cleaning of backfill from previously excavated wall segments and documented their findings in preparation for restoration. In the interior of the enclosure, Amalee Bowen, Waleed Hawatky, Victoria Shakespeare, and Benjamin Johnson documented newly exposed walls, collapse deposits, and stratigraphic profiles in two trenches. Detailed profile drawings were completed in the southern trench, providing an updated stratigraphic record that differs in key respects from early twentieth-century plans which are blank on Reisner's maps.

At the North Hill Settlement, the team prepared new areas for survey and opened a 5 x 5 meter trench for a controlled surface collection of pottery and lithic materials. Victoria Shakespeare, Sarah Sowerby, and Waleed Hawatky documented the area and collected samples, including several ground stone tools, for future study. This work represents the first systematic investigation of this area since the early excavations of the site in 1900.

A brief walking survey west of the site in the high desert identified several pottery scatters and looted burial areas dating to the Second Intermediate Period–New Kingdom transition. These observations underscore the urgency of documenting threatened archaeological remains beyond the core monuments of Deir el-Ballas.

### **Magazine Work**

The on-site workroom and magazine were particularly active during the 2026 season. Study of pharaonic and Late Antique pottery was undertaken by Gillian Pyke and Bettina Bader, while Beth Hart conducted analysis and photography of lithic materials, including agate bead production debris excavated from House E in 2019. Botanical analysis continued under the direction of Claire Malleon, assisted by Jayme Reichart, focusing on samples recovered from the South Palace this season.

A major effort was devoted to reorganizing, inventorying, and rehousing stored materials from previous seasons. The team improved preservation conditions by introducing new storage containers within *shawal* bags and implementing a revised bag-numbering system. Charcoal samples, pottery, bones, lithics, and other miscellaneous materials were reorganized by area and context to improve accessibility and long-term curation for specialists.

The Expedition also conducted a full day of work at the Quft (Coptos) Magazine, where Nicholas Brown, Gillian Pyke, and Beth Hart documented 58 stored objects, including faience and stone beads, stone tools, two statue fragments, and clay figurines. Documentation included photographs, measurements, drawings, and written descriptions, conducted in collaboration with Egyptian colleagues from the magazine.

### **Acknowledgments**

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

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## Figures

Fig. 1 Restoration and stabilization work at House F.



Fig. 2 Conservation work at the North Palace casemate walls.





Fig. 3 Clearance and documentation of the North Palace Enclosure Wall.



Fig. 4 Establishment of site grid and fix points across Deir el-Ballas.





Fig. 5 On-site magazine work and rehousing of stored materials.



Fig. 6 Aluminum site signs for the North Palace and South Palace in storage, and a temporary sign installed at the South Palace workroom.







Appendix A: Complete List of Site Grid Fix Point Coordinates

Deir el-Ballas Fixed Points\_Coordinate Table

Point_ID	Area	Northing	Easting	Elevation
DB00	North Hill Settlement	2881728.2995400000000000	475079.9009200000000000	77.6223300000000000
DB01	South Palace	2879924.0025300000000000	475115.2305200000000000	90.7414000000000000
DB02	South Palace	2879981.3004000000000000	475066.1698300000000000	99.2941100000000000
DB03	South Palace	2879996.8052000000000000	475027.6031000000000000	100.0612300000000000
DB04	South Palace	2879966.6719900000000000	475031.8965800000000000	95.7887800000000000
DB05	South Palace	2880063.4562900000000000	474982.2570100000000000	94.3852800000000000
DB06	South Wadi Settlement	2880210.1124100000000000	475200.9184600000000000	75.8843600000000000
DB07	South Hill Settlement	2880428.7406000000000000	475119.8791000000000000	80.5088700000000000
DB08	South Palace	2880024.4818700000000000	475060.5448100000000000	95.6630700000000000
DB09	South Wadi Settlement	2880235.3003400000000000	474957.6647100000000000	81.1744100000000000
DB10	South Hill Settlement	2880504.7894500000000000	475010.6525200000000000	106.9940500000000000
DB11	North Palace	2880921.7517600000000000	474919.2604000000000000	83.1902600000000000
DB12	North Palace	2880861.8419800000000000	474884.9260000000000000	83.3653800000000000
DB13	South Hill Settlement	2880547.6654600000000000	475102.3507800000000000	78.7840900000000000
DB14	South Hill Settlement	2880672.6798100000000000	474951.0167800000000000	78.5754500000000000
DB15	North Palace	2880925.3097100000000000	475191.0593800000000000	82.2802500000000000
DB16	North Palace	2880963.4308400000000000	475220.2069800000000000	81.8964000000000000
DB17	North Palace	2880965.0376900000000000	475079.4445100000000000	80.8817900000000000
DB18	North Palace	2880926.6135500000000000	475035.9610000000000000	79.6953700000000000
DB19	North Palace	2880894.0832600000000000	475287.1423700000000000	77.4220300000000000
DB20	North Palace	2880993.8202600000000000	475306.6276900000000000	78.2378300000000000
DB21	North Wadi Settlement	2881031.1372300000000000	474965.3413500000000000	79.1667200000000000
DB22	North Wadi Settlement	2881150.8013500000000000	475000.7315300000000000	79.7865700000000000
DB23	North Wadi Settlement	2881287.4881100000000000	475021.4813300000000000	80.7566900000000000
DB24	North Wadi Settlement	2881501.6612000000000000	475043.3965000000000000	94.2014500000000000
DB25	North Hill Settlement	2881606.2414600000000000	475167.3050000000000000	75.1171200000000000
DB26	North Hill Settlement	2881663.5198900000000000	475237.1340400000000000	82.7971400000000000
DB27	North Hill Settlement	2881737.1357700000000000	475288.2767800000000000	73.6409300000000000
DB28	North Hill Settlement	2881800.7159100000000000	475233.5920900000000000	75.6657300000000000
DB29	North Hill Settlement	2881832.2014100000000000	475148.8236000000000000	77.8227400000000000
DB30	North Hill Settlement	2881736.3756900000000000	475155.3364200000000000	91.0280300000000000
DB31	North Palace	2880832.7037200000000000	475028.8688200000000000	77.3880200000000000
DB32	North Palace	2880907.2250100000000000	475129.1327400000000000	79.7884000000000000

