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The Egyptian Cultural and Education Bureau
in association with the
British Egyptian Society and the Dakhleh Oasis Trust

Invites you to a lecture by

Dr Helen Whitehouse
Curator of the Egyptian and Nubian collections in the Ashmolean Museum,
Oxford

Roman Wall Paintings in the Dakhleh Oasis – An Evolving Story

At 4 Chesterfield Gardens, London W1 at 6.30 on Thursday 22 October 2009

The Dakhleh Oasis Project surveyed the Roman village site at Ismant el-Kharab in 1981, discovering and mapping many of the buildings which could be seen on the surface. Dr. Colin Hope of Monash University then began a series of campaigns which involved excavations in several houses, where rich finds of texts were recovered, and in the Temple of Tutu. Tutu was known from the New Kingdom onwards, but only from depictions and relief. There was no temple dedicated to his worship. So the temple at (ancient) Kellis was most important as it was unique. One shrine attached to the temple contained the mammisi, the birth house, of Tutu.

The mammisi is a room which is at present unique in Egypt. Its painted walls combine traditional Egyptian religious iconography with the kind of décor that was being used in public and private interiors all over the Roman empire, not least in Kellis itself – as confirmed by the limited clearance and recording of other structures in the village. Most recently, work has begun on the investigation of a substantial private dwelling with an elaborate interior plan and well-preserved paintings and stucco decoration: as yet only partly cleared, this 'well-appointed home' is already adding considerably to our knowledge of domestic architecture, not just in the Oasis, but in Roman Egypt as a whole.

Dr Helen Whitehouse is curator of the Egyptian and Nubian collections in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford. A researcher in both Egyptology and classical archaeology, she has a particular interest in the graphic art of Roman Egypt, ranging from wallpaintings and mosaics to paintings and drawings on papyrus. Since 1995, she has worked with the Dakhleh Oasis Project, studying and recording the wallpaintings uncovered at Kellis and Amheida.