

**Fourth archaeological survey of the ancient greywacke
quarries of the Wadi Hammamat**

**Institute of Archaeology, University College London
in co-operation with SCA Ancient Quarries and Mines
Department**

10 – 20 April 2013



Main Settlement in the Wadi Hammamat Greywacke Quarries

**Report to the
Supreme Council of Antiquities
*by***

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INTRODUCTION

The objectives of this fourth season of work were as follows:-

- risk assessment and monitoring of the site given threats to it, primarily from random 'safari tourism' and flash floods
- undertake a detailed survey with total station equipment of the main areas of settlement and other associated features
- further contextualise the inscriptional evidence onto the map as this is still not completed in several quarry areas, and to the east along the main route of passage through the Wadi Hammamat
- make detailed documentation of the less disturbed Predynastic Naqada II bracelet workshops/settlements

THE SURVEY TEAM

Dr Elizabeth Bloxam (Field Director) – Institute of Archaeology, University College London

Dr Ian Shaw (archaeologist) – University of Liverpool

Adel Kelany (archaeologist) – SCA Dept of Ancient Quarries and Mines

SITE MONITORING AND LOSS OF INSCRIPTIONS

See attached report sent to Emad Abdel Hamid, Director Quseir Office for details of stolen inscriptions.

Apart from the area of inscriptions, no other damage or losses were recorded at the site.

SURVEY OF MAIN AREAS OF SETTLEMENT AND ASSOCIATED FEATURES

Using a total station, the first systematic survey of the main settlement areas was completed. In undertaking this work we determined phases of development of the main settlement and were able to assess where living quarters and domestic areas were located. Several sections of an enclosure wall in the front of the settlement, ignored by archaeologists who had previously worked at the site, we determined as being a defence against flash floods, given the settlement's position beside the wadi (**Fig 1**). Further investigation of this feature through excavation is important to determine the height of the wall and thus indicate how high flood levels may have been during the life-time of the settlement between the Late Period and Roman Period occupations.

Spot excavation will also be required of the settlement given the imminent problems with flash-floods increasing and also unsupervised visits to the site by tourists. Determining a chronology of the settlement, and if it overlies earlier phases, is yet to be investigated. Also, the function of various rooms can only be speculated at

present until excavation can provide more information. The survey plan from this work will be submitted with the final report.

SURVEY OF NAQADA II BRACELET WORKSHOP (2) BIR HAMMAMAT

The second survey area was at the smaller Naqada II bracelet workshop that is the least disturbed at Bir Hammamat. Using the total station we surveyed the zone of workings and small enclosures associated with it (**Fig 8**). During this work it seems likely that two features previously interpreted as shelters are more likely to be wells (**Fig 2**).

INSCRIPTION DOCUMENTATION

Documentation of inscriptions into the landscape continued along the Wadi Hammamat in the quarrying areas at the eastern end of the concession. Several new inscriptions, graffiti and rock art (**Figs 3 and 4** are two examples) were recorded and so we continue to build on previous work with the aim of providing a detailed map and database of these in due course. The task of recording inscriptions is still not completed and will resume in the quarry areas in the next season of survey.

EARLY DYNASTIC TO PREDYNASTIC SETTLEMENT AND WELL

During the inscription documentation at the entrance to the Wadi Masq el Bagar, a well, hearth and possible area of disturbed settlement were located (**Fig 5**). Given the proximity of an early dynastic vessel quarry about 400 metres away in the wadi as described in the previous report (Bloxam et al 2013) there could be a connection between these sites. This will be investigated in more detail during the next season.

GOLD PROCESSING WORKSHOP

During the inscription survey a raised terrace consisting of large grinding stones was located at the eastern end of the concession. The grinders appear to be of the type used to crush and process gold bearing ores and so suggesting this to be a gold processing workshop (**Fig 6**). Pottery sherds associated with the area date to the Roman Period.

SUMMARY

This season achieved its major objectives in terms of undertaking more detailed survey of settlement areas to add to our map. This work enabled us to also plan what is needed to be done in the next survey seasons in March/April 2014 and October/November 2014. The main settlement, as mentioned above, needs some spot excavations to determine the chronology and whether this is built on earlier phases given that the Old Kingdom to New Kingdom settlements have not yet been located. We also need to make an even more detailed grid plan of the Naqada II workshop given its vulnerability to flash floods and other types of disturbance.

Although this was a very successful season from a work and research perspective, we leave with a troubled feeling given the robbery of inscriptions and how to protect this site in both the short and long term. **It is no exaggeration to say that the**

inscription areas are so vulnerable that they may completely disappear within a year if protection measures are not taken immediately. The attached report is just a summary of what I understand the situation to be in terms of how and when the robbery took place. However, I am still puzzled as to why no one told me when we were surveying the site in November 2012 (after the robbery took place) that the inscriptions had been stolen? If I had been told then perhaps we could have done more to alert various authorities as to this loss of heritage. Thus there is a need for better communication between all those involved as a crucial step towards protecting this global heritage site.

REFERENCES

Bloxam, E., N. Moloney, J. Harrell, and A. El-Senussi 2013. *Third Archaeological survey of the ancient greywacke quarries of the Wadi Hammamat, November 2012*. Final Report to the Supreme Council of Antiquities, February 2014.

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