

The wine of Horemheb

REPORT Egyptologist Dr Jaap van Dijk is preparing for his third season of excavation in the Egyptian Valley of the Kings, the burial site of the pharaohs and the place where the English archaeologist Howard Carter found the tomb of Tutankhamen in 1922.

By ERNST ARBOUW

Is there anything left for archaeologists to do in Egypt? Yes there is, says Egyptologist Dr Jaap van Dijk. This autumn he'll be excavating in the tomb of Pharaoh Horemheb, the successor to the famous Pharaoh Tutankhamen. And there's more than enough interesting stuff to be found.

"The tomb had already been plundered in ancient times, and it was rediscovered in 1908 by an American businessman and amateur archaeologist, Theodore Davis", Van Dijk says. "Davis was more or less the modern-day equivalent of a tomb robber. All the remaining artefacts were taken out of the tomb in no more than a few weeks and the excavation work was done in a very sloppy way."

Van Dijk, his colleague Professor Geoffrey Martin from Cambridge and their Egyptian staff of about 35 workers have spent two seasons going through the rubble and debris which was left in the tomb. They intend to finish their project this autumn. "The tomb was opened to the public in the mid-twentieth century. To allow access, the rubble was dumped at the back of the burial chamber and in the well shaft, a deep pit about a third of the way along the 100 metre-long corridor leading from the entrance to the burial chamber."

Over the last two years the researchers have found loads of interesting objects in the rubble. "When we started, the well shaft – which measures about four by four metres – was three metres deep, it's now seven metres deep and we hope to dig even further", says Van Dijk. He estimates that they've shifted about seventy to eighty cubic metres of rocks and debris so far. "All by hand, using baskets and ropes."

Interesting finds include broken bits of pottery wine jars. Inscriptions on the sherds – much like present-day wine labels – include the year the wine was made and the vineyard from where it originated. But there's an important twist, Van Dijk explains. The Egyptian calendar started counting from zero every time a new Pharaoh was crowned. This makes it very hard to



Team members at work in the tomb of Pharaoh Horemheb where they have cleared over seventy cubic metres of rubble. Photo Jaap van Dijk

compile a rock-solid chronology of events in ancient Egypt, but in this case the dates on the pottery sherds provide important clues. "Wine had a very limited storage life and the wine jars you find in tombs are usually from the last, or perhaps the last two harvests. In the tomb of Horemheb there are no wine labels with a higher date than year fourteen of his reign, which makes it highly likely that he died before the harvest of year fifteen." As yet,

many scholars assume Horemheb reigned for over 28 years.

The excavations in the Valley of Kings are all the more interesting because Horemheb's tomb wasn't finished when he was buried. "It's like a time capsule, showing all stages of tomb decoration", says Van Dijk. It's also the earliest royal tomb to contain scenes and hieroglyphic inscriptions carved in relief, which makes it extra special.

The entrance to Horemheb's tomb

is fifty metres from the entrance to the tomb of Tutankhamen. How does Van Dijk feel about working in the midst of thousands of tourists. "Well, you don't notice them once you're at work inside the tomb, but there's a small outdoor corridor where we sieve through the rubble where tourists keep peeking over the wall. I once put up a small sign saying 'Please don't feed the archaeologists.' I heard that being translated into some twenty languages."



Uruzgan

Last week, the television news showed something which is rare: footage of Dutch soldiers under heavy enemy machine gun fire in Afghanistan. On the whole, the Dutch army hasn't exactly got the image of being battle-hardened warriors and film footage of servicemen in battle situations is really unusual.

Around 1200 Dutch soldiers are currently deployed on a mission in Uruzgan, an Afghan province 250 kilometres to the south-west of the capital Kabul. Though the original intention of the mission was the reconstruction of the war-torn region, over the past months, the soldiers have mostly been busy fighting Taliban opposition. Over the last few weeks, the resistance of Taliban fighters has been on the rise, resulting in a growing number of attacks on the Dutch servicepersonnel. Ten soldiers have been killed in the fighting since the start of the mission, one serviceman took his own life.

The intention was originally to end the mission in Uruzgan in August 2008, but it now seems very likely that the Dutch government will decide to extend the mission, even though the original intention of reconstruction has all but failed. A government decision is expected to take place somewhere this month.

[ERNST ARBOUW]



UC Berkeley posts lectures on YouTube

On of the most famous universities in the United States, UC Berkeley, announced last week that it has begun posting entire lectures on the video-sharing site YouTube.

Berkeley officials claimed in a statement that the university is the first to make full lectures available on YouTube. Over 300 hours of videotaped lectures will be made available at youtube.com/ucberkeley.

Berkeley said it will continue to expand the offering. The topics of study found on YouTube included

chemistry, physics, biology and even a lecture on search-engine technology given in 2005 by Google cofounder Sergey Brin.

The university already has a multimedia website of its own (<http://webcast.berkeley.edu/>) with over 3500 hours of recorded lectures.

Stolen bicycle found after 11 years

Police in Groningen found a bicycle that had been missing for over a decade during an inspection at the Zernikeplein, near the University, last week. The bike was stolen eleven years ago but was

recognized by policemen by its engraved frame number.

Police have already discovered the original owner of the bike died several years ago. They are now trying to establish whether there is another legal owner of the bike.

During the inspection, another bicycle, which was stolen in June, was also found.

'Students eat live goldfish'

Members of Albertus, Groningen's second largest student society, consume live goldfish during the ragging rituals of one of its

debating societies. Four Albertus members have confirmed this practice to the UK. "It's done very openly, it's absolutely no secret", said one of them.

During the introduction period for freshmen, debating society Fluidum presents itself to aspiring members with a ritual in which they have to drink a glass of water containing a live goldfish. A spokesman for Albertus denies the maltreatment of live animals during the introduction period. "Our debating societies and sub-groups are subject to very strict rules", he says, even though several eyewitnesses have confirmed the practice to UK reporters.

Try Eat, drink, sing

Ecumenical student organization GSp organizes a dinner for students every Tuesday and Wednesday at 6.30 p.m. The meal costs only EUR 3: register before 12.00 noon the same day at info@gspweb.nl. This Sunday, an English-language ecumenical Evensong will be held in the Martini Church (Grote Markt) at 5 p.m. In addition, a service in the tradition of the French Taizé Community (in English) will be held on Sunday 25 November. www.gspweb.nl