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Your suggestions
and/or
contributions
to your bulletin
are welcome.

Thank you!

Swedish-Egyptian Society

2007-10-05

Årgång 7, nummer 16

Every time I look at the date of the previous bulletin, I feel guilty that it has been so long since the previous issue! I hope this extra long issue will compensate for that!

This issue will be dedicated to Alexandria, mainly because of the 5th anniversary of Bibliotheca Alexandrina. News of the Society to be found on the center pages.

In addition to the better known cultural landmarks, such as its light house, its old or modern Bibliotheca, its "promenade" and beaches, Alexandria has also been the seat of numerous buildings, private as a royal palace and residences or public as the Casino San Stefano as well as hotels and pastry shops, which all, in different ways, contributed to the well deserved nick name "Princess of the Mediterranean".

The Antoniadis Palace and Gardens were much more famous when they were the gathering place for the social elite and later the guest house of visiting royalties and dignitaries, as well as hosting the signing ceremony of the 1936 treaty, the creation of the League of the Arab States in 1946 and the first meeting of the Egyptian Olympic Committee.

A miniature version of the Palace of Versailles, the Palace was built in the 19th century on the initiative of its original owner, Sir John Antoniadis, a British subject with his roots from the Greek island of Lemnos and the perfect prototype of the "cosmopolitan citizen of Alexandria" and a major benefactor of the city and its Greek community.

The villa had a total living area of 2 859 square meters over three floors and the gardens extended over an area of 49 acres including the Antoniadis Gardens, the Flower Garden, the Zoological and Botanical Garden as well as the Nozha Garden (once a residential suburb and the home of Callimachus (310–240 BC), then head librarian of the ancient Library of Alexandria). The villa is listed as historical monument



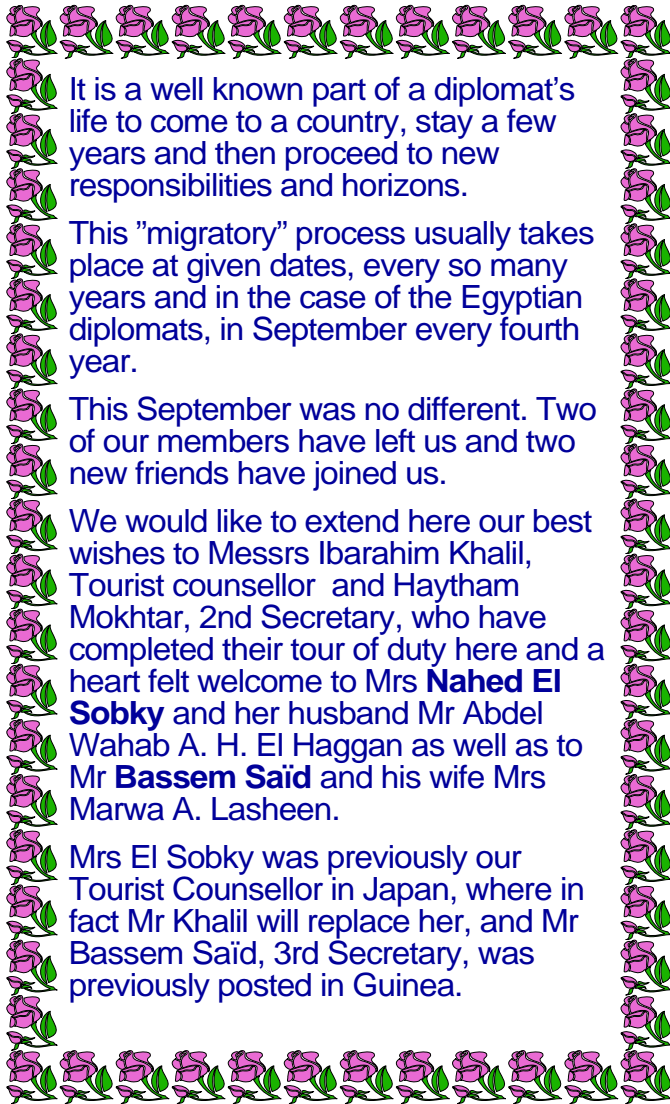
1 250, and the family mansion, its grounds and gardens were donated by the son of its founder, Sir Anthony Antoniadis, to the Alexandria Town Council.



Some rearrangements were made after 1952 to enlarge the Nozha and the Zoological park. In 1970 the villa needed to be renovated, but the gardens were "still going strong".

Thanks to the initiative of ex-governor of the city of Alexandria, General Abdel-Salam Al-Mahgoub, the entire site, its art collections and furniture were donated to the Bibliotheca Alexandrina. As part of this arrangement the Villa is to be restored and its contents will be

(Continued on page 4)



It is a well known part of a diplomat's life to come to a country, stay a few years and then proceed to new responsibilities and horizons.

This "migratory" process usually takes place at given dates, every so many years and in the case of the Egyptian diplomats, in September every fourth year.

This September was no different. Two of our members have left us and two new friends have joined us.

We would like to extend here our best wishes to Messrs Ibarahim Khalil, Tourist counsellor and Haytham Mokhtar, 2nd Secretary, who have completed their tour of duty here and a heart felt welcome to Mrs **Nahed El Sobky** and her husband Mr Abdel Wahab A. H. El Haggan as well as to Mr **Bassem Saïd** and his wife Mrs Marwa A. Lasheen.

Mrs El Sobky was previously our Tourist Counsellor in Japan, where in fact Mr Khalil will replace her, and Mr Bassem Saïd, 3rd Secretary, was previously posted in Guinea.

ACTIVITIES, PAST AND FUTURE

On September 13th, some of us met at Sällskapet and listened to the second part of Mr Leif Hjärre's lecture on the discoveries in Egypt, from Napoleon until today. The first lecture covered the period until 1900 and this one the period from 1900 to 1950.

The wealth of knowledge and information Leif succeeded in passing on to those present during his lecture can only be defined as impressive.

He also disclosed, in direct answer to one of the questions placed by one of those present, some details about his forthcoming series, which will cover the period from 1950 till today.

The last activity for this year will take place on November 21st (± a day or so). The venue will be at Sällskapet and, provided our discussions with the intended lecturer have a successful outcome, the subject matter will be "The Siwa Oasis", and the special culture and history of its people.

For those who would like to make the most of this forthcoming lecture, we have gathered below a few facts and figures about Siwa.

Siwa has little in common with the other Western Oasis, except perhaps, that like these, it has had many names over the ages.

Its people, the Siwan, are mostly berbers who inhabited the area as early as 10 000 years BC. But it was the Greeks who "put Siwa on the map" with the discovery of the Oracle of Amun and popularised it with stories relating to the visit of Alexander the Great, which took place shortly after he founded Alexandria...

Siwa is situated 60 feet below sea level and has a population of about 23 000. Very difficult to access until recently it is famous, not only for its sites and history, but also for its olives and dates, its springs (nearly a thousand) and not the least for its October festival, a three day arrangement, during which the Siwans must settle all past disputes...

In spite of the transport facilities provided by modern times transportation, desert driving has special requirements and a lot of planning is a must, if a visit there is to be a pleasant and memorable souvenir!

MEDELHAVSMUSEET INFORMS

FALL 2007

EXCAVATIONS IN EGYPT

Nildeltats senantika städer **03 oktober**

Sentida gravar i gamla rikets bosättningar **10 oktober**

Understanding the central delta in antiquity **18 oktober 18.00**

MUMIES

Mumiens boning – En grav byggd för evigheten **24 oktober**

Mumier och mumiemani **31 oktober**
Mumier ur ett bevarande perspektiv **07 november**

Mumier och röntgen **14 november**

All lecture are scheduled to start at 18.00

Title language = language in which the lecture will be delivered.

Medelhavsmuseet

Fredsgatan 2
Entrance fee SEK 60:-
Phone 08 519 550 50

LESS KNOWN FACTS ABOUT EGYPT

Obviously, none of the space here will be about the Pyramids or other famous sights and monuments.

The prime objective of these lines is precisely to focus on facts not so well known. Facts that may relate to Helwan, a well known spa 30 km south of Cairo, migratory birds stopovers or the "forgotten" revolutions of Egypt

Helwan of today may be more known as an industrial district rather than a spa, but the fact is that "Hammamat Helwan" or "Helouan-les Bains", as it used to be called because its springs had a chemical composition so similar to those of French Aix-les Bains, was very well known long before the industrial processes that made her famous in modern times.

Its sulfur and saline springs were known even in ancient times, but "rediscovered" towards 1870. These and its warm and dry desert climate made Helwan particularly suitable for the treatment of rheumatic and lung conditions, catarrhs and all such cases, where cold and damp must be avoided. Furthermore, in Helwan, the stony soil and the strong sunshine make the air unusually pure and dust free.

There are many viewpoints offering extensive prospects of the Nile Valley and the Pyramids of Saqqara, Dahshur and even Giza. On this favored spot, with its hot springs, its agreeable climate and its beautiful scenery, an artificial oasis was created in the second half of the 19th C. by Khedive Ismail and his son Taufiq, involving the transport of fertile soil from a considerable distance.



Quails, herons and ducks are only three out of the nearly 500 species of birds, who live or transit every year via Egypt, when the cold weather of Europe chases thousands of birds towards Africa. Though none has yet been quarantined they have to be treated with a suitable mixture of hospitality and caution, especially since the avian flu made the headlines of most newspapers and broadcasts.

Although blood tests and other precautionary measures are taken, the Egyptian hospitality extends to birds also and several protected areas have been set for their benefit.

Egypt is indeed a major stopover for migrating birds just as it has been for the old merchant route of the mechanical species known as "aircraft".

Special programs coordinated by the Ministry of Environment and the various governorates and law enforcement agencies ensure that correct procedures are respected during the hunting season. The same applies for the monitoring of the migratory birds at several locations and though no sign of flu has been detected vigilance remains a must.

Egypt has adhered to several international conventions for the protection of the migratory birds and, while hunting is permitted, it is strictly regulated as to where, when and how, bird watching is encouraged and several facilities provided for that purpose in such places these winged visitors prefer, near lakes and swamps. Fayoum and the Lake Karoun, in fact the "depression of Karun", is one such region along with Siwa (see also on page 2, but no birds there..) and Farafra on the birds' way south.

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The rapid industrial development of the town and surrounding area in recent years has largely destroyed the image of the fashionable international spa of the turn of the century. The pattern of the area is now set by its large metalworking plants (aircraft and automobile assembly), factories producing cement, lime and fertilizers, a large power station and steelworks as well as its "own" university with a wide spectrum of faculties ranging from Applied Arts to Computer Science and campus activities (see picture) that include Sports, Arts and Culture

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(Cont'd from page 1)

exhibited as part of the Sir John Antoniadis collection. This will also reinforce the role of the Bibliotheca Alexandrina as a major actor in revitalizing the city of Alexandria.

With a clear strategy for the future and a comprehensive vision of the twenty-first century institution, the Bibliotheca Alexandrina is much more than a library; it is an international center of knowledge and the promoter of dialogue and understanding between peoples and cultures. It is also in this spirit that the Alex-Med, officially the Alexandria and Mediterranean Research Center, was created in April 2003 as a part of Bibliotheca Alexandrina.

This specialized center, working closely with Euro-Mediterranean institutions, will focus on researching, documenting and disseminating the city's heritage. It also seeks to encourage dialogue and mutual understanding to reinforce the Mediterranean's role as a meeting point of today's civilization.



Above and opposite: Two of the several Greek style statues of Sir John Antoniadis collection.

Hence, Alex-Med participates in projects to preserve and manage the heritage of the city and honors the past to invest in the future by rehabilitating the Villa Antoniadis and its gardens, as well as many other buildings.

The Villa Antoniadis will host some of the

Bibliotheca Alexandrina events and become a center for scholarship on Alexandria and the Mediterranean. As such it will be a Research Center as well as a guest house for visitors and researchers. It will also contain a museum with exhibition space, along with thematic gardens, a horticulture center and even an outdoor theater. It will also have an art center, meeting rooms and workshop facilities.



The renovation has been entrusted to Dr Mohamad Awad and it aims to preserve and manage a unique heritage site so as to make it a source of enrichment and pleasure to future generations.

SOME FACTS, FIGURES AND LINKS

The estimated budget for renovation will be about 4 millions US dollars, of which 2,5 millions for renovating the Villa, 1 million for renovation of the gardens, and the balance for furniture and equipment.

The Antoniadis villa and gardens are just 300-400m from Sidi Gaber Train Station and 10 minutes from Nouzha Airport.

http://www.euromedheritage.net/adopt/adopt_gallery/alexandria.htm

<http://www.onassis.gr/english/grants/antoniades.php>

http://www.delegy.ec.europa.eu/en/Sites_of_special_interest/1.asp

http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Palais_d'Antoniadis_%C3%A0_Alexandrie