

QUEENSLAND MUSEUM



Egyptian Mummies

EXPLORING ANCIENT LIVES

16 March to
26 August 2018

Media kit

The British
Museum

Inner coffin of Nestawedjet,
Thebes, Upper Egypt,
700BC - 660BC, 26th Dynasty.
© Trustees of the British Museum



Message from the Minister

Welcome to *Egyptian Mummies: Exploring Ancient Lives*, an interactive and educational exhibition that uses the latest scientific advancements to reveal some of history's greatest mysteries.

Egyptian Mummies: Exploring Ancient Lives is an international travelling exhibition from The British Museum which uses extensive CT technology to explore the lives of six ancient Egyptian mummies, without disturbing their bandages.

The Queensland Government is proud to support this world-class exhibition. These cultural experiences reinforce our position as a must-visit destination, contribute to our booming tourism industry and engage locals and tourists alike.

I encourage you to step back in time to explore these ancient lives.

The Hon Leeanne Enoch MP

Minister for Science and Minister for the Arts

About Egyptian Mummies: Exploring Ancient Lives

Queensland Museum will host the international touring exhibition *Egyptian Mummies: Exploring Ancient Lives* from 16 March – 26 August 2018.

For centuries, mummies have fascinated people as the focus of morbid curiosity and scientific enquiry. Despite being separated from us by thousands of years, there is something still very recognisable and human about them.

From around 3500 BC to about AD 400, mummification was an essential part of Egyptian funerary practice for people of high status. By stopping decomposition and rebuilding the body to look as lifelike as possible, the deceased's *ba* (a spirit entity) could recognise and reinhabit the body after death and be reborn like the god Osiris. Those who could afford it had tombs and coffins built for them, equipped with magical scenes and inscriptions, food offerings and grave goods to protect and sustain the *ka* (another non-physical entity) for eternity.

Historically, to study mummies researchers often had to unwrap and later X-ray them. However, in recent years, advances in sophisticated imaging techniques — such as CT scanning — allow mummies to be studied without disturbing their coverings, revealing more about who the ancient Egyptians were in their historical, geographical and social settings.

The presentation of this exhibition is a collaboration between The British Museum and the Queensland Museum.

Funding for insurance has been provided through the Queensland Government Exhibition indemnification Scheme, administered by Arts Queensland.

This exhibition contains human remains.

Queensland Museum is committed to providing a respectful environment when displaying human remains and asks visitors to refrain from photographing any human remains.

Caring for Human Remains

Queensland Museum in the past collected remains and sacred items from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities without permission or consent. In a new role as caretaker, Queensland Museum works with Aboriginal People and Torres Strait Islanders to provide a culturally appropriate and proactive repatriation program to return sensitive items to Country.

Exhibition snapshot

The British Museum uses the latest non-invasive scientific methods to study the Egyptian mummies in its collection and gain insights into life in an ancient land defined by the river Nile.

In *Egyptian Mummies: Exploring Ancient Lives*, you will meet six individuals who lived and died in ancient Egypt between 3000 and 1800 years ago. Technology has enabled the British Museum to create a personal profile of each individual, painting a picture of who they were — their age, beliefs and their health — all without disturbing their wrappings. Each mummy has a story to tell.

Meet the Mummies



Nestawedjat

Third Intermediate Period, 25th Dynasty, Circa 700–680 BC

Nestawedjat was a married woman belonging to a wealthy family from Thebes (modern Luxor), a major religious centre in ancient Egypt. Her carefully mummified body is an excellent example of ancient Egyptian mummification.



Tamut

Third Intermediate Period, early 22nd Dynasty, Circa 900 BC

Daughter of Khonsumose, a priest of the god Amun — king of the gods. Tamut was from a high-status family and was buried with many amulets and other ritual trappings believed to have magical powers that would protect the deceased and help her to gain immortality. CT scans also show she has plaque in her arteries and suffered from arteriosclerosis.



Irthorru

Late Period, 26th Dynasty, Circa 600 BC

A priest from the town of Akhmim situated about 200km north of Thebes. Several amulets were placed on his body to protect him and ensure rebirth in the afterlife. The mask placed on his body was gilded to symbolise the skin of gods. CT scans reveal Irthorru's dental health was very poor, with several missing teeth.



Temple Singer

Third Intermediate Period, 22nd Dynasty, Circa 800 BC

Although we do not know her name, the inscription on this woman's cartonnage case tells us that she was a priestess — more precisely a Singer of the Interior of Amun. CT scans reveal that a few amulets were found inside her abdomen and numerous small pellets — probably gold — were scattered on her body.



A young child from the Roman Period

Roman Period, Circa AD 40–60

In ancient Egypt few children appear to have been mummified. CT scans confirm that the boy was around two years old. His spine and ribs were damaged, possibly during mummification, but his body was wrapped with great care and placed in a gilded and finely decorated cartonnage.



A young man from Roman Egypt

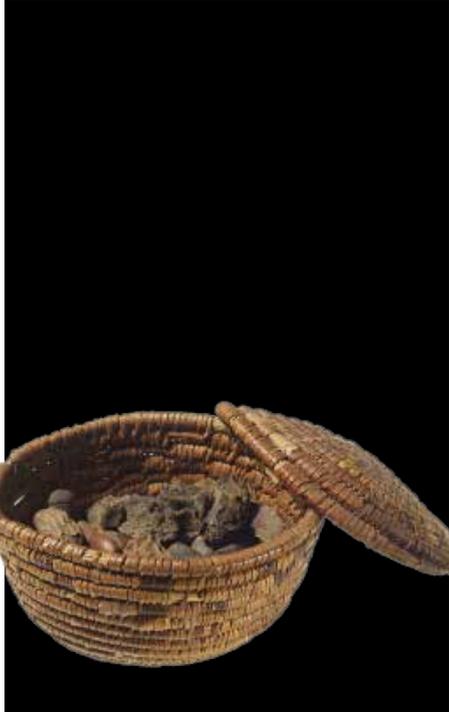
Roman period, Circa AD 140–180

Mummification continued to be practised when Roman rulers took over Egypt in 30 BC but the techniques evolved. One major innovation was 'mummy portraits' on wooden panels. This mummy of a man with his lifelike portrait was among the first mummies with such an image to reach Europe.

Collection snapshot

Life in Ancient Egypt

Egyptian Mummies: Exploring Ancient Lives uses almost 200 objects from the British Museum's world-famous Egyptian Collections to give people an understanding of life in ancient Egypt.



Basket with dates and seed

Basket with dates and seed, vegetal remains, New Kingdom, Egypt.

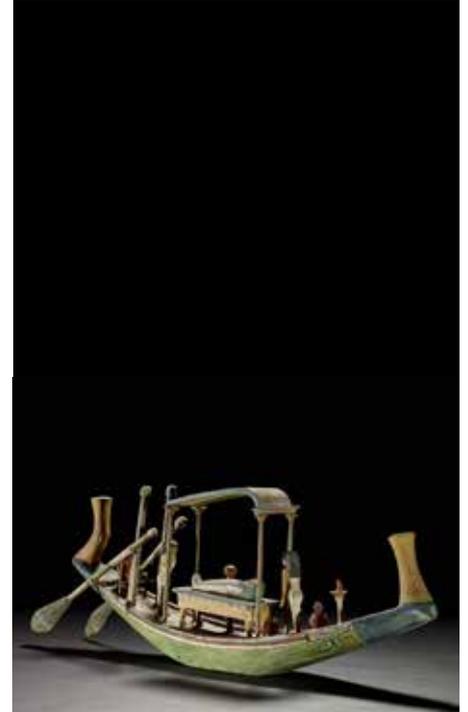
© Trustees of the British Museum.



Figure of Anubis

Late Period, 664-332 BC, Provenance unknown.

© Trustees of the British Museum.



Model of a funerary boat

Model of a funerary boat, wood, 12th dynasty, Egypt.

© Trustees of the British Museum.

Diet in ancient Egypt

Food remains found at archaeological sites and depictions in tombs and temples tell us what the ancient Egyptians ate. They suggest a rich and varied diet, at least for the upper classes. Bread and a thick, nutritious barley beer were staples. Wealthy people also drank wine. The elite may have eaten meat more regularly, and a diet rich in animal fat may explain the presence of plaque in the arteries of some mummies.

Gods in ancient Egypt

Made up of thousands of different gods, the ancient Egyptian religion was both complex and flexible. Some of these divine manifestations were the focus of a national cult, while others were worshipped only in certain regions. Their physical appearance, which still fascinates us today, often shows a combination of human and animal features, reinforcing the gods' supernatural powers.

Death and disease in ancient Egypt

Health problems and illnesses were widespread in the Nile valley and affected all levels of society, but they are often hard to detect on CT scans. Only a few diseases and traumas leave visible traces on the skeleton, and any internal organs left in the body are usually shrunk and distorted following mummification. This means that establishing the cause of a person's death is often impossible.



Group statue of Itu and Henutweret with their son
Mid-18th Dynasty, about 1400 BC, Thebes, Egypt.
© Trustees of the British Museum.



Mask in cartonnage
Mask in cartonnage, plaster, linen, gold,
Roman Period, Abydos.
© Trustees of the British Museum.



Embalmer's tool
Circa 1550-1069 BC, New Kingdom, Egypt.
© Trustees of the British Museum.

Family life in ancient Egypt

The family unit was central to ancient Egyptian life and is often depicted in art. The deceased is usually shown surrounded by members of his or her family. The ideal nuclear family — comprising a father, a mother and a child — was mirrored in the divine world. Gods were often portrayed in triads, such as Osiris, Isis and their child Horus.

Children were at the heart of the family's concerns. High infant mortality during birth and in early childhood probably meant that great importance was placed on fertility. Ensuring the survival and well-being of the next generation was considered to be the responsibility of all members of society.

Cultural diversity

Egyptians, Greeks and Romans were the three main populations living in Egypt during the Roman period. Many Egyptians adopted Greek names, making an individual's cultural origins hard to ascertain from inscriptions. This fusion of different cultures is especially visible in the funerary practices of the time. Already in use during earlier periods, the cartonnage mask became widespread. It replaced coffins, which were now rarely produced. In addition, the introduction of wooden portrait panels and painted shrouds brought a hybrid style that combined European techniques and Egyptian funerary traditions. It is hard to tell if these mummy portraits were commissioned by Egyptians or people from other places who had made Egypt their home.

Death in Ancient Egypt

Ancient Egyptians believed that a person's body must survive death for them to enter the afterlife. Artificial preservation of the body (mummification) made this more likely. During mummification, the body would be refashioned into a divine form with the qualities and attributes of a god. The mummified body would serve as the physical base for the spirits of the person, such as the ka and the ba, which could travel freely between the world of the living and the realm of the dead.

It is unclear when Egyptians started experimenting with mummification. The first mummies, from about 4000 to 3500 BC, were naturally preserved. Buried in shallow graves, their bodies were dried by the heat of the desert. Egyptians from this early period may have accidentally unearthed these natural mummies, and such discoveries may have guided their beliefs towards the need to preserve the body after death.



Exhibition spokespeople

Queensland Museum

Dr Jim Thompson

Acting CEO, Queensland Museum

Dr Thompson has an extensive and distinguished career and has performed a range of leadership roles throughout Australia in areas such as research, policy and the public sector. He has a PhD in Wildlife Management, a Master of Resource Science and a Bachelor of Science (Hons) in Zoology/Animal Biology. Prior to joining the Queensland Museum Network Jim was the Chief Biosecurity Officer at Biosecurity Queensland for six years.

Dr Brit Asmussen

Senior Curator of Archaeology, Queensland Museum

Brit has been involved in a number of archaeological and anthropological research projects investigating people-land-resource relationships in Australia, Torres Strait and PNG. She has contributed one book and more than 20 articles in the archaeology of Australia, PNG and Torres Strait, museum collections and repatriation. She is on the Editorial Advisory Boards for Australian Archaeology and Queensland Archaeological Research and was a social media editor for Australian Archaeology. Brit researches in Australian archaeology, investigating Aboriginal animal and plant management and use, taphonomy, zooarchaeology, ethnobotany, experimental archaeology and Aboriginal objects held in museum collections. Her research currently investigates past resource use, the impacts of past climate changes, and socio-cultural change.

Nicholas Hadnutt

Curator of Archaeology, Queensland Museum

Nick started volunteering with Queensland Museum's Cultures and Histories program in 2007, becoming a fulltime Assistant Collection Manager in 2008 followed by Collection Manager in 2011. Nick successfully guided the Collection Management program through the following four years with key highlights including the successful management of multiple blockbuster international touring exhibitions as well as substantial exhibition renewal and redevelopment at Queensland Museum. In 2015, Nick was awarded the position of Curator, Archaeology and is currently engaged in researching Queensland Museum's substantial archaeology collections. Nick's research interests include historical archaeology as well as museum collection development and access to museum collections.

British Museum

Dr Marie Vandenbeusch

Curator of Funerary Archaeology, British Museum

Marie Vandenbeusch is a Curator in the Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan at the British Museum. She has worked on temporary and permanent displays for both UK and Swiss institutions and was one of the curators of the successful exhibition *Ancient lives, new discoveries* at the British Museum. She is also part of the team working on the Amara West excavations in Sudan. Her research interests are the study of religion and magic in ancient Egypt, in particular through funerary texts and iconography, and the history of Egyptology.

Dr Daniel Antoine

Curator of Physical Anthropology, British Museum

Daniel Antoine is the British Museum's Curator of Physical Anthropology, with responsibility for the Museum's human remains. His areas of expertise include the scientific study of mummies and human skeletal remains, human anatomy, ancient diseases and hard tissue biology. Before joining the Museum in 2009, Daniel was a Leverhulme Trust (2006-2009) and Wellcome Trust Postdoctoral Research Fellow (2002-2005) at the Institute of Archaeology, University College London, where he gained his PhD in 2001. His research has focused on developing new methods to investigate past human life using mummified, dental and skeletal tissues as indicators of age, disease, growth and development.



5 minutes with the Curators

Quotes attributable to either:

Daniel Antoine, Curator of Physical Anthropology, British Museum

Marie Vandenberg, Project Curator of Funerary Archaeology, British Museum

Q: What are your favourite objects in this exhibition?

A: It is particularly difficult to single out a specific object and each member of the team would probably suggest a different one. The wooden horse (in the section on the young child from Roman Egypt) is a particularly touching object. This toy is likely to have been placed in a burial of a child who lived in Egypt under Roman rule. It not only shows which kind of toys children were playing with in ancient times, but visitors will also be able to relate directly to it, as it resembles a modern toy.

Q: Who is your favourite mummy, and why?

A: New discoveries were made when researching each mummy and each one of them brings something different to our understanding of ancient Egypt and the practice of mummification, as well as to the exhibition. Very interesting discoveries were made when researching the last mummy in the exhibition, the mummy of a young man from Roman Egypt.

The CT scan data confirmed that he was 17-20 years old when he died, as his portrait panel placed on his wrappings suggests, but the data also revealed that he was significantly overweight. The combination of his weight and the fact that the embalmers did not remove his internal organs suggest complex mummification techniques were used, particularly as his body is amazingly preserved.

Q: Why do you think people are so fascinated by ancient Egypt and their mummies?

A: Fascination about ancient Egypt is long-lasting and probably results from multiple factors, sometimes linked to superstition or morbid curiosity. However, one of the main factors is the incredible survival of archaeological remains due to the hot and arid conditions prevalent in most of the Nile valley. Combined with the practice of mummification, the physical remains of many ancient Egyptians have survived to this day. This allows us the rare privilege of seeing the face of someone from the distant past. Valuable texts and the remains of everyday objects and foods have also survived, providing unique insights into the lives of ancient Egyptians.

Q: What do you think people will find most interesting about this exhibition?

A: This is a once in a lifetime opportunity for audiences in Brisbane to get up close to these mummies from the British Museum. Visitors will be able to virtually peel back the layers of history through interactive 3D visualisations of CT scans and discover for themselves insights into the lives and deaths of six carefully mummified individuals. They are in exceptional condition and now, thanks to modern technology, we are able to uncover their stories without unravelling their wrappings.



Q: What type of technology sits behind this impressive exhibition?

A: High-resolution 3D imaging techniques, and in particular CT scanning, have superseded traditional X-ray machines. A CT scanner makes use of X-rays to image the body but the X-ray source is not static and points in multiple directions by rapidly rotating around the body as it passes through the scanner. In this project, the mummies were all scanned using a Dual Energy CT scanner, which uses two X-ray energy sources (with different wavelengths) as it rotates around the body. This increases the amount and resolution of the data generated, allowing us to create very clear 3D models.

The data is gathered by a computer to create very detailed images of the inside of a body. The ‘raw’ data is actually made up of thousands of two-dimensional X-ray images (or tomograms) slicing through the body from top to bottom. They are combined by using graphic software – so-called volume rendering – to produce 3D images, or models of the body inside the wrappings. The 3D models can also be virtually cut so that cross-sections of the body can be analysed. The data can also be used for 3D printing. We have been able to see and physically hold replicas of Tamut’s amulets for the first time even though they are still where the embalmers placed them thousands of years ago.

Q: What was the biggest challenge you faced curating this exhibition?

A: Unlike most other temporary exhibitions, we had no idea of what we were going to tell at the beginning of the development phase. We knew the exhibition will focus on six mummified individuals from ancient Egypt, but we didn’t know what they would reveal before CT-scanning them. It was an exciting challenge to build the exhibition around the discoveries we made throughout the research phase and to be led by what the mummies had to tell.

Q: What is the most fascinating thing you’ve learned while pulling together this exhibition?

A: Even though we knew mummification techniques varied greatly from one mummy to another, CT scans confirmed that there are not two identical mummified individuals. The techniques evolved and changed according to the period and region, possibly due to the workshop in which mummification was performed. When present, amulets with differing shapes and made from a range of materials were placed in different locations throughout the body by the embalmers.

The plaque in Tamut’s arteries also tells us she suffered atherosclerosis and she would have been at risk of a stroke or heart attack. Cardiovascular diseases are often regarded as a modern problem, but they appear to have a long history.

Q: Is there anything else you’d like to share with media and the public?

A: Methods usually employed by physical anthropologists and forensic archaeologists to analyse skeletal remains were used to determine each mummy’s approximate age-at-death and confirm their sex.

In the case of Nestawedjat, these methods helped re-establish her identity. Also, all four adults appear to have lived into middle adulthood (thirty-five to forty-nine years) but the CT scans revealed that they suffered from very poor dental health. Tooth decay and numerous dental abscesses were found, leading to the loss of several teeth in some individuals.

A similar pattern has been observed in other adult mummies in the British Museum collection and dental disease may have been widespread, probably due to high levels of dental wear. Abscesses would have been a source of inflammation and great discomfort or pain. In some, they may have contributed to the person’s death.

Tickets

Ticket Prices	Member Prices
• Adult: \$21	• Adult: \$18.90
• Concession: \$18	• Concession: \$16.20
• Child (3 – 15 years): \$12	• Child (3-15 years): \$10.80
• Family (2A+2C): \$58	• Family (2A + 2Ch): \$52.20

Timed ticketing

Egyptian Mummies: Exploring Ancient Lives is a timed ticketed experience and is open daily from 9.40am to 5pm. Entry times commence at 9.40am daily, then at 20 minute intervals through to the last entry at 4pm. Please arrive 10 minutes before your scheduled ticket entry time. For example if your ticket time is 10am please arrive at the museum no later than 9.50am.

Why is entry timed?

Timed ticketing helps us make people's visit more enjoyable. It gives them the time to view this stunning exhibition at their leisure. Once inside, visitors are welcome to stay as long as they wish to. Pass outs are not available.

School resources

School bookings

School bookings are available for schools and groups (10 or more) of children up to 15 years. A timed admission system manages movements through the exhibition to optimise your visit experience.

Groups can manage rotations by including a Museum 'General Visit', or booking a school program or Sciencentre visit. You will be provided with a group visit itinerary by our booking office.

For more information phone the booking office between 8.15am and 3.30pm Monday to Friday on 3840 7608.

Win

To celebrate *Egyptian Mummies: Exploring Ancient Lives* at Queensland Museum we are offering the chance to win a trip for two to London. To go into the draw to win this holiday of a lifetime, visit *Egyptian Mummies: Exploring Ancient Lives* and register via our iPad station outside the exhibition entry on level 3.

Public Programs

After Dark

For the ultimate post-work knock-off session head to the Museum for After Dark to view *Egyptian Mummies: Exploring Ancient Lives*. Explore the museum, grab and drink and enjoy expert talks, demonstrations, live music and entertainment.

A Night at the Museum

Explore the Museum as the sun goes down at our night time adventure for families and children, with a special Egyptian theme.

School holiday program

During the school holidays Queensland Museum will be running hands-on holiday programming.

Museum Detectives

Holiday Workshops for ages 7-12

Looking to entertain the kids these Easter school holidays? Our popular school holiday workshops are back and sure to keep hands and minds busy.

Children aged 7–12 years will don their detective caps and investigate objects in the lab. Inspired by our latest exhibition, *Egyptian Mummies: Exploring Ancient Lives*, children will get hands-on with their detective skills and use cameras, UV light, magnifiers and x-rays to reveal hidden clues.

Mummies Shop

Loved your mummy experience at the Queensland Museum? Then a visit to the Egyptian Mummies Shop on Level 3 is a must for those wanting to take home a souvenir to remember their experience. There is a range of Egyptian Mummies themed giftware, books and trinkets, including a beautiful exhibition catalogue, featuring highlights from *Egyptian Mummies: Exploring Ancient Lives*.

Food and Beverage

It's easy to work up an appetite when exploring the museum. To keep the hunger at bay stop by our cafe at Queensland Museum, near the Whale Mall, and explore the new menu fit for Cleopatra.

The Café caters for all ages and offers a range of healthy meals, sandwiches, snacks, coffee, drinks and various specials throughout the day.

Opening hours

Monday – Friday 7.30am – 5.00pm
Saturday – Sunday 9.30am – 5.00pm

The café is also available for venue hire and is a unique functions venue in the heart of Brisbane's Cultural Precinct, just minutes from the CBD.

For any enquiries please contact (07) 3840 7730 or email events@qm.qld.gov.au

Please note:

Food and beverages are not allowed inside the Museum exhibit halls or theatres



Media enquiries

A range of images of exhibition objects is available for download and use by media via the *Egyptian Mummies: Exploring Ancient Lives* website. Supplied photo captions and credits — included in the image gallery — must accompany publication.

<http://www.qm.qld.gov.au/mummies>

media@qm.qld.gov.au

Christine Robertson, (07) 3840 7789, 0417 741 710

Kylie Hay, (07) 3842 9388, 0434 565 852

Social media

Facebook: [Facebook.com/qldmuseum](https://www.facebook.com/qldmuseum)

Twitter: [@qldmuseum](https://twitter.com/qldmuseum)

Instagram: [qldmuseum](https://www.instagram.com/qldmuseum)

[#qldmuseum](https://www.instagram.com/qldmuseum)

[#mummiesqm](https://www.instagram.com/qldmuseum)

www.qm.qld.gov.au/mummies