



# IN IMITATION OF EGYPT

## *The Afterlife in England of Ancient Egyptian Architecture*

by **Chris Elliott**

*Photos courtesy of English Heritage*

**E**ven as the last temples to the ancient Egyptian deities were being built, extended and decorated by Roman emperors, the architecture of the pharaohs was beginning an afterlife outside Egypt, which would see it spread across the globe and survive until our own times, nearly 2,000 years later. Buildings which reflect the distinctive architectural style of ancient Egypt are one of the most obvious signs of the long-lasting and deep-rooted influence that civilization has had on our own.

Almost as soon as Egypt had become part of the Roman Empire, its monuments were being transported to Italy. Around 10 BC Augustus brought an obelisk of Seti I from Heliopolis to Rome, one of several that he transported to the capital of the empire, where it was erected in the Circus Maximus. Two other obelisks, of Ramesses II, were also brought from Heliopolis, to stand outside the Iseum (Temple of Isis) in Rome, although it is not known which emperor was responsible. While they were sometimes attacked, cults of the Egyptian deities, particularly that of Isis, were hugely popular in the Roman world; and temples were established all over the empire, even as far away as Britain. As well as obelisks, other antiquities were imported from Egypt, in the form of sphinxes, sculpted lions and statues of animal-headed deities; and wealthy Roman households were decorated with a wide variety of Egyptiana. The popularity of the Egyptian cults was probably a major factor in this; and, as well as genuine Egyptian antiquities, there were copies and imitations, some of which may have been produced by Egyptian craftsmen in Italy, some by Roman artists trained in the style or merely doing their best to reproduce it.

In the Second Century AD, the elaborate villa-complex of Emperor Hadrian — the Villa Adriana at what is now Tivoli — included buildings representing different parts of the empire. One of these was a

*Façade of the Egyptian House in Penzance, England — a geological museum & specimen shop — is a riot of color, reflecting the Egyptian style in architecture, combining interpretations of an ancient Egyptian temple façade with Classical elements & a most un-Egyptian coat of arms & an eagle on a pile of rocks. DPI14986*



*Left, The first example of an Egyptian-style façade on a major public building in England, designed by Peter Frederick Robinson, was the 1811-1812 Egyptian Hall in Piccadilly, built to house the London Museum of William Bullock. XA00143*

*Below, Entrance to the Egyptian Court in the Crystal Palace, London, that opened in 1854, with accurate reproductions of ancient Egyptian architecture & casts of monumental sculpture. It burned in 1936. DP004619*



*euripus* or artificial waterway, surrounded by statuary and an arched colonnade, with a temple at its end. This was a symbolic representation of the Temple of Serapis at Canopus in the Nile Delta, and of part of the Nile itself. The rediscovery and excavation of the villa hundreds of years later was to be important in the revival of the Egyptian style in architecture.

Even the adoption of Christianity as the official religion of the Roman Empire did not diminish enthusiasm for Egyptian antiquities. Emperor Constantine planned to bring an obelisk of Thutmose III to Rome; and, after Constantine's death, the plan was carried out by his successor, Constantius, around 357 AD. The last obelisk to be moved before modern times was one of Thutmose III, originally at Karnak, and probably transported by Theodosius to Byzantium — modern Istanbul — in the late Fourth Century AD.

Over the succeeding centuries, the obelisks and other Egyptian antiquities of Rome were buried and forgotten, or incorrectly identified as purely Roman; but a link between Egypt and Europe was maintained by the role of Egypt in the biblical narrative, and by the importance of the country for Christian pilgrimage, especially to sites associated with saints Mark, Catherine and Menas. Despite disruptions caused by the rise of Islam and the long conflict of the Crusades, the tradition of pilgrimage was maintained into the Fourteenth and Fifteenth centuries, when the traditional route to St. Catherine's Monastery at Sinai went through Babylon in Egypt, now part of modern Cairo.

The gradual rediscovery by the West of the works of Classical authors, and texts by Jewish and Arabic scholars, was another important factor in maintaining the cultural influence of ancient Egypt. Of particular importance was the *Rerum Gestarum* by the Fourth Century AD Roman historian Ammianus Marcellinus. In this work he notes that Augustus brought two obelisks from Egypt and set them up in the Circus Maximus and Campus Martius; outlines what he believed to be the principles of hieroglyphic script; and describes the transport and raising of another obelisk by Constantine and Constantius (and of three others, although he does not say who was responsible); and, finally, he offers a Greek translation of the inscriptions on the Circus Maximus obelisk, following the work of one Hermapion. A number of manuscript copies were made from a Sixth Century AD version of Marcellinus's work, and the first printed edition was produced in Rome in 1474. This, and several succeeding editions, had numerous errors, but more accurate editions became available from 1533.

In the early Fifteenth Century, the beginning of the Renaissance saw the copying and circulation among a number of scholars and their patrons of texts from the Classical world, including those of Ammianus Marcellinus, Pliny the Elder, Herodotus and Plutarch, and also the *Hieroglyphica*, a list of hieroglyphs and their purported meaning, originally written by a Fifth Century AD Alexandrian known as Horapollon. The Florentine scholar Niccolò Niccoli was pre-

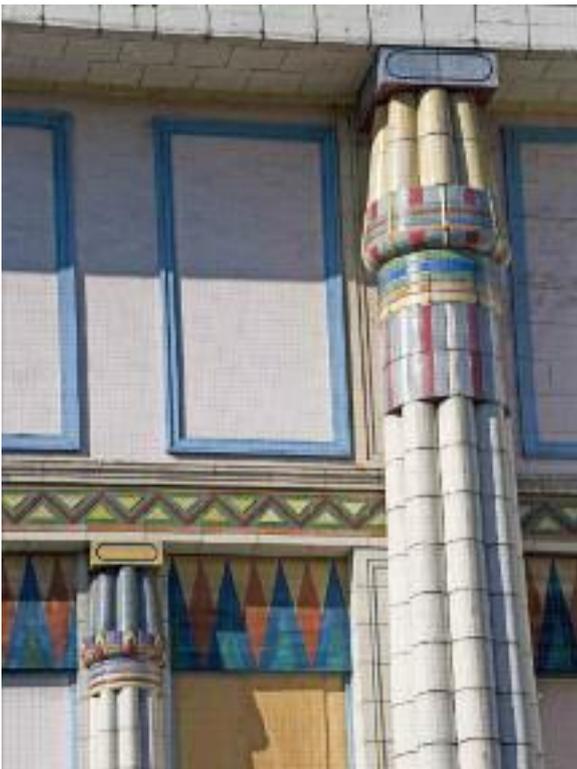


*Above, St. Boniface Catholic Church in Tooting, England, was originally designed by architect William Williamson in an Early Christian revival style, but was finished in 1927 with a west front featuring Egyptian-style papyrus columns & cavetto cornices. DP103945 Below, Detail of the 1928 550-foot long, 12-pillared facade of the former Carreras factory in London, one of the best examples of the influence of ancient Egypt on interwar architecture in England. DP103856*



sented with a copy of this around 1422, and subsequently presented a copy of Ammianus's work to Pope Martin V. A number of the Renaissance popes were keenly interested in ancient Egypt, probably because elements of its religion could be seen as prefiguring or prophesying Christianity.

The first Egyptian obelisk to be re-erected in Rome



*Above & detail below left, Façade of the Carlton Cinema on Essex Road, London, which opened in 1930. The building is vacant at this writing, but is the only one of London's Egyptian-style cinema exteriors to have survived. DPI148248 & DPI03868*



*Right, The Pyramid Cinema, Sale, the last Egyptian-style cinema built in England, opened in 1934 & seated 1,940. It closed in 1984, but survives at this writing as a fitness center. DPI1109992*

was probably a fragment of one of those at the Iseum, which was re-erected on the Capitoline Hill some time in the Fourteenth Century. It fell again and was re-erected in 1582. Six years later, in 1588, the obelisk of Thutmose III from Karnak, brought to Rome by Constantius, was re-erected as the Lateran obelisk by Sixtus V, who a year later also re-erected, in the Piazza del Popolo, one of the obelisks brought to Rome by Augustus. In 1665 another obelisk formerly in the Iseum was rediscovered, and Pope Alexander VII instructed the Jesuit scholar Athanasius Kircher to supervise its clearance and re-erection, which took place in the Piazza della Minerva in 1667.<sup>1</sup>

It was not only in Rome itself that the search for relics of ancient Egypt went on. Emperor Hadrian visited Egypt twice, first in 117 AD, following which he had constructed at his Villa Adriana the structure modelled on the Temple of Serapis and Isis at Canopus. On his second visit, the emperor's male lover, Antinous, was drowned in the Nile and subsequently was deified and identified with Osiris. The completed architectural features at the villa featured a variety of Egyptian and Roman Egyptianizing statuary, including a number of Antinous in Egyptian costume. The site of the ancient villa was excavated for statuary from the mid-Fifteenth Century onwards, and studied by architects of the period, including Francesco di Giorgio Martini, Andrea Palladio and Pirro Ligorio, who designed the nearby Villa d'Este.

The Seventeenth and Eighteenth centuries saw the evolution of the Grand Tour as an educational rite of passage for aristocratic young Englishmen, and a stay in Rome was an accepted part of this. Many of those who participated would become architectural patrons after their return, or even architects themselves. In Rome they saw Egyptian antiquities and Roman copies or imitations of them, and obelisks were still being unearthed and re-erected. The Piazza della Rotonda obelisk, which stood in front of the Pantheon, was set up on top of an existing fountain in 1711; and the Monte Citorio obelisk was excavated and re-erected between 1748 and 1751, on the instructions of popes Benedict XIV and Pius VI. Another noted architectural feature of the city was the First Century BC pyramidal Tomb of Gaius Cestius. In the later Eighteenth century, around 1769, the popular Caffè degli Inglesi (or English Café) was decorated with elaborate ancient Egyptian scenes by Giovanni Battista Piranesi, who also produced a series of extravagant designs for Egyptian-style fireplaces in his book *Diverse maniere d'adornare i cammini ed ogni altra parte degli edifizii desunte dall'architettura Egizia, Etrusca, Greca*, to give it its full title.

This period also saw the development of the style of landscaped garden that would come to be known as the English Garden, and which would spread across Europe. Many of these gardens had architectural features linked to ancient Egypt, especially obelisks and pyramids. An early example is at Chiswick House, where around 1727 a plain, unscribed obelisk was set in a circular pool in front of a small temple with a dome and columned portico, in a group strikingly



Above, View of the Old Synagogue, Canterbury, built in 1847, with Egyptian-style façade & obelisk-flanked gateway. DP139129 Below, Entrance to GEC Witton Factory in Birmingham, with elongated papyrus pilasters & a winged solar disk. DP139065







*Opposite & above, Views of the Egyptianized esculator & lower ground floor of Harrod's in London, added when the venerable department store was acquired by the Egyptian Al Fayed family in 1985. AA005451 & AA005432*

similar to that of the Piazza della Rotonda obelisk and the Pantheon. Other obelisks were built at Hartwell, Castle Howard, Wentworth Castle and Stourhead, the latter explicitly modeled on the Campus Martius obelisk in Rome. There were pyramids at Stowe, Hartwell, Castle Howard and Tring, as well as a number of pyramidal mausoleums, such as those at Blickling Hall in Norfolk and Brightling in Sussex, which evoked the Pyramid of Cestius.

It was not just Egyptian antiquities in Rome or elsewhere in Italy which inspired such features, however. As early as 1724, Sir John Vanbrugh had designed a pyramid for the gardens at Stowe House, which was explicitly described as a copy of the Great Pyramid at Giza by a contemporary visitor.<sup>2</sup> The architect James Gibbs, who designed the obelisk and pyramid at Hartwell, was the first British architect to receive professional training abroad, studying in Rome. His library included not only Athanasius Kircher's work on obelisks, *Obeliscum Ægyptiacum* of 1666, and *Architectura*

*Piranesi* (with all Piranesi's works in a single volume), but also Johann Fischer von Erlach's 1721 *Entwurff Einer Historischen Architektur* ("A Plan of Civil and Historical Architecture"), one of the first and most influential comparative studies of world architecture, and Bernard de Montfaucon's *L'antiquité expliquée et représentée en figures* (also of 1721). Both the latter include material on surviving examples of ancient architecture in Egypt, and draw on the accounts of modern travelers to Egypt, in addition to Classical sources.

**T**he pyramids and obelisks of these Eighteenth Century English gardens were produced for a wealthy cultural and social elite, who could afford not only to commission such, but also could travel to Rome and there see the originals which inspired them. They had in their libraries the expensive volumes which speculated on ancient Egyptian civilization and reconstructed its architecture; and their education equipped them to be familiar with the Classical sources which provided almost all of their information on ancient Egypt. Then, a series of events triggered a seismic cultural change.

In 1798, Napoleon Bonaparte invaded Egypt, in an





*Faux sphinxes & obelisks adorn the entrance to a private home at 66 Richmond Avenue in London, one of a row of private houses (numbers 46-72) with Egyptianizing features built in 1841 by William Dennis. DP103937*



Left, Façade of the Freemasons' Hall, "Lodge of Harmony," in Boston, East Midlands, built 1860-1861, was inspired by the Temple of Dendur in Nubia.

DP103991

Right, The former Maidstone Waterworks (pumping station) in East Farleigh, built in 1860 & known today as the "Egyptian House; it has been converted for office use. DP139351



attempt to seize this valuable part of the Ottoman Empire before another European power did, and thereby to threaten British influence in India. The expedition was a military failure, but a cultural watershed. Along with the army went the 167-strong Commission on the Sciences and Arts, which, in addition to civil engineers, surveyors and cartographers, included artists, antiquarians and Orientalists (as those who studied the civilizations of the Middle East were then known). The records they made and the ancient Egyptian antiquities they collected — including most notably the Rosetta Stone — laid the foundations for modern Egyptology.

It was not, however, the Commission's official report, the *Description de l'Égypte*, which was to be the greatest influence on the use of the Egyptian style in architecture, but the work of one of its members. The *Description* eventually ran to twenty-three volumes, with its publication stretching from 1809 until 1822. It was also huge — in massive elephant-folio volumes — and very expensive. By contrast Commission artist Vivant Denon, who traveled with the army, had published his account, *Voyages dans la Basse et la Haute Égypte* ("Travels in Upper and Lower Egypt") by 1802, and it was translated into English within a year. It was available in a variety of sizes, including cheap pocket-editions, and contained maps and engravings of surviving ancient Egyptian temples.

The impact of Denon's work was almost immediate. In 1803 a carriage porch at Stowe House was built with Egyptian decoration, and an 1817 guide to the house gave Denon's engravings of reliefs in the Temple of Hathor at Dendera as the source of these.<sup>3</sup> Denon was lavish in his praise of ancient Egyptian architecture, which he considered the equal of Greek and Roman, and described the Temple at Dendera as one of its finest examples. It was not long before other buildings inspired by Denon's work followed. The first Egyptian exterior was created for the offices of the *Courier* newspaper in London in 1804, by adding an overhanging cavetto-cornice and palm columns; and in 1806 another Egyptian interior based on Denon's work was created for

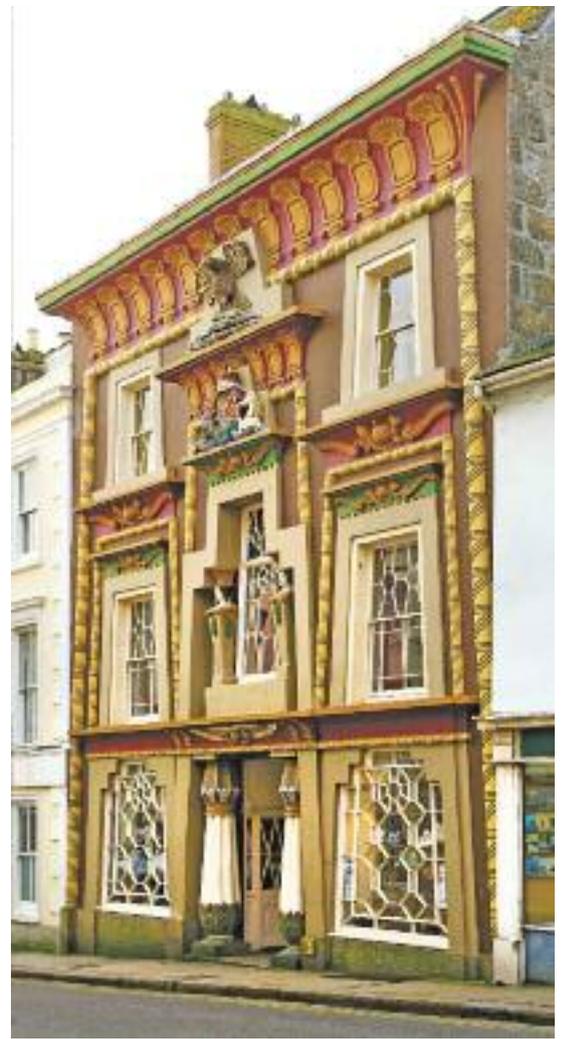
Craven Cottage, residence of the wealthy friend of the Prince Regent, Walsh Porter, at Fulham, now a London suburb. The most spectacular and influential building in this style at that time, however, was the Egyptian Hall in Piccadilly, London. Built in 1811-12 to house a commercial museum, and later converted into exhibition spaces, it was inspired by Denon's illustrations of the Temple of Hathor, but actually bore little resemblance to it.

The Egyptian Hall established many key features of revived ancient Egyptian architecture, in England and elsewhere. It was essentially a conventional building, with a façade which employed a few key features to create an Egyptian appearance. These were the overhanging cavetto-cornice, found on the roof line of Egyptian temples; the pylon form with its "battered" or sloping sides found at temple entrances, often created with the use of half-round torus mouldings; the use of plant-form columns, especially those based on papyrus; and winged solar-disks and rearing cobras, or uraei. The Egyptian Hall itself directly inspired two other buildings which closely resemble it: the Civil and Military Library, designed in 1823 by John Foulston at Devonport in Devon; and the Egyptian House at Penzance in Cornwall, which dates from around 1834-1837.

These buildings were also an interesting indication of the way that the Egyptian Style would be used in architecture, particularly in England. The surviving stone-built architecture of ancient Egypt is essentially religious and funerary in nature, erected by the nation's social and political elite and its monarchs. Funerary monuments were associated with ancient Egypt before the rediscovery of that civilization following the Napoleonic invasion; and this continued to be an important use of the style. But the majority of other Egyptian-style buildings constructed in the Nineteenth and Twentieth centuries have been commercial or industrial, in the widest sense. There has been only very limited use of the style for private residences; and it seldom has been used for major public buildings or monuments, particularly in the British Isles.



Left, The Ker Street Social Club today, but originally built in 1823 as the Civil & Military Library in Devonport, the building's façade is one of the early examples in England of the highly distinctive Egyptian Style. DP130084



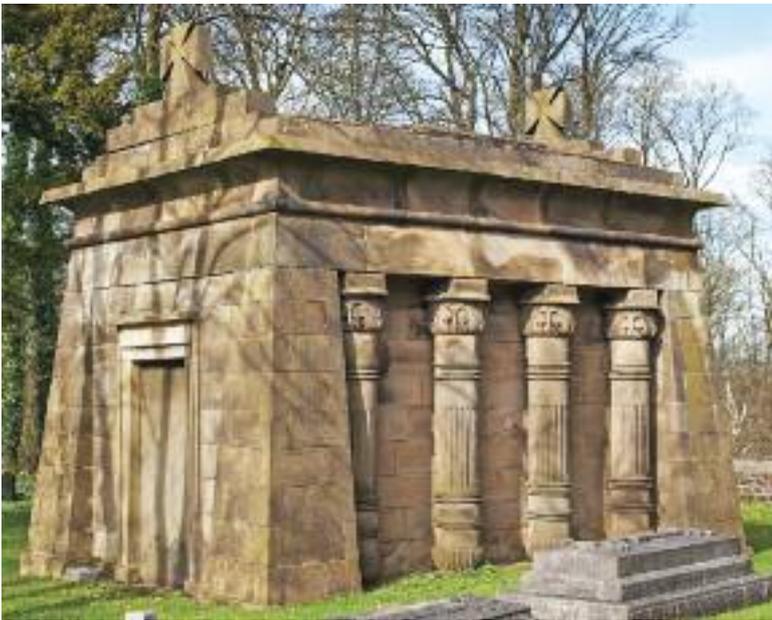
Right & detail below, the colorful Egyptian House in Penzance (another detail view on p.66) was built around 1834-1837 in imitation of the now-gone Egyptian Hall in Picadilly, London (see p. 68). Greatly deteriorated, with the risk of possible collapse, it has been rescued from demolition, repairs made & the façade restored, based on surviving layers of the original paint.

DP114948 & DP114992





*Egyptian-style funerary monuments in English cemeteries (clockwise from top left): Abney Park Cemetery entrance, London (DP103845); Hobart Mausoleum, Blickling Park, Norfolk (BB93/09310); unique granite monument of James Wilson in Hampstead Cemetery, London (DP103962); Gordon Mausoleum, Putney Vale Cemetery, London (DP104364); Illingworth Mausoleum, Undercliffe Cemetery, Bradford (DP116904); & Gillow Mausoleum, Thurnam (DP136915).*



There are many reasons for this. The architectural remains of Rome, and to a lesser extent Greece, were relatively accessible — and it was still possible to read the written records of both civilizations — so it was not surprising that they became highly influential and esteemed among the cultural and social elite of Europe. Until the early Nineteenth Century, travel to Egypt was difficult and often hazardous; and before the successful decipherment of hieroglyphs — which did not even begin until 1822, with Champollion's final breakthrough — Classical writers were still the main source of information on ancient Egypt. This meant that there was little informed understanding of its civilization, although the admiration with which it was generally regarded in the Classical world colored attitudes. The biblical account of the Flight to Egypt, and the county's important role in the early development of Christianity, were offset by the negative connotations of the Exodus narrative, and the view that the eastern Christian churches had fallen victim to heresy and schism.

Set against these weighty issues, however, was a more general perception of ancient Egypt as an exotic and colorful civilization of legendary wealth, with the added bonus of a reputation for occult knowledge. Viewed in this light, the fact that many Egyptian-style buildings are, to modern eyes, archaeologically ill-informed, was probably fairly unimportant when they were built. What seems to have mattered more was having the key elements that evoked the style, and with it the connotations appropriate for modern use.

The early Victorian Era saw the creation of a huge and technically innovative flax mill for the Marshall family in Leeds, built in two stages, with Egyptian decoration, some of it based on actual drawings and measurements taken from temples in Egypt. But the most popular use of the style, despite the opinion of those who considered it pagan and unsuitable for a Christian country, was in the new “garden” cemeteries, created to replace overflowing parish-church graveyards in cities whose populations had expanded massively.

In a few cases — as with St Bartholemew's Cemetery in Exeter, and Abney Park and Highgate cemeteries in London — buildings of these cemeteries were in an Egyptian style; but more often that was used for grave monuments. In an era when death from infectious diseases was a common occurrence, those who could afford it aspired to elaborate and expensive funerary monuments; and, as commercial enterprises, the new cemetery companies allowed their customers to choose their own style.

Generally speaking there is little if any connection between those who commissioned these Egyptian monuments and Egypt itself. Some are similar enough in style — simple mausoleums with sloping sides, cavetto cornices and perhaps half-round mouldings and winged solar disks above their entrances — to suggest that they are “pattern book” styles with limited customization; but others are elaborate and individually designed. They range from the monument

of equestrian showman Andrew Ducrow in London's Kensal Green Cemetery to the Illingworth mausoleum in Undercliffe Cemetery in Bradford, and the Gordon Mausoleum at Putney Vale Cemetery in London. The production of such Egyptian-style monuments continued into the early Twentieth Century, but disappeared after the First World War, when ostentatious monuments in general seem to have become considered inappropriate.

The enthusiasm of Roman emperors for Egyptian obelisks means that more of these now survive in Rome than in Egypt, and in a new age of “empire” it was not surprising that other rulers wanted to emulate the Caesars by raising obelisks in their capitals. The first attempt to transport to England one of the two obelisks of Thutmose III at Alexandria known as Cleopatra's Needles — which had already been moved from their original site at Heliopolis — came in 1801, after the British had defeated French forces at the Battle of Alexandria. The commander of the British land forces, the Earl of Cavan, requested from the Turkish rulers of Egypt the gift of one of the obelisks which had fallen centuries before, a request that they were happy to grant. The intention was for it to serve as a monument to British naval and land victories, and to Admiral Nelson and General Ralph Abercromby, who had died during them.

However, a storm destroyed the jetty created to load the obelisk into a ship; and a combination of cost, political sensitivity over the fragile state of the Ottoman Empire, and concern about the Needle's state of preservation, meant that it would be over seventy years before it finally reached London. Before it did, the wealthy traveler and pioneer Egyptologist William Bankes had transported a smaller obelisk from the Temple of Isis at Philae to his estate at Kingston Lacy in Dorset, where it was set up in 1830; and in 1836 the French had transported one of the two obelisks in front of the temple at Luxor to Paris, where it was erected in the Place de La Concorde. The fallen and better preserved of Cleopatra's Needles arrived in London in 1878, and would have been placed in Parliament Square, had the directors of the Metropolitan Railway not demanded a perpetual indemnity against it collapsing into the tube tunnel under the square. Eventually, after the so-called Battle of the Sites, largely conducted through the letters columns of *The Times*, it was erected on the Victoria Embankment by the Thames. Three years later, its companion was set up in New York City's Central Park.

The use of plain, uninscribed obelisks as memorials is fairly common, both to commemorate individuals and as war memorials; but the erection of genuine, inscribed ancient Egyptian obelisks did not result in the increased use of hieroglyphs in Egyptian-style architecture. In England there were only a handful of buildings with modern compositions in hieroglyphs. Four were created between 1840 and 1860; and a fifth was proposed, for Marshall's Mill in Leeds, mentioned above, but never executed. The first, in 1840, was a small inscription for the gate houses of Abney Park Cemetery in London, identifying them as the entrance to a ne-



*Homebase DIY superstore in London is the most recent Egyptian-style building in England (completed in 1988), with composite columns & entablature marking the entrance (left), & a sunk-relief frieze parade of ancient Egyptian deities on the structure's exterior wall (below).*

DP1033884 & DP1033877



ropolis. It was composed by Joseph Bonomi, the artist who worked for many of the most important expeditions to Egypt, and Samuel Birch of the British Museum. Bonomi was also involved with the design of Marshall's Mill; but it was not until 1850 that he designed a small shrine or kiosk in the grounds of Hartwell House, with a dedicatory hieroglyphic inscription eulogizing Queen Victoria, again composed with the assistance of Birch.

**T**he Egyptian Court of the Crystal Palace — re-erected at Sydenham in South London after its use in Hyde Park for the Great Exhibition of 1851 — also featured dedicatory hieroglyphic inscriptions, again produced by Bonomi and Birch. These inscriptions seem to have formed the basis of those on the façade of Freemason's Hall at Boston in Lincolnshire, completed in 1863, which also had hieroglyphic inscriptions on its columns commemorating leading contemporary Masonic figures associated with its creation.<sup>4</sup>

Bonomi and the antiquarian Samuel Sharpe were consulted on hieroglyphic inscriptions for the Elephant House created at Antwerp Zoo in 1856; and, recalling the Crystal Palace, exhibitions at Philadelphia in 1875 and Chicago in 1893 had exhibits decorated with hieroglyphic compositions. It was not until 1988 that another dedicatory text was composed to accompany a carved-stone frieze of ancient Egyptian gods and goddesses, with their names in hieroglyphs, on an exterior wall of a Homebase DIY superstore on Warwick Road in west London. Two years later hieroglyphs were used in the decoration of the Harrods department store in London; and, in an echo of Antwerp, the entrance to Memphis Zoo was decorated in 1991 with hieroglyphic versions of animal names.

The Nineteenth Century had seen the Egyptian style used in a limited way for commercial and industrial buildings, including a shop in Hertford, near London, and two waterworks buildings in Yorkshire and Kent, as well as the Leeds mill; but the early Twentieth Century saw this type of use grow. Architect Thomas Wallis was a leading designer of factories in this period, and — although he developed a distinctive style of his own — his early work (such as the GEC factory at Witton, in Birmingham, built between 1918 and 1922) shows clear Egyptian influences. The 1916 printworks of W.H. Smith, a leading stationers in South London, had Egyptian decoration; and 1928 saw the construction of both the relatively modest Britannia House in central London and the immense cigarette factory of Carreras Ltd. in north London. Of the hundreds of cinemas built in Britain between the two World Wars, only six are known to have had Egyptian-style interiors or exteriors; but two of these, the Carlton in north London and the Pyramid in Sale, near Manchester, have survived.

**I**t could be argued that Egyptian-style architecture is not really a “style” at all, but merely the use of a few elements in occasional ill-informed historical pastiches. Certainly, the charge of “façadism” was one that was leveled at

such buildings in England, particularly in the inter-war period, which saw the rise of Modernism. Examples of the Egyptian style from the public realm are conspicuously absent. Cleopatra's Needle was “real” Egyptian, a trophy rather than a re-use of the style; and the Wellington Monument at Wellington in Somerset is triangular, rather than a true obelisk, and originally built without the Egyptian-style decoration at its base.

The style never caught on for private dwellings, and so its main uses have been for industrial and commercial buildings, a few civil-engineering structures, and funerary buildings and monuments. These, typically, are areas where the architectural style is chosen by the client or architect, or jointly, rather than potentially having to be a matter of public or political debate. However, the fact that for over 200 years Egyptian-style buildings have been constructed in England and elsewhere in Europe and America — and indeed throughout the world — shows that use of the style is driven by something more than individual whim or fancy.

Egyptian-style architecture speaks of our fascination with one of the world's oldest civilisations; and the variety of such buildings, which can be identified by their distinctive features, shows that the values we attach to it are equally varied, and not always consistent. As long as we are interested in ancient Egypt, it will not be long again before someone builds a little bit more of Egypt in England, or elsewhere.

#### Notes

1. It is beyond the scope of this article to deal with the attempts by Kircher and others to establish the principles of hieroglyphic inscriptions, or their role in the development of Hermetic philosophy; but the search for relics of ancient Egypt, in Rome and elsewhere, was given a powerful impetus by the Humanist scholarship of the Renaissance.
2. John Perceval, First Lord Egmont, who visited Stowe in 1724, wrote an account of his visit in a letter to Daniel Dering on 14th August 1724. In it Perceval writes that “*The pyramid at the end of one of the walks is a copy in mignature [sic] of the most famous one in Egypt...*”
3. This was not the first Egyptian interior in the British Isles, which was almost certainly a room created in 1792 at Cairness House, in Aberdeenshire; but the architect who designed it, James Playfair, had visited Rome while working on the house and would have drawn on examples of Egyptian antiquities that he had seen there. The room is usually described as a billiard room, but in recent years there have been suggestions that it may also have had a Masonic function.
4. Again, the scope of this article does not allow discussion of the desire by some Freemasons to link the origins of the craft to ancient Egypt, particularly in the late Eighteenth Century, or the relatively rare examples of Egyptian-style Masonic lodges that this inspired.

**About the Author** Chris Elliott has been researching the cultural influence of ancient Egypt for over ten years, and in 2003 contributed to the inter-disciplinary series of books “Encounters with Ancient Egypt.” He has appeared on television and radio talking about Egyptian Style architecture.