

THE EGYPTIAN SOCIETY OF SOUTH AFRICA



In Memory of Keith Grenville



Keith Grenville

13 September 1935 - 26 August 2024

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It was with great sadness that we learned of the death on Monday 26th August, 2024 of the esteemed founder of The Egyptian Society of South Africa (TESSA). As a man of great presence and superb voice, his passion, knowledge, and talent was the driving force and mainstay of the society. He was Chairman for ten years from 1996 to 2006, but still took an active interest and was always there to give advice and encouragement. Unfortunately in the last couple of years ill health meant he could no longer take an active role in the society, but we knew he was there in spirit. His loss is inestimable. However, as in the ancient Egyptian tradition, if one's name is remembered, one gains immortality. Keith Grenville's name will live on in his legacy.

Born in England to a Jewish mother and an Italian Catholic father, his real surname was Benugli. Grenville is his stage name.

It is a fitting tribute to Keith that the society that he founded in 1996 is still active after 28 years.

On the occasion of the 21st anniversary of the Society, Keith wrote the following in a special anniversary booklet:

When I considered creating an "Egyptian" society in 1996, it never entered my mind that 21 years later I would be writing these words. With the energetic support of my Founding Committee coupled with the enthusiasm of the 153 Founding Members signed up on that memorable inaugural meeting on 4th November 1996, here we are at the 21st birthday of The Egyptian Society of South Africa. Coincidentally, on the same day in 1922, the first step of Tutankhamun's tomb was discovered.

To form the Founding Committee, I approached personal friends. The late Desmond Caywood, became the first Treasurer, an office he occupied with integrity until ill-health caused him to stand down. Carla Irving was enormously supportive following her first visit to Egypt, and became Secretary. Anlen Boshoff, then Curator of the Ancient Egyptian collection at Cape Town's SA Cultural History Museum, was Vice Chairman - a valuable link with the museum as our Constitution includes support of the museum's Egyptian collection - a link which, sadly, has weakened with the museum's re-organisation. Another significant member of that Founding Committee was the late Angus McBride, internationally recognized artist and illustrator, whose knowledge of ancient Egypt and irrepressible enthusiasm made him essential to the society. Angus designed our eloquent logo.

The most enduringly loyal member of that original Committee is Founding Member, Mireille Farah, whom I met following several messages from her offering support for the society. Mireille has served with distinction and diligence for the best part of 21 years. Her portfolio was, and remains, "Press & Public Relations". I hope she will continue for years to come.

That first Committee was also supported by Elizabeth Hedley, and as the year passed, Debbie Blinkhorn joined the Committee. A succession of dedicated people followed who

have ably served the society - Professor Anthony Humphreys as hard-working Chairman for 9 years from 2007, succeeded by Marilie van der Walt for one year. Mention must be made of the late Catherine le Sueur, Denise Bremridge who served for a time as Vice Chairman, Christine Paddon, and Johnny Johnston. Coleen Cox has been our highly valued and meticulous Librarian since July 200, a finer Librarian would be hard to find - loyally assisted by methodical Jackie Weitsz. Michael Beaumont was a fine Treasurer for 10 years, supported by his wife Shirley - both were heavily involved in society events, especially arrangements for visiting international guest lecturers. David Wolfaardt took over the job of treasurer when Michael stepped down. John Lombard painstakingly served for some years as Organiser and continues to assist on technical matters. Jane Mulder scrupulously organised and co-ordinated the successful national lecture tour marking our 10th anniversary year of the redoubtable Dr. Zahi Hawass in 2005, then Director of Egypt's Supreme Council of Antiquities.

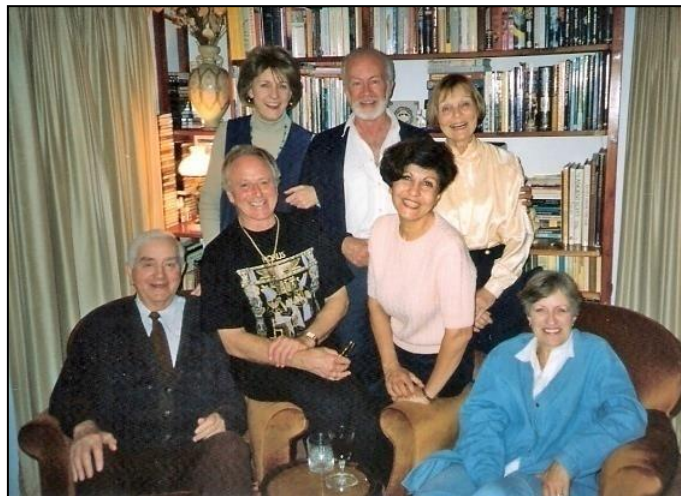
Jean Smith became Secretary in 2000, a role which she has performed rigorously with an ever-widening acceptance of responsibilities. The society would be in desperate straits without her boundless enthusiasm and input. Currently Jean Smith acts as both Chairman and Secretary.

Limited space prevents fuller acknowledgement of much in these wonderful 21 years - Nerine Dorman as Editor of SHEMU, Lila Komnick, Dianne Norman, Bill and Elaine Weckesser as Committee members, our excellent speakers, international guests, various meeting venues, improved facilities, donors, sponsors, Day Schools, St George's Grammar School management, and so on.

The Society has also been privileged to be addressed by a number of eminent international speakers.

In 1999 - Dr Toby Wilkinson; 2000 - Dr Kent Weeks; 2002 - Prof Mustafa el-Abbadi; 2003 - Dr Toby Wilkinson; 2005 - Dr Zahi Hawass; 2010 - Dr Joann Fletcher and Dr Stephen Buckley; 2013 - Dr Selima Ikram; 2014 - Dr Huub Pragt.

TESSA's existence depends on our loyal members and those who serve on the Committee, the administrative muscle of the society, now and in the future.



TESSA's first committee

Front: Desmond Cawood, Keith Grenville, Mireille Farah, Anlen Boshoff
Back: Carla Irving, Angus McBride, Elizabeth Hedley

For the 25th anniversary of the society on 4th November, 2021, Keith wrote the following message in a special anniversary booklet to mark the Silver Jubilee:

An everlasting memory of mine concerning the formation of this society on 4th November 1996 was the crowd of enthusiastic people who packed the large function room on the top floor of the historic Josephine Mill in Newlands as a result of media releases announcing the foundation meeting of the first-ever Egyptian society in South Africa. I recall people even sitting on the floor, hemming me in to a restricted floor space where I could just about move my feet when addressing the audience.

Those who were unable to get access to the room sat on the staircase; others could not even get into the building. Such was the enthusiasm. I had calculated that if we were able to sign up 60 members that evening we would be able to organise and run a society. A remarkable total of 153 members paid their subscriptions that same evening. Thus was established The Cape Town Egyptian Society, as we were originally called. The name was changed swiftly to the Egyptian Society of South Africa caused by the swelling membership from all over this country and from abroad.

TESSA's membership grew, and the society gained international repute. Keith also played a very active role in bringing international speakers to South Africa.

In September 2000 he escorted archaeologist Dr Kent Weeks as he delivered his lecture *The Lost Tomb* in Cape Town, Stellenbosch, Durban, Johannesburg and Pretoria. Keith spent two weeks driving Kent and his wife Susan around the country, and got to know them well.

In April 2002 he accompanied Egyptian Professor El Abbadi & his wife Professor Kararah who presented lectures *Alexandria in Cape Town* in Cape Town, Stellenbosch, Durban, and Johannesburg.

In July 2005 Dr Zahi Hawass was brought to South Africa by the Society to present his lecture *Recent Discoveries in the pyramids*. Although Keith played a very active role in this most ambitious project, unfortunately due to a sudden bout of ill-health he was not able to escort Dr Hawass during his lecture tour in Johannesburg and Pretoria. However his presence in Cape Town was of invaluable help to the coordinator of the tour, Jane Mulder. The two lectures delivered at The Baxter were sold out.

In September 2010 Drs Joann Fletcher and Stephen Buckley were brought out to present lectures at St George's Grammar School auditorium - *The search for Nefertiti* and *Testing the DNA of Tutankhamun*.

Other experts visiting Cape Town from abroad and who lectured the society were:

- July 1999 - Dr Toby Wilkinson - *Early Dynastic Egypt - New Light on a Dark Age* and September 2003 - *Genesis of the Pharaohs: rethinking the origins of ancient Egypt*.
- April 2013 - Dr Salima Ikram - *Mummies in ancient Egypt*
- October 2014 - Dr Huub Pragt - *The hidden tomb and the theft of Amarna art*
- September 2022 - Dr Heba Abd el Gawad - *Who owns Egypt's Dispersed Heritage ?*

LECTURES TO TESSA

Keith was a sought-after lecturer, and apart from the many lectures he gave to TESSA, he also lectured in a number of venues offering adult education. The following is a list of the 42 lectures he gave to TESSA:

- 24/02/1998 - *Akhenaton, before and after - winner or loser?*
- 24/10/1998 - Day School - *Hatshepsut, the female king*
- 22/06/1999 - *Ancient Egypt in Paris*
- 22/07/2000 - Day School - *I have seen yesterday; I know tomorrow*
- 21/08/2000 - *Lake Nasser and the Nubian Monuments*
- 28/07/2001 - *Abydos - anatomy of a temple: history & features of the most sacred site in ancient Egypt*
- 22/01/2002 - *Autopsy on Tutankhamun* - Keith, John Lombard, Angus McBride, Dr B. Brown
- 27/07/2002 - Day School - *Myths, Music & Theatre Magic*
- 27/08/2002 - *Sex & sexuality in ancient Egypt - Divine & Human*
- 28/01/2003 - *Western Desert safari & Middle Egypt Tour - based on the Society's 2002 tour*
- 26/07/2003 - Day School - *Akhenaten - Splendour of the sun disk*
- 24/08/2004 - *Egypt observed - words & images*
- 22/02/2005 - *The Grandeur of Karnak* (double lecture)
- 21/06/2005 - *The Valley of the Kings*
- 24/01/2006 - *The Hatshepsut Enigma*
- 23/01/2007 - *Priests, Princes and Pharaohs* (double lecture)
- 21/07/2007 - Day School - *Bull, Bird & Birth - Abydos, Edfu & Dendera*
- *Portraits of Pharaoh*
- 26/02/2008 - *Back to the present in Egypt- A visual remembrance of things past*
- 27/05/2008 - *Imhotep - the new museum at Saqqara*
- 24/02/2009 - *Flesh of the Gods*
- 25/07/2009 - Day School - *Abydos - Anatomy of a Temple*
- *Philae - the House of Isis*
- 23/03/2010 - *Ancient Egypt in London*
- *Travels with a tour leader in Egypt; Comedies & near tragedies of leading groups*
- 24/07/2010 - Day School - *Ancient Thebes to Modern Luxor*
- 22/02/2011 - *Jackal among the tombs*
- 23/07/2011 - *The Giza family of pyramids*
- 24/01/2012 - *"I am for the sky... soar cloudwards to the sky like a heron" - The Pyramid Texts*
- 28/07/2012 - Day School - *Bravo Belzoni*
- 26/03/2013 - *Ancient Egypt in Victorian Art*
- 27/07/2013 - Day School - *Hatshepsut - Betrayal or a royal cover-up?*
- 25/02/2014 - *Royal crowns of ancient Egypt*
- 19/07/2014 - Day School - *It's all in a name - the dawn of the Aten*
- 23/09/2014 - *Ancient Egypt in the 'Crystal Palace'*

24/02/2015 - *Ramesses III's temple and palace at Medinet Habu*
 25/07/2015 - Day School - *Symbolism in ancient Egyptian art*
 26/01/2016 - *Howard Carter the man, and the road to Tutankhamun*
 28/06/2016 - *Fun quiz with quiz master Keith Grenville*
 16/07/2016 - *The cenotaph of Ramses II the Great at Abydos*
 22/11/2016 - *Akhenaten's great hymn to the Aten*
 15/07/2017 - *Making a meal of it - Tutankhamun's menu*
 28/11/2017 - *Akhenaten's great hymn to the Aten*
 14/07/2018 - *Once upon a time ... and they lived happily ever after*
 22/10/2019 - *Farouk - the last king of Egypt*

TOUR DIRECTOR

Keith's passion for ancient Egypt led him to conduct tours to Egypt, when he was able to introduce travellers to the wonders of the ancient land. In time he started his own tour company *Egypt Today* and conducted groups to a number of countries, such as Turkey, Russia, Morocco and India. He also offered tours to other countries, such as Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. It was his background in extensive travel in Egypt that stimulated him to start a society of like-minded Egyptophiles.

ACTING CAREER

But ancient Egypt but was but one string to the bow of this very talented and accomplished man. He was a renowned actor, director and producer both in theatre, TV and film (locally and internationally), and received numerous awards. He was particularly noted for his Shakespearean roles.

Apart from his theatre performances, such as in *Pygmalion* in Colchester, from his early days of acting he also played smaller parts in a range of TV and film productions in England. It was a fortunate day for us when he decided to remain in South Africa after being invited out from England in 1971 to play the role of Leontes in *A Winter's Tale* at Maynardville. He was 35 years old. In South Africa his career took off and he was cast in a number of major roles in both local and international films and TV dramas.

For many years he did major work acting and directing for CAPAB (Drama Director), NAPAC and PACT, as well as being Consultant Director at the Baxter Theatre.

THEATRE

At Maynardville - *The Winter's Tale* (1971); *Measure for Measure* (1987)

At the Space - *The Bear*; *Endgame*; *L'amante Anglaise*; *Lesson in Blood & Rose*; *Othello Slegs Blankes*; *Revenge*; *'Tis a Pity She's a Whore*

CAPAB - *Entertaining Mr Sloane* (1977); *Dear Liar* (1979)

PACT - *The Director of the Opera* (1977); *Royal Hunt of the Sun* (1981)

At Baxter Theatre - *Home* (1978); *Dear Liar* (1981); *King Lear* (1985); *Under Milkwood* (1985)

FILMS

Emergency-Ward 10 (1957); The Fourth Reich; Love me Leave Me; My Partner the Ghost (1969); UFO (1971); Deadly Jaws (1974); Decision to Die (1978) The Star Child (1989); That Englishwoman (1990) ; The Gospel According to Matthew (1993);

Voice-overs: *The First Christmas (1998); The Chimes (1999)*

TV ROLES

On British TV he had occasional roles in a number of series, such as:

The Wednesday Play (1966), Conflict (1966), The Power Game (1966 & 1969), The Rat Catchers (1966 & 1967), The Informer (1967), Who Is Sylvia? (1967), George and the Dragon (1968), ITV Playhouse (1969), My Partner the Ghost (1969), The Gold Robbers (1969), Complete and Utter History of Britain (1969), Randall and Hopkirk (Deceased) (1969-1970), Timeslip (1971), Doomwatch (1971)

In South Africa he played major roles in a number of series:

An Entirely New Concept in Packaging (1983); Shaka Zulu (1986); Arende (1989), Arende II: Moordenaars Karoo (1992), The Legend of the Hidden City (1996, 1998), as well as appearances in locally filmed international series, like Deadly Jaws (1974) and The Adventures of Sinbad (1996)

DIRECTOR

For the Space Theatre: *The Caretaker, A Galway Girl, Fallen Angels*

For CAPAB: *Dear Liar (1979), The Phantom of the Opera*

For the Baxter Theatre: *Under Milkwood (19**), Dear Liar (1981), It's a Boy! (1982), Anyone for Denis? (1983), Under Milkwood (1985), Gulls (1987), Under Milkwood (1996)*

For Volute Productions: *Not About Heroes (1986); Michael Drinn's stage play The Phantom of the Opera (1990)*

For Pieter Toerien and Shirley Firth: Robert Kirby's *It's a Boy! (1982)*

For Maynardville: *Twelfth Night (1989), As You Like It (1999), Othello (2001)*

For The Little Theatre: *A Nightingale Sang*

AWARDS

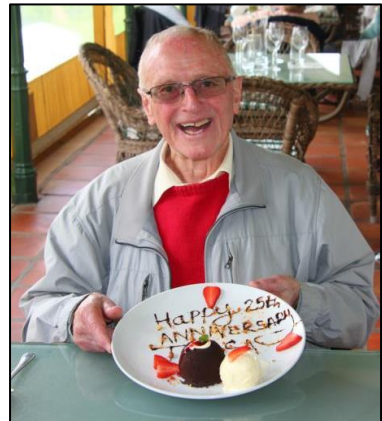
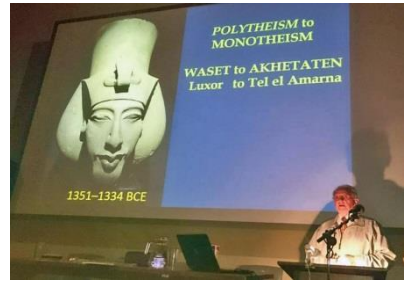
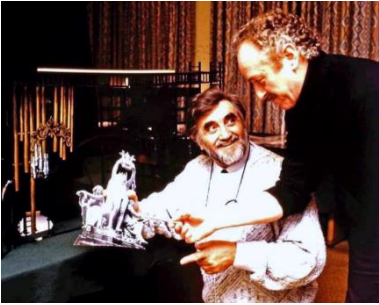
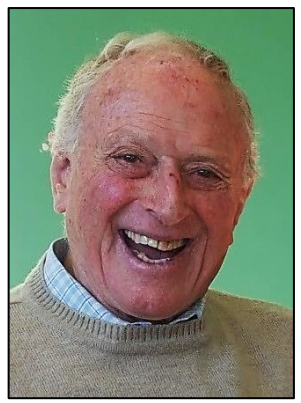
Keith received numerous awards over the years, the most prestigious of which were *The Three Leaf Award; The Fleur du Cap Theatre Award as Best Leading Actor (1978) and Best Director (1999); and in 1987 the Vita award for his direction of Gulls.*

Most of the above details of his career were sourced from

https://esat.sun.ac.za/index.php/Keith_Grenville and <https://en.kinorium.com/name/256994/>

With thanks to the following who supplied photos:

Eduard Bantjes, Janneke Engelbrecht, Gunther Komnick, John Lombard, Peter Mulder





**THE EGYPTIAN SOCIETY OF SOUTH AFRICA
1996-2024**

Website:

<http://egyptiansociety.co.za/>

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<https://www.facebook.com/groups/353552841373111/>

Commemoration brochure written and compiled by Jane Mulder