1011701 ISSUE 1 SEPTEMBER 2006 The Amarna Project and Amarna Trust newsletter



A princess from Boundary Stela S . (object 34625).

Introducing 'Horizon' and The Amarna Trust

The ancient Egyptian city of Tell el-Amarna (or simply Amarna) was the short-lived capital built by the 'heretic' Pharaoh Akhenaten and abandoned shortly after his death (c. 1332 BCE). As well as its historic interest Amarna remains the largest readily accessible living-site from ancient Egypt. It is thus simultaneously the key to a chapter in the history of religious experience and to a fuller understanding of what it was like to be an ancient Egyptian. There is no other site like it.

Archaeology, although more popular than ever before, nevertheless attracts limited public expenditure. Despite the continuing support of the Egypt Exploration Society (whose association with Amarna extends back over a century) and the contributions made by the Supreme Council of Antiquities to administering the site, much that needs to be done can only by achieved by outside support. The research agenda of the EES remains at the heart of what we do at Amarna. Over the years, however, the remit of the Amarna Project has extended to include repairs to ancient buildings, improvements to visitor access, and the many tasks needed to assist the Supreme Council of Antiquities in the creation of a site museum. It is to help channel support to a widening remit that the Amarna Trust has been set up, a charity registered with the Charity Commission of the United Kingdom. Horizon is its newsletter. It is intended that it will appear twice in each year and will illustrate the full range of activities undertaken both at Amarna and in furtherance of its wider aim of using Amarna as an educational resource

At the same time the Amarna web-site, which has so far been kindly hosted by the McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research in Cambridge, will move to a new address. That address is www.amarnasite.com. The Trust will have its own web-site: www.amarnatrust.com. Each issue of Horizon will be available as a downloadable pdf file on both.

Archaeology has a diverse agenda. It teaches us about the roots of human society. Its sites and museums are part of the world that we construct around us. How they tell their stories and how far they reach out and encourage people to discover more is an important responsibility for all involved. Horizon will do its job if, for Amarna, it helps to sustain this wider agenda.

Barry Kemp

Chairman of the Trustees



The Amarna plain from the north cliffs. The southern headland, 10 kms away, forms part of the horizon. The North Palace occupies the island of desert in the fields in the middle of the picture.



The new god. The Aten, the power of the sun visible through the sun's disc, experienced by the touch of its rays. It required large temples and mountains of food offerings. Picture of the Aten temple in the tomb of the high priest Meryra at Amarna.

The Amarna story

Amarna is famous for being the place chosen by Akhenaten as sacred to the sun-god, the Aten, the sole divine force that Akhenaten wished to recognise. It thus has a place in the history of questing for spiritual understanding. Yet he remains an enigma, the written sources for his reign insufficient to answer quite fundamental questions.

Was he an early representative - a forerunner of the prophets - of the assertive monotheism that came to characterise the Middle East in later periods? He gave great emphasis to the word 'truth', and his courtiers praised him for his ethical teaching, but what that teaching was has not been found. The fact that he was not an outsider to his community but the ruler of a powerful and wealthy kingdom makes it particularly hard to judge him. It is easy to suspect motives that compromised his vision. By making himself the sole interpreter of spiritual truth was he using religion to enhance his own position with respect to powerful priesthoods of established cults? His unique position gave him the means to impose his vision on society and to pursue his plans with speed. It also linked his ideas inextricably with dynastic politics. How far the rejection of his vision was due to widespread hostility to his ideas and how far it was imposed by the military rulers that succeeded his short-lived heirs are again questions that still remain unanswered.



The facial features that stamp Akhenaten's reign. Limestone sculptor's trial piece, discovered at Amarna in 2005. The face is probably that of Akhenaten himself (object 34931).



Fragment of a limestone block with traces of paint. Original place of discovery at Amarna unknown; thrown away by a previous generation of archaeologists (S.2564).



Archaeological excavation within an area of small houses, March 2005.



Analysis of the complex rhythm of the ancient city plan is part of the research agenda.

Akhenaten's reign coincided with a peak in artistic creativity. Draughtsmen rapidly assimilated new themes to carve on the walls of temples and tombs that celebrated the variety of human life on whose behalf Akhenaten laboured. They mastered the distinctive style in which Akhenaten wanted himself and members of his family portrayed. Sculptors of statues did the same, men trained to perfection in the working of the hardest of stones. Amarna was quickly home to large numbers of exquisitely modelled statues of Akhenaten, Nefertiti and other members of the royal family. Nowhere is the hostility to Akhenaten by his successors more visible than in the smashing of most of these statues in the years following his death (and future issues of Horizon will report on how the study of the thousands of statue fragments recovered is helping to document the full scope of Amarna's original statue programme).

By his own account Akhenaten journeyed to Amarna in the fifth year of his reign, guided by the Aten. Having 'discovered' this tract of unoccupied desert (named by him the 'Horizon of the Aten', and conveniently served by farmlands across the river) he made it the centre of his life

and administration. Very soon an army of officials, priests, and military officers, each with their own companies of dependants and followers, landed and set about building a city. Palaces and temples went up, and beside them grew an irregular city of mud-brick houses. In the seventeenth year of his reign, he died. The experiment was over. His short-lived heirs, who included Tutankhamun, failed to maintain it.

Later kings allowed his memory no reverence and his schemes no scope to continue. His huge and extensively decorated stone buildings were demolished. The several tens of thousands of people who had moved there soon departed, leaving their houses to fall into ruin and to become the archaeological site that is now a precious relic of how one major ancient community lived.

It is this second face of Amarna – the city of rich and poor, their houses, their possessions, their graves – that offers boundless scope to archaeological investigation. It is here that the Amarna Project makes its principal contributions.



Imagining Amarna as it was. A mode of a portion of the city (made for the exhibition Pharaohs of the Sun, inaugurated in November 1999 at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts).



Akhenaten, Nefertiti behind him, worship the Aten. Part of the shrine from the house of the high priest Panehsy (Egyptian Museum, Cairo).



In their religion the people of the city had their own concerns. The face of the goddess Hathor modelled on a pottery vessel (object 34149).



Fragments of smashed statues of the royal family form another of the Project's research themes.

Amarna expeditions

a century of more than archaeology

Archaeologists have worked at Amarna for over a century (though with major breaks in continuity). The first was Flinders Petrie (assisted by an eighteen-year old Howard Carter) in 1892. Norman de Garis Davies copied all the tombs between 1902 and 1907; also in 1907 came Ludwig Borchardt to make the trial excavations that led to the major programme of work of the Deutsche Orientgesellschaft between 1911 and 1914. The first season of the Egypt Exploration Fund (later Society) began on January 18th 1921, directed by Thomas Eric Peet. And so on. Outline histories of work and discovery at Amarna have already been written, though there is ample scope for more.



Photograph of the last day of the EES work in 1936, labelled 'The whistle goes for the last time of all.' At a quick count around 111 workmen and girls were present, plus one foreman (standing on a wall) and an archaeologist (in white shirt and trousers).



Looking after our interests. Representatives of the antiquities inspectorates of el-Minia and Mallawi, and of the police and tourist police, discuss their responsibilities at the start of a season.

History of this kind is essentially the work-experiences of foreigners, accounts of what the archaeologists have achieved. This is not unreasonable given that the discovery of knowledge and the finding of things of value define the purpose of the various expeditions. There is, however, another side, an incidental history.



The caretaker of the expedition house since 1978, Mohammed Omar Osman (left); and long-distance taxi driver Ali Abd Ellah (right) who has worked for the expedition from the around same time.

I am aware that, over the years, there has come about through the presence of the expedition an odd little patch of interaction with the people of the local villages and towns, involving workers, guards and policemen, representatives of various branches of the Egyptian administration (not least the Inspectorate of Antiquities), and those - and there are many - who extend their hospitality. For a few months each year two very different societies brush against each other. It is, however, a superficial engagement. My guess (strengthened by passing remarks in the archives) is that it has always been like that. For the archaeologist the local people occupy something like an area of peripheral vision and more or less cease to exist between seasons; for their part we must appear, for the short times we are amongst them, a demanding and rather wasteful group of people with the potential for arbitrary decisions that can have a marked effect on individuals. How, I wonder, was the closure of the EES work in 1936 viewed by those most directly affected?

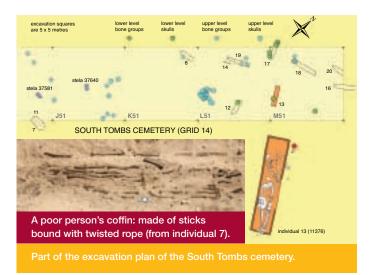
Even despite the slightness of documentary evidence, in English or Arabic, I would like the history and character of this century of interaction to be one of the themes of Horizon; and for it to extend more generally into aspects of the rich and varied – and also rapidly changing – life of the local society to which we are intermittently neighbours.

Notes from the field the poor of Amarna

For a long time it was a puzzle as to where the ordinary citizens of Amarna had been buried, all those who were not officials and in a position to have decorated rock tombs made for themselves. An estimate published in 1999 put the figure of likely deaths during the city's occupation at between six and fourteen thousand.

The author of the estimate expressed surprise at the absence of a large cemetery and speculated that the dead were buried either in their home cemeteries elsewhere or in a cemetery on the west bank not yet discovered. An earlier excavator at Amarna, F. Ll. Griffith, had formed a similar estimate, and at the end of his 1924 season allowed his head workman 'with a chosen band of assistants' to undertake a search of his own (Griffith called it 'a fling') for a cemetery, but without success.

In recent years the puzzle has been solved. Thanks to the patience and archaeological eye of surveyor Helen Fenwick, we now have five such cemeteries marked on the map. This year we have started to investigate one of them.



To reach it one heads out on the road to the tomb of the god's father Ay, no. 25, belonging to the southern group of rock tombs. Not far behind Ay's tomb, the desert drops away again to a shallow valley. Our cemetery is on the far side, the graves originally dug



View south-westwards along the excavation trench, mid-season.

into a terrace of clean yellow sand beside the channel cut by floodwaters from occasional desert storms. Those floodwaters had washed out human bones and potsherds, scattering them across the desert plain in front of the valley mouth. Last year we made a methodical collection of both, and the reports by two of our experts (Jerry Rose and Pamela Rose, respectively) encouraged us to make the site the main focus of our excavation. For six weeks, under the supervision of archaeologists Mary Shepperson and Lindsay Ambridge, a trench measuring 35 metres long by 5 wide was excavated across the full width of the sand terrace, roughly in the middle of the cemetery, as far as we can tell from signs on the surface.

It quickly emerged that all the burials bar one had been made in fairly shallow pits dug directly into the sand. It proved to be not possible to detect the edges of the original graves, for the sand is almost uniform in appearance at all depths and from one end of the trench to the other. Thus all the sand, including what originally lay between the graves, had to be removed. It also emerged that the graves had been systematically robbed, probably long ago when the cemetery was still recent. Burials had been located and bodies dragged out, sometimes by the head, leaving the legs behind on the floor of the grave pit. As the excavation progressed, clusters of bones were found at all levels, their positions marked on a plan, and at the end of each day were transported back to the expedition house for study.



Faience pendant beads found in the sand of the cemetery, quite possibly from the same original necklace.

The final composite plan shows a group of regularly spaced graves at the (local) east end, but over the remainder only clusters of bones even though the sand was dug to the same depth across the full length of the trench. The regular spacing might reflect the marking of each grave with a pile of the dark stones that now lie scattered across the surface. Two graves, however, had been marked with limestone stelae, one with the unusual design of triple points across the top. Both have recessed fronts as if to hold a plaque of another material. A possible parallel is provided by a stela in the Petrie Museum (UC 35817) where the plaque is made of bronze (and shows Osiris).

The people themselves had been placed in the grave pits, seemingly on their backs, but not all lying in the same direction. Some pits and bodies were aligned roughly east to west and others at right-angles. One lay in a badly decayed wooden coffin, but the rest had been wrapped in linen or enclosed in containers made of basketry or sticks bound together with rope. One grave stood apart from the others, almost overlooking the wadi edge. It had been built as a single brick chamber with vaulted roof. It had been broken open at one end and the body dragged out. Nearby, in the sand, lay fine crumpled gold leaf. Was this from the coffin, which would have then repaid the robbers' efforts?

Robbers are rarely if ever truly thorough in their work, especially when rooting around in loose sand. The general lack of small finds is likely to be a sign that, for most of the bodies, not much was buried with them at all. By the end the careful sieving of the sand had yielded approximately 80 beads and small amulets, and two scarabs that were quite old at the time of burial. Many potsherds were recovered but these only reinforced the feeling that these were the burials of poor people. Almost all the sherds came from bowls and storage jars made from the local riverbank clay. Hardly any came from the better-quality amphorae which were used to store wine and beer and other commodities.



Unusual limestone stela (or tombstone), as found in the sand.

The New Kingdom was a prosperous time in Egypt. Outside Thebes, however, relatively few cemeteries have been properly excavated and recorded. Our cemetery is a welcome addition in other respects. It seems to be for people of uniformly low standing in life, thus representative of a broad swathe of the population that was evidently poor yet with friends or relatives able to undertake a neat burial in a proper cemetery. These are likely to be, therefore, the ordinary citizens who lived in all those small mud-brick houses that, from time to time, we carefully excavate. And so they must all have died within the space of around the twenty years that Amarna was occupied. Many of them must have known each other. This makes our cemetery very special indeed. It is rare to find the remains of a large ancient population of people alive at the same time. It is now up to the skills of the modern bone specialist to reconstruct how they lived and died. Many more seasons are going to be needed before we have a sample of sufficient size, however.

The population estimate is by Sue D'Auria, to be found in R.E. Freed, Y.J. Markowitz and S.H. D'Auria, *Pharaohs of the Sun; Akhenaten, Nefertiti and Tutankhamen*. Boston, Museum of Fine Arts and London, Thames and Hudson 1999, p.166. Griffith's remarks are in his preliminary report published in volume 10 of the *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* for 1924, p. 303.

Amarna lives

reading people's bones

Professor Jerry Rose, physical anthropologist from the University of Arkansas, examined the human remains more or less as they were brought from the excavation.

They represent a minimum number of 27 individuals. Amongst them only a single infant could be recognised. Yet the high proportion of juveniles and the virtual absence of old adults suggests that this population lived under conditions of high stress and suffered high mortality at every age. Infants must have been disposed of in some other way (the bones of one were found beside the footing of a wall inside one of the very small houses dug last year). Damage to the spinal column in several instances shows that this young population was carrying loads that were too heavy. Distinctive patterns of minor alteration on the bone around the eye sockets point to anaemia, perhaps from an iron-deficient diet. These were people leading hard lives.



Discovery a new boundary stela



View of stela H, its niche still partly filled with sand. The stela panel itself is in the middle, the remains of the statue to the right



Map of the southern part of the Amarna plain showing the location of boundary stelae. The newly recognised stela is 'H'.

Akhenaten marked the edges of his city with a series of large tablets carved into the desert hillsides that face towards the Nile. On each tablet was incised his foundation decrees, in lines of hieroglyphs. Beside many of the tablets statues of Akhenaten, Nefertiti and some of his daughters were carved as well. Although some had been known for many years, the first person to seek out the complete set was Flinders Petrie who methodically tramped around the city limits in the winter of 1891–2, and eventually located fourteen. A fifteenth was identified shortly afterwards. All were given their own capital Latin letter to identify them.

More than a century later we can report on the existence of a sixteenth. It was spotted by Helen Fenwick during her survey and mapping of the desert plain in which she has far exceeded the great Petrie in areas covered on foot. It lies on the line of stelae which cross the broad flat valley in the south-east part of Amarna, some distance below and to the south-west of stela R. At the back of a wide niche a raised tablet has been carved, and beside it the rough shape of a statue pair is evident. The rock is soft and full of coin-like fossils. It can never have been carved with hieroglyphs. Did the sculptors, as so often at Amarna, coat the surfaces with gypsum and carve into that?

The niche is still partly filled with sand which someone in the past has dug over. Sherds, stone tools and pieces of stone furniture have been brought to the surface. The niche is therefore in itself an archaeological site, perhaps with remains from a work-camp, to be properly excavated in the future.

The new stela needs its own unique letter of identification. Whatever letter is chosen it will be out of the logical sequence. One that Petrie did not use was H, and that is the one we have selected.



Amarna on screen

finding Nefertiti once more

The 2006 Amarna season began with a diversion. A German television film-maker, Dr Luise Wagner-Roos, of the company Digital Drama, was in Egypt to film sequences for a documentary on the original discovery of the famous painted bust of Queen Nefertiti and on what subsequently happened to it.

She and her team put in three long days of work at Amarna itself, having with them a fine copy of the bust and an actor (Holger Schultz) dressed to play the part of Ludwig Borchardt, the German Egyptologist who discovered the bust, on December 6th, 1912, in the house of the sculptor Thutmose.



Environmental shock. The salt mine at Merkers in Thuringia, 300 kms southwest of Berlin, where, 500 metres below ground, Nefertiti spent a few weeks in the final stage of the 1939–45 war, in company with Germany's entire gold and currency reserves. All were quickly restored to German ownership after the capture of the mine by American forces in April 1945.

In Borchardt's time, at the end of a season of digging, the Egyptian government permitted a division of finds to take place between a representative of the Egyptian Museum and the excavator. Borchardt's division took place at his Amarna dig house (where we now live). The Egyptian government representative was a French scholar, Gustave Lefebvre, sixteen years his junior. Lefebvre was faced with a mass of fine pieces of sculpture displayed in cramped premises. He chose several for the Egyptian Museum. He did not choose the painted Nefertiti bust, which now seems an astonishing oversight. Lefebvre, however, was working at a considerable disadvantage, not least in being faced, in Borchardt, with an older person well known for his forceful character. Lefebvre's omission need not be ascribed to trickery on Borchardt's part although the accusation has sometimes been made.

Luise wanted Borchardt to discover Nefertiti all over again. The original house of Thutmose still stands, and the place where Nefertiti was found can still be identified. But the location we chose for the re-enactment is a ruined building from the

1920s near the dig house. Rubble was heaped into a corner, a few workmen were engaged to dig it out again, Dr Borchardt himself, in smart khaki attire, made an appearance, and there, in the sand and the dust were patches of colour – a rounded area of blue and a flattish area of yellow with red, green and blue patches (Nefertiti's necklace). Dr Borchardt took over, brushed around it, and suddenly we saw Nefertiti nose down.

For a short time, as with everything else that Borchardt sent back to Germany from Amarna, the bust was the personal possession of James Simon, Borchardt's wealthy patron. But then he gave the bust and everything else to the Berlin Egyptian museum. The Egyptian government has, more than once, asked for it back. The most famous occasion was to mark the accession of the Egyptian King Fuad in 1933. The request was refused by Adolf Hitler personally. Egypt still wants her back. If she ever did return, where should she go? To the new national museum at Giza or the museum being built at el-Minia? Or should we leave one of the cases at the Amarna site museum empty, just in case?



Re-enacting the moment when Nefertiti's bust reappeared after three thousand years spent face down in the sand.



Film director Luise
Wagner-Roos brings
Nefertiti (actually a copy
of the bust in Berlin)
back to Amarna.

From the Archives Mr Newton's Grave

'The shadow of Mr. Newton's death lies heavily upon the work of the Egypt Exploration Society at El-'Amarnah this year.' Thus began the season's report for 1925 in the Journal of Egyptian Archaeology. Francis Newton, the field director whose plan for the season was to complete the excavation of the North Palace, died in the American Hospital at Asyut, on Christmas day 1924. He was 46.

The cause of death was *Encephalitis lethargica* ('sleeping sickness'), a disorder of the central nervous system that occurred in epidemics in Europe and the United States of America about the time of World War I and the 1920s, and might have been connected with the influenza epidemic of the same era.

Out of respect for the wishes of his distraught mother the EES agreed to cover the expenses of shipping Newton's coffin back for burial in England. This did not happen. The health authorities in Egypt, uncertain (as we still are) as to the exact means by which Newton's illness was transmitted, insisted on immediate burial. His obituary note states only that he was buried in Asyut. But where exactly, and does his grave survive? Out of simple curiosity I visited Asyut in May, 2005.

In the early decades of the 20th century Asyut was an important centre of western (specifically American) evangelical Christian missionary activity. This had grown from the bold vision of John Hogg, a Scottish missionary who, in the mid-nineteenth century, had set out to convert the Copts of Egypt to Presbyterianism as a first step in converting the entire population of Egypt. Its legacy is the hospital, a substantial college in its own grounds (now the 'Modern Salam School' in one of Asyut's main streets), and a well-kept church that now bears the name First Evangelical Church.

The hospital, apparently newly opened at the time of Newton's death, is now the El-Iman Maternity Hospital. At the time of my visit it was undergoing substantial refurbishment paid for by the USA but still very much in use, the high and wide upstairs corridors lined with women and their babies, many squatting on the floor and chatting. An enquiry in the medical records section, addressed to staff obviously working in difficult circumstances, drew the answer that records as far back as 1924 had not been retained.



The best preserved corner of the Protestant cemetery of Asyut, near Deir Durunka.



Obituary portrait of Francis Newton.



The old American Hospital in Asyut (now the El-Iman Maternity Hospital) where Francis Newton died, 25.12.24.

At the First Evangelical Church, pastor Bagi Sadika also had no knowledge of Newton's death. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, so he thought, around seventy or eighty western missionary families had lived in Asyut, and so Newton's death would probably not have been a memorable event. He did, however, supply the next lead to follow. Foreigners of that time were buried in a graveyard at Deir Durunka, four kilometres outside Asyut, along the road that skirts the foot of the high desert cliff. He warned me that it had been badly damaged in a torrential rainstorm in November 1994 (one mostly remembered for the explosion of a derailed gasoline train at a nearby military depot).

The graveyard, in its walled enclosure, lies off the road, a short distance along a narrow lane bounded by the walls of brick tombs of some of the Coptic families of Asyut. It has indeed been damaged, and not only by the storm. It has been the object of vandalism and tomb robbing. A large underground vault fitted with shelves is now open to the sky, revealing open coffins, bones and lengths of old shroud. Mr Hogg's handsome tomb has not escaped attack. Almost all the headstones of the individual graves are missing. Of the few that remain one commemorates: 'Sitt Assa Bilal. Rescued from slavery 1878. Faithful worker in P.M.I. Died Nov. 26 1939'.

Mr Newton's name is nowhere to be seen, but it seems unlikely that he was buried somewhere else. Maybe he was never given a headstone. Who would have paid for it? The correspondence preserved in the EES archives suggests that, following the burial, no further action was taken or interest expressed in his grave. The EES turned instead to creating a memorial for Newton in the form of a monograph, *The mural paintings of El 'Amarneh*, edited by H. Frankfort and published in 1929. It remains probably the most handsome book that the Society has ever produced. Complete with a dramatically shadowed portrait photograph of Newton, it achieves an ancient Egyptian ideal, that one's name is more securely preserved through a book than through a tombstone.

Reading note:

An affectionate account of John Hogg and of his astonishing dream of an Egypt wholly converted to evangelical Christianity is contained in a biography written by his daughter, Rena L. Hogg, *A master-builder on the Nile; being a record of the life and aims of John Hogg, D.D. Christian missionary*. New York, etc., Fleming H. Revell 1914.



The eastern side of the North Palace at Amarna, repaired by the Project in consultation with the Supreme Council of Antiquities of Egypt and under the supervision of Surésh Dhargalkar.

The Amarna Trust

The Amarna Trust is registered with the Charity Commission as no. 1113058. Its registered address is

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The objectives of the Trust are:

To advance public education and to promote the conservation, protection and improvement of the ancient city of Tell el-Amarna, Egypt and the surrounding area for the benefit of the public in particular but not exclusively by:

- i) creating a permanent facility for study (the research base – The Amarna Centre);
- ii) undertaking and supporting field research (and publishing the useful results of such research);
- iii) promoting training in archaeological field skills;
- iv) providing, and assisting in the provision of, lectures and publications in furtherance of the stated objects;
- v) developing displays and exhibitions at a site museum for the benefit of the public and an educational outreach programme for the benefit of pupils at schools; and
- vi) working in partnership with the Supreme Council of Antiquities of Egypt to maintain the ancient city for the benefit of the public.



The Amarna site museum in April 2006, a project of the Supreme Council of Antiquities (in conjunction with Mallinson Architects and Engineers Ltd).

The Amarna site museum in August 2006.

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For residents of the USA, donations can be made either to the Cambridge in America Foundation or to the Amarna Research Foundation (both 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organisations) with the request that the donation be made into a grant for The Amarna Trust.

Further information, including downloadable forms, are available at www.amarnatrust.com where you can also donate on-line.





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