

The Thomas Hope Green Greywacke, *cup of bafalt*, from the Egyptian Room

Duchess Street Portland Place London



*In 1799, Thomas Hope (1769 – 1831) bought a house designed by the celebrated Scottish architect Robert Adam (1728 – 92) in Duchess Street, Portland Place, London, which he remodelled with a series of themed interiors. He recorded this work in his book, *Household Furniture & Interior Decoration* executed from *Designs by Thomas Hope* (1807), which became a major source for designers and introduced for the first time into the English language the term 'interior decoration'.*

Classical sculpture and vases were displayed alongside modern paintings and sculpture. Most striking of all was the inventive and exotic Egyptian furniture designed specifically for the Egyptian Room in the house.

*The Egyptian Room at Duchess Street was one of the most inventive interiors in Europe at the time. Here, Hope displayed his belief in the importance of the ancient Egyptians to the origins of western culture. Mixing genuine pieces of Egyptian sculpture with exotic furniture designed by himself in an Egyptian manner, he also exploited his novel colour theories. The walls and furniture, he explained, were in the 'pale yellow and bluish green of the Egyptian pigments, relieved by masses of black and of gold.'*¹

As a specialist dealer and collector of engine turning the Hope Egyptian Green Metagreywacke bowl has fascinated me for a long time. The handles are integral to the body and not applied a seemingly impossible feat of skill in a very hard stone. A lathe and abrasive turning techniques cannot allow for the handles. Here they are integral to the bowl and outside the almost perfect circular diameter of the bowl. This using a horizontal pottery wheel can be abrasively turned internally and externally below the handles, the balance the external centre of the bowl to include the handles has to be abrasively turned to a larger diameter then carved back by abrasion. I suggest that these very rare features gives the Thomas Hope mortuary libation bowl pharaonic status.

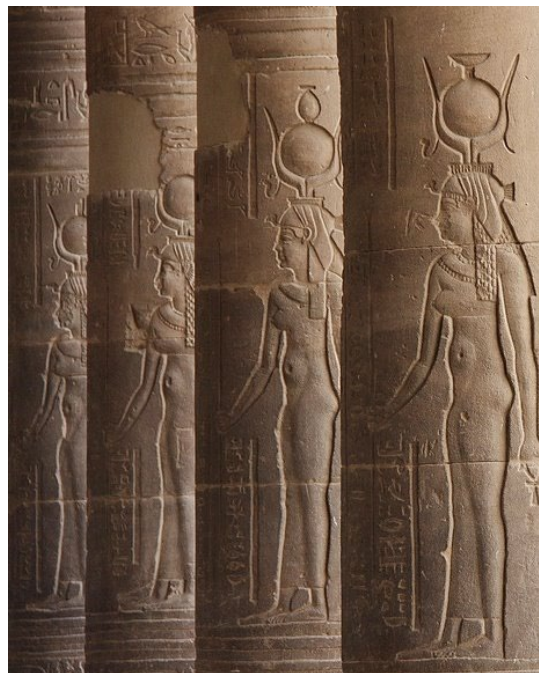
It is difficult to believe that such a perfectly cut circular surface can be produced entirely by eye it has to be as with a clay pot produced on a wheel. That the Egyptians could cut large blocks of stone for circular columns is evident from standing temple columns. The question that has not been adequately addressed is how and how they were created, were they turned on a horizontal wheel, were they turned in part, or are they like the large figural sculptures abrasively carved?

Sections of the following Egyptian columns particularly the capitals are carved, some are turned, some are partly turned, and part carved. I ask at what date did the sectional column become turned and in which country Egypt, Greece or Italy?

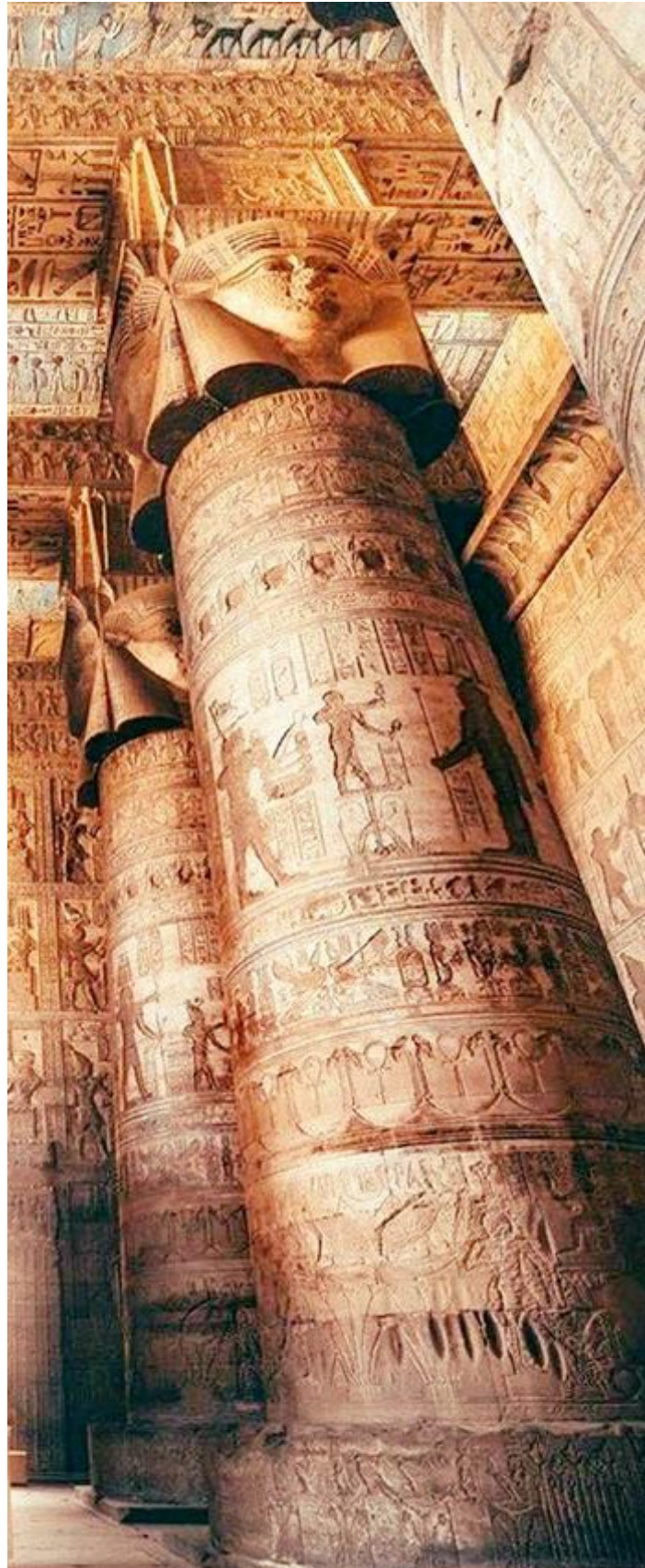
I suggest that many of the answers to the mystery lies with the Hope Bowl.



The segmented pillars at the entrance to the Luxor temple in Egypt



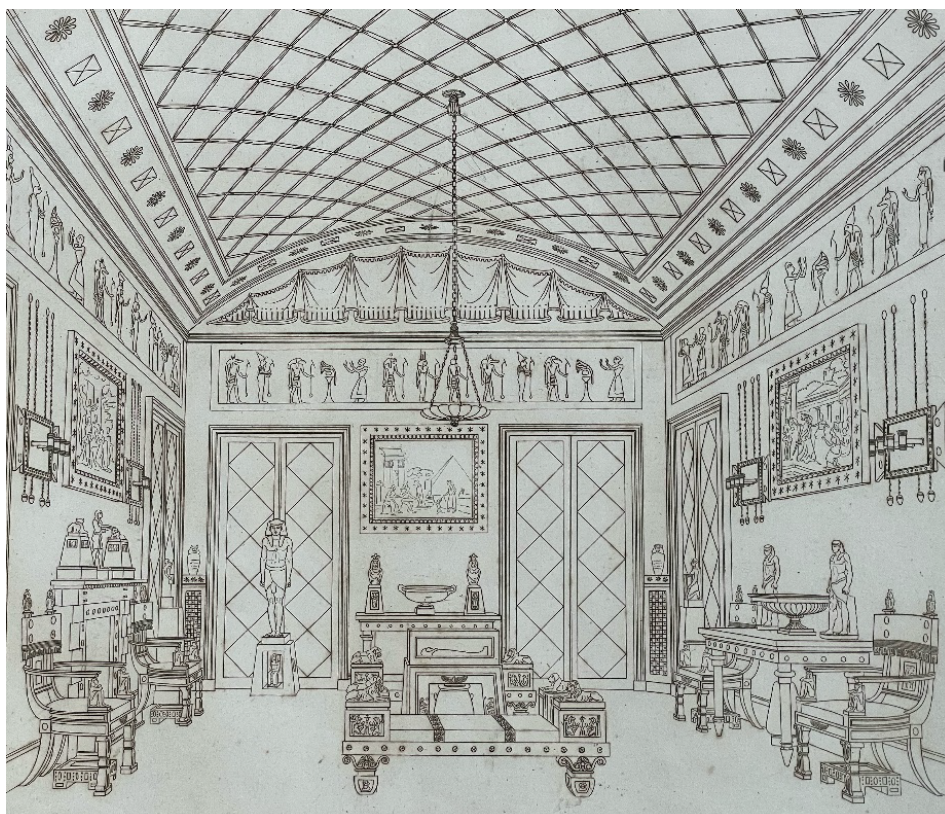
Round decorated blocks from the pillars at the Temple of the Goddess Isis at Philae on the east side of the Open Court (now on the Agilkia island): from left to right, Isis, Hathor, Nut, and Nephthys.



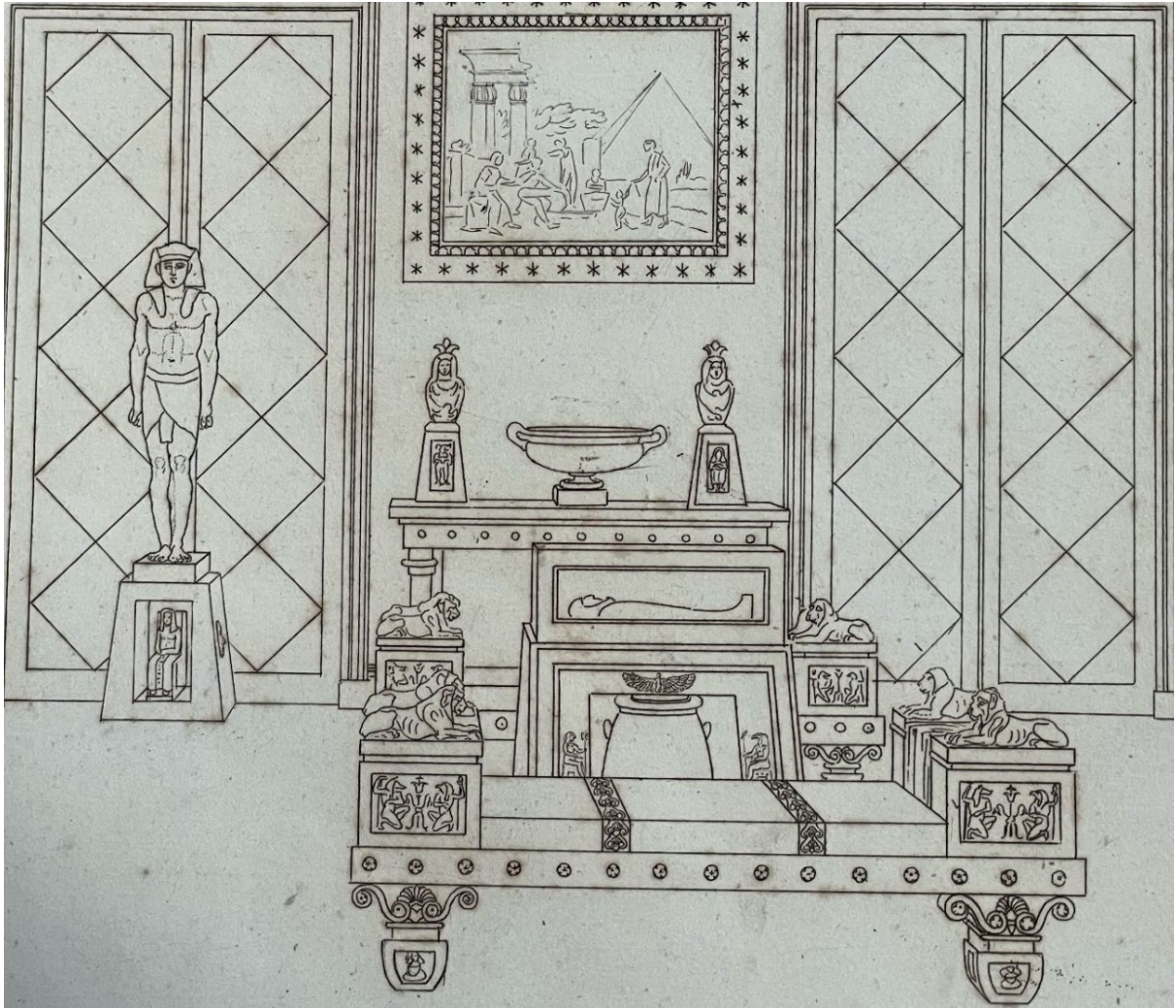
The Hypostyle Hall of Hathor Temple in Dendera.



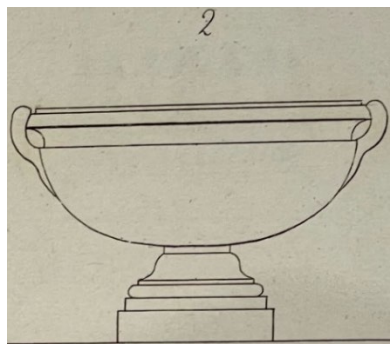
One half of the suite of four chairs and two sofas designed by Thomas Hope for his Egyptian Room in Duchess Street his inspiration derived from his notebooks made during his travels to Egypt and Constantinople in 1797. Their iconic form is a creation from the mind of this great interior designer, aided I feel by his architect Charles Tatham, the furniture maker remains unknown. The Powerhouse Museum Sydney ²



The Egyptian Room Duchess Street no later than 1807. The Hope Egyptian bowl is in the centre of the back wall, with two of a made-up set of four alabaster canopic vases of different sizes, three with hieroglyphs. These are illustrated on stands in the corners, imaging a human head Imetsy, right hand corner, a jackal head, Duamoutef left hand corner, a baboon head, a Hapy and a falcon head, Uebhsenuief. These together with the green greywacke bowl are foundation objects providing authenticity to this room, furthermore, they also are turned and carved.



Detail: The green metagreywacke Egyptian Hope bowl is the centrepiece to the back wall of Hope's Egyptian Room and this plate. The square plinth to the base has been added, presumably by Hope, to give proportion and height to bowl within the obvious scale of the room. Detail from the Egyptian Room, *Plate VIII, from Household Furniture & Interior Decoration executed from Designs by Thomas Hope, 1807, London, England*. Image from a large paper copy of *Household Furniture* belonging to the owner of the bowl.



Detail from another separate illustration in *Household Furniture*, the mouldings are identical with an extra square plinth added at base probably by Hope to give more height to the bowl. The added illustration confirms the importance that Hope attached to his bowl.



The extreme rarity exhibited in the turning and carving by abrasion of this bowl suggests that it is unique. This may be confirmed by placing the engraved freehand image later engraved as created for Hope as detail 2 before 1807 overlaid on a modern photograph proving that the engraving and the bowl are one of the same.



In 1807 or 107 BCE no one is going to invent such an object for no purpose when it is technically so difficult to make in such a hardstone.

PLATE XVI.

No. 1. Chimney-piece in black marble, belonging to the Aurora room, and decorated with emblems of night in gilt bronze.

No. 2. Table, belonging to the Egyptian room. On this table stands, between two Egyptian ædiculæ, containing idols, and supporting Canopuses, a cup of basalt. Under the table lies a lion of the same material.

Plate XVI Hope's *Household Furniture & Interior Decoration* contains a detail (No 2) of a Table belonging to the Egyptian Room on which stands *a cup of basalt*. the subject of this essay.

The Final Portion of the Hope Heirlooms.

If you attend the Sale, kindly bring this Catalogue with you.

The Dependence
DORKING,
Surrey.

copy made
D. Watkins
1974

Important Six Days' Sale,
On SEPTEMBER 12th, 13th, 14th,
17th, 18th and 19th, 1917. - - -

Auctioneers:
Messrs. HUMBERT & FLINT,
11, SERLE STREET,
LINCOLN'S INN, LONDON, W.C. 2;
And at Watford, Herts.

	80
Lot	
1180	A Mosaic marble slab 20½in. by 33½in. and a porphyry slab 42in. by 19in.
1181	Two 3ft. 3in. red marble sarcophagi with lion's head masks and rings on oblong slabs
1181A	A 19in. green circular marble vase with 2 handles
1181B	Two red marble vases (faulty) and a small red marble tazza
1181c	A mottled marble urn on iron tripod with lion mask mounts

The Humbert and Flint residual contents sale Deepdene catalogue gives the bowl a diameter of 19 inches. Danny Katz gives the diameter of bowl as 18 5/8 inches. Taken from Deepdene catalogue in the collection of Blairmans, courtesy Martin Levy.

The Deepdene sale description: A 19in green circular marble vase with two handles agrees with the Katz description: *carved from a particularly distinctive type of greywacke which has a green colouration...*

A table from this sale catalogued as Lot 997, a number still written in chalk underneath the top, passed into the collection of Edward Knoblock whose label it bears. This is now in the same private collection where it acts as a stand for the green greywacke bowl, with two Hope chairs for seating during its inspection.

The Property of the Honourable Lord Francis Pelham Clinton Hope.

THE DEEPDENE, DORKING, SURREY.

Contiguous to the Town of Dorking on the London, Brighton and South Coast Railway, and the South-Eastern and Chatham Railway, 25 miles from London.

The Contents of the Mansion

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Statue Gallery, Nine Reception Rooms, Halls and
numerous Offices.

Greek and Roman Statuary and other Marbles. Fine Bronzes.
Empire Furniture including Bed Room Suites, Wardrobes, Cheval Glasses,
Bookcases, Cabinets, Escritoirs, Tables, and many other items in
Mahogany, a CRIPPENDALE CARD TABLE, Mahogany Chests of Drawers,
Dressing Tables, Cupboards and Chairs, well-made Bedding, Iron and
other Bedsteads, beautiful CURTAINS & BED QUILTS, Carpets and Rugs.

Full-sized Billiard Table, by Burroughes & Watts.
Two Grand Pianos, by Erard.
Decorative China and Porcelain. 2,000 Volumes of Books.
Pictures and Prints, Electro-Plate, Candlesticks, Cutlery, Coppers, a few
OUTSIDE EFFECTS, Garden Seats, and Miscellanea.

WHICH

HUMBERT & FLINT

Are instructed to Sell by Auction, on the Premises,
On WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 12th, 1917, and the
two following days; and on MONDAY, SEPTEMBER
17th, 1917, and the two following days,
At 11 o'clock precisely each day.

Catalogues of each day's Sale free, or complete catalogues, illustrated (price 2s. each), may be had of the Auctioneers, Messrs. HUMBERT & FLINT (W. Hurst Flint, F.S.I., W. Fielder Flint, F.S.I., G. Gordon Flint, and J. R. Pocock).

11, SERLE STREET, LINCOLN'S INN, W.C. 2.
And Watford, Herts.
Or at the Deepdene Estate Office, Castle Gardens, Dorking.

*On View Saturday, September 8th, and Monday, September 10th, 1917,
from 10 a.m. till 5 p.m.*

Refreshments may be obtained on the Premises at each day's Sale.

SMALL DRAWING ROOM.

Lot

- 993 The circular shaped openwork brass kerb, ormolu implement stand, and brass mounted steel tongs and shovel, and pair of inlaid tulip wood bellows
- 994 A 3FT. 3IN. CEDAR WOOD CHINA CABINET with column supports, brass mouldings and ormolu Gryphon escutcheons, fitted with shelf and lined with crimson velvet, with green and white marble top (Empire period)
- 995 THE COMPANION CABINET
- 996 A 4ft. 6in. oval shaped rosewood centre table with carved decorations on scroll shaped legs and stretchers, fitted one drawer to side
- 997 A 3ft. 8in. circular mahogany centre table, on triangular pillar with bronzed mouldings and claw feet, the top richly inlaid with brass, rosewood and ebony



Lot 997 The Knoblock table from the Stirling Collection now owned by the Hope Libation Bowl Collector.

Four Turned Stone Containers with Integral Handles from the Ancient World

There are seemingly only four complete large turned stone objects with integral handles created in the Ancient World:

- The Hope Green Metagreywacke two handled Aegyptian Bowl, illustrated and recorded separately by Hope in his Egyptian Room, Duchess Street, London in 1807. Suggested to be First Century AD, but I believe to be older.
- The Bessborough Granite two handled urn described as: *Aegyptian Vase, found in Augustus's Bath*, from Castle Howard.
- The Holy Grail Habsburg Treasury Agate Dish. One of the great treasures from the Ancient World Roman. Probably First Century BC.
- A Banded Calcite bowl in the Egyptian Museum Cairo from the tomb of Tutankhamun.

The Hope Green Metagreywacke Bowl from his Egyptian Room Duchess Street.

A very important and detailed survey of the greywacke quarries in Egypt and the surviving objects sourced from these quarries over the centuries can be found at: ³

The greywacke quarries were not constantly or intensively exploited. The fact that the stone was used in private or royal statuary and not as a building stone could have caused its demand to be less than that of other materials such as granite, limestone or sandstone.

Othman lists 20 greywacke Wadi Hammamat objects bearing inscriptions that allow for further dating and interpretation and continues to catalogue the following greywacke objects in the museums of the world by type and number as:

Palettes: 35 pieces.

Minor arts (Amulets – scarabs – Jewellery - offering tables - Figurines – Ushabtis - Magical stela): 21 pieces.

Statues: 88 pieces.

Utensils (Vases, tools, dishes, cups, trays, knives, vessels, bowls, Mace – heads): 24.

Sarcophagi: 10 pieces.

Obelisks, Naoi and architectural elements: 3 pieces.

This provides a context for the importance and rarity of the Hope Bowl.



The key to the age of this bowl is the handles which prevent it being turned. It is made in two sections, the plinth, joined by plaster and an iron pin to the bowl.

Extracted from the invoice from Danny Katz on the purchase of the bowl:

A RARE AND IMPORTANT ROMANO-EGYPTIAN GREYWACKE TWIN-HANDLED BASIN CIRCA 1ST CENTURY AD. 53.5 cm wide, 28.5 cm high.

This highly polished large basin is of high quality and is in near perfect condition. In the form of a footed basin with twin handles, the broad bowl rises to a concave neck with an out-turned rim and a moulded lip which continues as a broad band curving into the interior. The inward-turned twin handles are attached both to the rim and the body of the basin where they rise from leaf-shaped motifs each of which have a medial ridge.

The basin has a separately attached pedestal foot with moulded profile. 21 $\frac{1}{8}$ in. (53.5 cm) wide, 18 $\frac{5}{8}$ in. (47.5 cm) diam., 11 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. (28.5 cm) high

PROVENANCE: Collection of Henry Myron Blackmer II (1923-1988), acquired prior to 1978 With Colnaghi, London, whence acquired by the previous owner in the 1980s.

PUBLISHED: 'The Collectors: Nuances of History', Architectural Digest: The International Magazine of Fine Interior Design, May 1978, pp. 136-142, illustrated on p. 137 The Library of Henry Myron Blackmer II, Sotheby's London, 12-13 October 1989, illustrated in catalogue introduction.

This basin is the creation of a master sculptor - a two thousand year old treasure of the highest quality, surviving in an exceptional condition. Perfectly symmetrical, proportioned and balanced, the basin has been carved from a particularly distinctive type of greywacke which has a green colouration. The sculptor has conveyed a massiveness of scale, while contrasting the sharp edges of the basin's overhanging rim and foot mouldings, with the smooth sensuous curving body and handles. With the high polished finish to the basin, the sculptor has cleverly enhanced the vivacity of the green stone and created a work of compelling tactility. This basin is highly important because of its extreme rarity. Few ancient stone basins in such superb condition, and of such a high level of meticulous workmanship, exist outside of museum collections.

This extremely finely worked basin uses a distinctive green coloured greywacke stone (geologically called metagreywacke) which was found in only one quarry in ancient Egypt, the Eastern Quarry in the Wadi Hammamat.

In antiquity this beautiful, very dense, medium-grained dark green ornamental stone was highly prized and was known as bekhen-stone. The bekhen-stone quarry in Wadi Hammamat was not in continuous use and was only intermittently quarried over an extensive period from circa 4000 BC to 300 AD. A famous rock-cut inscription in the quarry commemorates a major expedition sent by Pharaoh Ramesses IV in 1147 BC specifically to extract blocks of bekhen-stone (see Ramesses IV portrait above). The huge scale of this operation is indicated by the 8,368 men who were sent, including 130 stonemasons and

quarrymen, 800 labourers, 5,000 soldiers and 2,000 personnel of the Amun temples. Remarkably, there survives in Turin Egyptian Museum, a map likely drawn as preparation for Ramesses IV's expedition. The Turin Papyrus Map is the world's oldest geologic map, dating to circa 1150 BC. It shows Wadi Hammamat with the bekhen-stone quarry and has notes referring to a bekhen-stone quarrying expedition, sizes of the quarried bekhen-stone blocks and the destination of the blocks. Further rock-cut inscriptions recording other expeditions to the bekhen-stone quarry indicate that the work force was well treated, well fed, had "at least five litres of beer every day" and "no man got lost".

During both the Egyptian Pharaonic and Ptolemaic Greek periods, Wadi Hammamat greywacke was used for some of the finest carved statuary ever produced in ancient Egypt...

By the Roman period, this stone was being exported throughout the Roman Empire. The stone was chosen by elite patrons for sculptures of exceptional quality carved by master sculptors, such as the so-called 'Berlin Green Head' and a striking portrait of Julius Caesar.

The use of Egyptian greywacke could indicate an association with an Egyptian cult, such as that of Isis, as this was a cult which became increasingly popular in Italy during the 1st century AD. The basin could have been from a temple in Rome or from a temple in another major Roman city....

A close parallel for the handles on the present basin are on the Bessborough Vase which is carved from Egyptian granite and has similar handles rising from leaf-shaped terminals

Comments on the above

In the context of this paper an important distinction must be drawn between the use of Green and Grey Metagreywacke in known surviving masterpieces. Grey Metawacke objects appear to be Egyptian while the Green Metawacke objects appear to be both Egyptian and Roman when the Roman Empire was at the height of its power.

Provenance

There appear to be four ways that Thomas Hope may have acquired the Green Metagreywacke Bowl between 1795 and its illustration in 1807:

- Hope purchased the bowl when on his Grand Tour while in Egypt, Naples, Rome or Constantinople.

Hope understood the origin of his *cup of basalt*, prompting a central and important placement in the Egyptian Room hence a purchase in Egypt is the most logical country of acquisition. Constantinople is equally possible as Hope spent a year in the city. If so, it may have had a known history as being brought from Egypt to the capital of the then Ottoman Empire in recent times.

The eye-catching central position and the inclusion of the bowl in an additional engraved plate which specifically references, the bowl suggest a purchase in Egypt: *On this table stands, between two Egyptian aediculae containing idols and supporting canopuses, a cup of basalt, under the table lies a lion of the same material.* Neither the lion nor the cup are basalt the lion is Grey Metagreywacke and the cup a libation bowl is Green Metagreywacke.

- From the Bessborough Collection.

The Bessborough sale catalogue in the Christies archive with buyer's names and prices will confirm this as a possible source. Hope purchased his porphyry foot in the Bessborough sale. The Soane Collection marked catalogue is more easily accessed, a description such as a, *basalt cup or bowl*, will determine the matter and the Christies copy will prove that Hope was the buyer. Catalogues exist:

A copy of the Bessborough catalogue annotated for the purchases of Sir John Soane is held by the Soane Museum

CHRISTIE, James, the elder (1730--1803)

[Sale catalogue. 1801:04:07]

A catalogue of the capital, well-known, and truly valuable collection of antique statues, bustos, Egyptian, and other vases, bas-reliefs, &c. (including a few capital pictures, ...) the property of a noble earl, deceased, ... Which will be sold by auction, by Mr. Christie, at Roehampton, on Tuesday, April the 7th, 1801, ...

London (Place), J. Smeeton, printer, [1801].

Lugt 6226; Fredericksen, *Index of paintings*, I, p. 7, no. 23 (lists only two other locations apart from Christie's file copy). With a printed addenda slip detailing supplementary lots 116-18 in Case, No. 10. The "noble earl, deceased" was Lord Bessborough. Soane made several notable purchases at this sale, including six cinerary vases or urns (in lots 33, 40, 42, 71 & 72), three of which are identifiable as SM Inv. M429, S146 & S147 [probably], one, a pilastered double cinerarium (M429), being an example that had passed through Piranesi's workshop and formed the subject of one of the plates in his *Vasi, candelabri, cippi ...*, 1779 (q.v., pl. 5). Soane also paid 61 guineas for one of the highlights of the sale, a statue of Diana of Ephesus (lot 103, SM Inv. M613) which had appeared in Montfaucon's *L'antiquité expliquée*, 1719 (q.v., vol. I, pl. 95, p. 158). Other Soane purchases included a large oval antique vase (lot 73, SM Inv. M828) for which he paid 32 guineas; a statue of Aesculapius (lot 80, SM Inv. M603); a small cippus or altar (lot 2, SM Inv. M515); and a fragment of a frieze (part lot 23, SM Inv. MC19). The remainder of Soane's purchases (lots 33, 40 & 42) have not been securely identified with objects in the Museum. For the above lots Soane paid a total of £210, including commission. In addition to this, however, and as an apparently separate transaction, Soane seems to have also bought lots 104, 106, 112 and 114, for tipped onto the title-page in copy 1 is James Christie's bill for these lots dated 8 April 1801 amounting to a further £97.

However, accompanying this is a letter from Christie: *Pallmall/ May 2. 1801* asking Soane to fix a day for the return of the marbles to Roehampton, ... *as Lord Bessborough would wish to apprise his Servants of their coming, that proper assistance might be had for placing them in the different Situations they are meant to occupy*. Clearly some dispute, mistake or dissatisfaction had arisen amongst the parties concerned. Soane drafted his reply in pencil on the back as follows: *Ld. Bessboro' may have lots 105, 106, 112, 115 on sending for them to Ealing, taking on himself all the risque & expence as to the safe return of the Marbles Mr S is to be repaid the purchase of £97----- & also the Expence he has been at in the carriage of the Marbles to Ealing & putting them into their place. It is calculated this expence has been about £3----- but it may be determined by what Lord B. pays for carrying the Marbles to Roehampton. Mr S pledges himself that the Marbles recd. no injury neither in their transit nor in placing them. The incorrect lot numbers may be explained by Soane not having the relevant details in front of him while he was writing.*

Copy Notes

Copy 1: Title-page inscribed in ink Lord Besborough 1801. Prices noted in ink only for Soane's purchases. With a letter from James Christie dated 2 May 1801 and two bills dated 8 April 1801 (see notes above). Bound in a collection of sale catalogues, 1784 to 1823.

Copy 2: Without the addenda slip. Title-page inscribed in ink Lord Besborough 1801 and in pencil M Scholey/ 10 Cumberland / place / Paddington / Road. With most prices noted in pencil, but only Soane named as a buyer, suggesting perhaps that the bookseller Robert Scholey may have acted as Soane's agent at the sale. Bound after copy 1.

Reference Number 1896.⁴

- That it was in the Hamilton Collection

The documentation regarding the purchase by Hope of Hamilton's second collection of Greek vases and other artifacts may possibly include a reference to the purchase of an Egyptian basalt cup or bowl.

- A purchase from an unidentified collection or source.

There appear to be only two ancient stone bowls or vases that are still complete and have integral handles the Egyptian Hope Bowl and the Roman Bessborough Vase.

The Bessborough Granite two handled urn described as: *Aegyptian Vase, found in Augustus's Bath* from Castle Howard.



Sothebys Lot 16. A Monumental Quartz Granite Vase, Roman Egypt, probably Alexandria, circa 1st Century B.C. 68.5 cm high x 54 cm; 2 ft. 2½ in., 1 ft. 7¾ in. Estimate 400,000 - 600,000 GBP it sold for over a million pounds.

Provenance: Excavated in 1721 in "Augustus's Bath" (The Nymphaeum and garden under Nero's Domus Transitoria) on the Palatine Hill, Rome.

Purchased by William Ponsonby, 2nd Earl of Bessborough (1704-1793), probably through his agent Thomas Jenkins, thereafter at Parkstead House, Roehampton, Middlesex;

By descent to his son Frederick Ponsonby, 3rd Earl of Bessborough (1758-1844), until sold Christie's sale at Parkstead House, The Property of a Noble Earl Deceased, April 7th, 1801, lot 105 'A large and singularly fine and AEGYPTIAN GRANITE VASE found in AUGUSTUS'S BATH' 110 guineas bought by Frederick Howard, 5th Earl of Carlisle (1748-1825), Castle Howard, Yorkshire

Thence by descent

Literature: Gustav F. Waagen, Works of Art and Artists in England, London 1837, vol. III, p. 214, Gustav Friedrich Waagen, Treasures of Art in Great Britain, vol. III, London, 1854, p. 328,

Barbara Borg, Henner Von Hesberg, Andreas Linfert, eds., *Die Antiken Skulpturen in Castle Howard (Monumentis Artis Romanae)*, Wiesbaden, 2005, p. 19.

As shown, minor chips and abrasions along the edges of the foot and rim. The inside of the handles, the handle zone on one side of the neck, and the transition area between handles and neck were left rough/unpolished in antiquity. The flat surface beneath the foot was also left unpolished and has a deep circular hole about 3/4 of an inch in diameter in the center filled with desiccated rubbish both organic and man-made. It is unclear whether this hole is ancient or modern, but it is likely to have been used to secure the vase to a base/pedestal. The hole appears to be connected to a large, corroded iron peg driven into the bottom of the vase on the inside. The vase is hollow inside, roughly finished with lathe and chisel up to two thirds of its height, and above that roughly polished, up to and including the inside of the neck. There is a recess on top of the inside of the rim, most likely for securing a now missing lid. The rim is not evenly thick but tapers slightly from one handle to the other.

Two ancient vases made of what appears to be the same type of stone are in the Vatican Museums: ⁵

The provenance of this vase could hardly be more distinguished. Originally made for Nero's Domus Transitoria on the Palatine Hill in Rome it was excavated in the 1730's and some-time shortly after acquired by Frederick Ponsonby, later 2nd Earl of Bessborough. On his death it was sold by his son and bought by Frederick, 5th Earl of Carlisle and has descended at Castle Howard ever since. Thus in modern times the vase has only appeared once at sale and has been part, over the past two hundred and fifty years of only two celebrated collections.

The 1801 auction catalogue of the Bessborough collection lists the present lot as a "singularly fine Aegyptian Vase, found in Augustus's Bath." The place of discovery most likely refers to a large and magnificently decorated subterranean chamber excavated in 1721 on the Palatine Hill and dubbed "Bagni di Augusto" or alternatively "Bagni di Livia" by the scholars who discovered it on behalf of the Duke of Parma. The names remained for most of the 18th and 19th century, although the structure itself, of which little is still extant, soon came to be recognized as part of the Domus Transitoria, the Palace of Nero, which was destroyed by fire in A.D. 64.

Augustus's "Bath" turned out to be a misnomer as well. As early as the 19th century scholars identified it as a nymphaeum, an elaborate fountain structure with attached indoor garden. This large and highly elaborate architectural ensemble meant to combine the effects of running water and still, reflecting water with dazzling coloured marble and mosaic decoration, porphyry columns, and white marble statues. A large two-handled granite vase from Egypt, probably originally fitted with a lid, would have suited this context perfectly.

*The sheer scale of the room comes across in an annotated floorplan executed shortly after its discovery (see R. Lanciani, "Il 'Palazzo Maggiore' nei secoli XVI-XVIII," *Mitteilungen des deutschen Archäologischen Instituts*, 1894, p. 23) and its lavish wall decoration and architecture in the exquisite hand-coloured engravings of Elisha Kirkall (*British Museum*, inv. nos. 1874,0808.2159-2160). For the most recent and comprehensive scholarly assessment of this structure and a study of the complex hydraulics involved in its water displays see H. Manderscheid, "Was nach den 'ruchlosen Räubereien' übrigblieb – zu Gestalt und Funktion der sogenannten Bagni di Livia in der Domus Transitoria," in A. Hoffmann and U. Wulf, eds., *Die Kaiserpaläste auf dem Palatin in Rom*, Mainz, 2004, pp.75-85.*

The first modern owner was the aristocratic traveller, collector, builder and politician William Ponsonby, 2nd Earl of Bessborough (1702-1793). He grew up at the family seat Bessborough, Co. Kilkenny in Ireland which in due course he and his father would rebuild as a large classical mansion to the designs of Francis Bindon, between 1744-1755. Young Ponsonby entered the Irish parliament in 1725 and from 1727 he was MP for his native Kilkenny, a position he held for the next 30 years. It was not until 1736 that he embarked on his Grand Tour, considerably older and more mature than most who made the journey. This may well have been a reflection of the fact that he had just been elected to

the Society of Dilletantes. He travelled to Rome by way of Florence where he encountered both classical art in its original setting as well as two people who have a continuing influence on his taste: the fellow British traveller John Montegu, 4th Earl of Sandwich and the Swiss artist Jean-Etienne Liotard. After nearly two years travelling in Italy Ponsonby joined Sandwich and Liotard on the then unusual voyage to explore the eastern part of the classical world. In April 1738 they sailed from Naples and having explored some of the Italian islands went on to Greece. Here they visited Athens and the islands of Mylo, Zephros, Antiperos, Paros and Chios. They voyaged on to Constantinople and then the western coast of the Turkish mainland of Smyrna. Whilst in the area Ponsonby acquired antiquities and in the Ottoman capital he and Sandwich were painted by Liotard in oriental costume. He returned to England in 1739 fired up with a desire to form a distinguished collection of antiquities.

In that year he married Lady Caroline Cavendish whose father the 3rd Duke of Devonshire was the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. In the same year Ponsonby's father was made Earl of Bessborough and he Viscount Duncannon. The new Viscount became Lord Commissioner of the Admiralty which may have influenced his decision to buy Ingress Abbey on the south bank of the Thames. His world though abruptly changed in the late 1750's with the death of his father and then that of his wife. As a consequence he came into the family estates, sold Ingress and decided to build a new house with the purpose of displaying his growing collection of antiquities. As a site he chose the top of Roehampton Hill and for architect Sir William Chambers. Parkstead, the large classical villa that ensued, was to be a latterday Chiswick. Here he arranged his collection and as an anonymous poet wrote

*"Here Genius, Taste, and Science stand confest
And fill the minds of each transposed Guest...
Where e'r we turn; where'er we look around
We seem to breathe and tread on Classic Ground...
Ask ye, from whence these various Treasures come
These scenes of wonder? Need I Bessborough name?"*

Now in his sixties Bessborough had retired from public life but would live at Roehampton for another thirty years as a distinguished collector and trustee of the British Museum. Here he also brought up his children: his son Frederick who would succeed him, who married Lady Henrietta Spencer, sister of Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire, and his two daughters who in turn would become the Duchess of St Albans and Countess Fitzwilliam.

It is clear from surviving correspondence that from 1763 onwards Bessborough began to collect in earnest once again employing as his agents the famous Roman dealer Thomas Jenkins (1722-1798), and in Paris Lord Clanbrassill (1730-1798). The latter seems to be principally concerned with a gem collection which would later form part of the celebrated Marlborough gems. It is possible to identify some elements in his collection with those cited in correspondence. For instance, Jenkins supplied "the top of an ancient sarcophagus with bas reliefs of figures but for the main the task is made impossible as the Bessborough – Jenkins correspondence between 1763 and 1769 appears not to have survived. It was in the latter year that Jenkins visited Parkstead and followed it up with a letter suggesting more purchases including a marble of Diana and Apollo which Lord Bessborough acquired. Interestingly in his letter of reply he made the point that "You know I have not room for many things. It (Parkstead) as you know pretty full so what I want most are such things as I can put out in the garden". Fortunately, this gives a slight clue as to when this vase may have been purchased for it is known that by 1801 it was standing in the main hall of the house which implies a potential purchase prior to 1769.

The reason it is known where things stood by 1801 was that the catalogue of the collection prepared then was unusually laid out in the order of where objects were displayed in the house. It commences with the gardens and the two temples before entering the basement area of the house where terracotta vases and cinerary urns were displayed in what Bessborough called his catacombs. This seems to have been a well-lit vaulted, stuccoed passage fitted with niches to imitate an ancient columbarium, an

interesting prototype for Soane's display at his house in Lincoln Inn Fields (see Jonathon Scott, The Pleasures of Antiquity: British Collectors of Greece and Rome, New Haven, 2003, p. 140). The sequence of display then moves to the main hall on the piano nobile. It was here that Bessborough displayed his greatest treasures including the items he had purchased on his Grand Tour: "Greek Head of a Faun found in Athens", "Group of a Lion devouring a horse found in the neighbourhood of Smyrna", "Statue of Ganymede dug up in the Campo Martial in 1769", and amongst others "An Aegyptian Granite Vase found in Augustus's Bath". It is therefore very likely that the vase was either purchased by Bessborough whilst in Rome or later in the 1760's from Jenkins.

Following Bessborough's death in 1793 his son was forced to sell the collection and it was brought to auction by Christie's in 1801. Their catalogue underlined the importance of the collection: Catalogue of the Capital, Well Known, and Truly Valuable Collection of Antique Statues, Bustos, Aegyptian and other vases, Bas-Reliefs etc.... The Property of a Noble Earl, deceased (Not less distinguished for his exquisite Taste and Judgement in the Fine Arts as his Liberality in Collecting). This Valuable assemblage, a great part of which was formed during his travels and residence in Italy.

Amongst those who attended the sale was the architect /collector Sir John Soane, the antiquarians Charles Townley, Thomas Hope and Henry Blundell, and fellow nobility including Bessborough's son in law The Duke of St Albans, Lord Egremont, and the 5th Earl of Carlisle.

Carlisle acquired five objects in all but none nearly as expensive as the present vase for which he paid 110 guineas. In the manuscript inventory of the antiquities of Castle Howard entitled Bronzes, statuary & table tops. 5th Earl of Carlisle (Castle Howard Archive H2/2/2) the present vase is listed as no. 1 indicating how important its new owner considered it to be. Surprisingly since then the vase seemed to escape the attention of scholars and has not been fully published. Even in Borg, Von Hesberg, and Linfert, op. cit., p. 19 it is merely mentioned in passing in the introduction. This is unexpected given both the historical importance and sheer beauty of this powerfully worked monumental vase.⁶

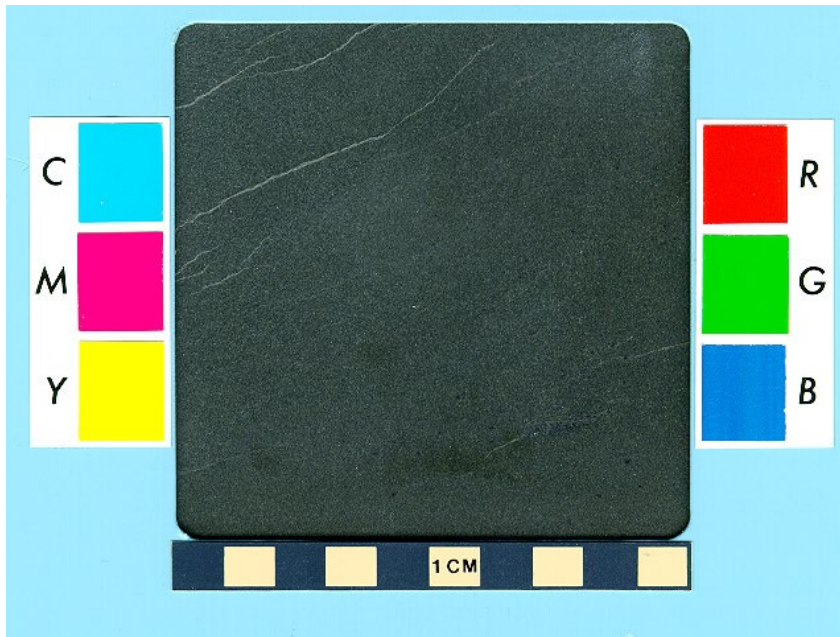
Metagreywacke

There are two types of metasedimentary rocks, metagreywacke and metasiltstone. These rocks are essentially the sedimentary rocks that have been very weakly metamorphosed and are homogeneous and have no visible schistosity. The metamorphism of greywacke and siltstone increases the cohesiveness of the mineral grains and its hardness making these rocks less susceptible to fracture during carving.

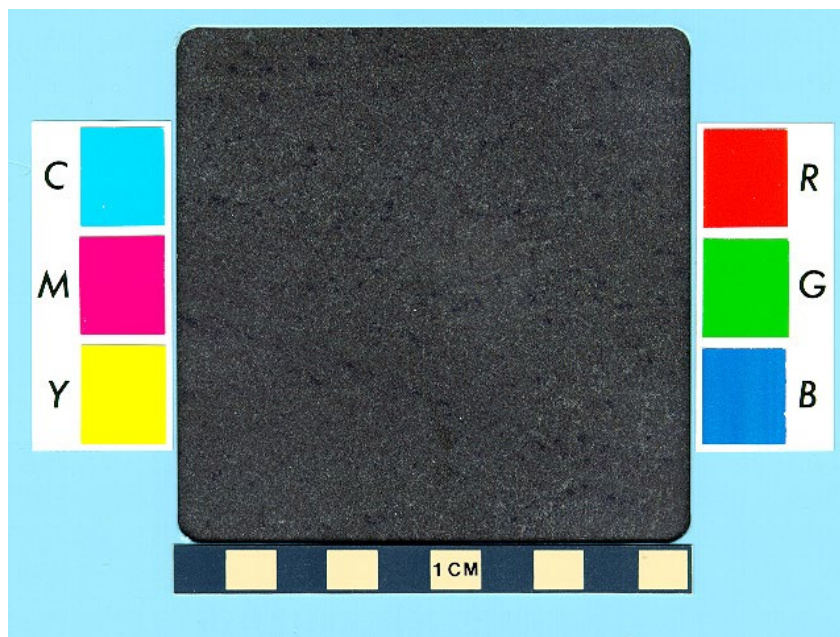
Greywacke is a term that refers to an immature sandstone, generally indurated, dark grey, and consisting of poorly sorted angular to subangular, sand-sized grains. These grains generally consist of quartz, feldspar, and a variety of rock and mafic mineral fragments embedded in a compact clay matrix, which makes up at least 10% of the rock, having the general composition of shale. Siltstones are sedimentary rocks ranging in their modal % of silt, which dominated over a clay matrix similar in compositions to the clayey matrix of greywackes.

Metagreywackes and metasiltstones are found in Egypt in several localities in the Eastern Desert, where they are associated with Precambrian basement rocks, and they are often found together in the same locality. The main source of these rocks are the immense quarries at Wadi Hammamat. These quarries were worked from the Predynastic period to the Roman period. The typical grain-size of metagreywackes and metasiltstones at this location are very fine- to fine-grained (0.06-0.2 mm) and silt sized (0.01 to 0.02 mm). The metagreywackes are occasionally pebbly and dark greenish-gray to mainly grayish-green in colour. The Metasiltstones are dark purplish- and greenish-gray to mainly grayish-green in colour.

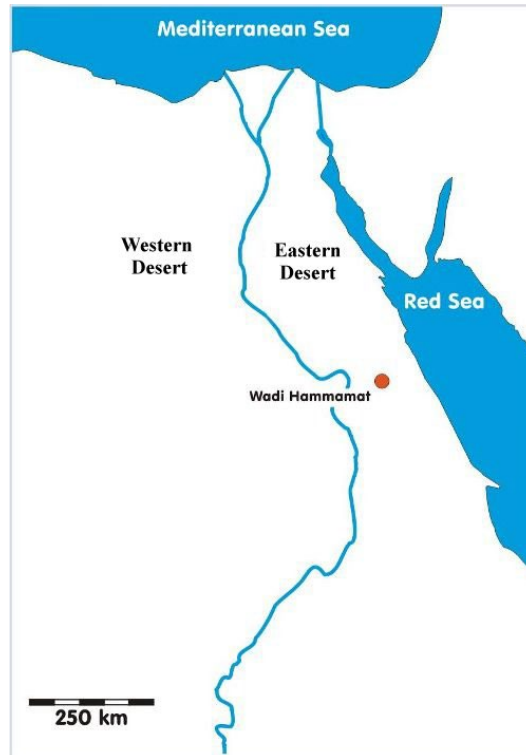
The green colour is associated with a high content of the mineral chlorite, formed during weak metamorphism due to deep burial in the Earth's crust (chlorite zone). Photos of polished rock slabs obtained from various metagreywacke quarry sites used by the ancient Egyptians can be seen **at the** ⁷



Wadi Hammamat Metagreywacke known as Green Greywacke



Wadi Hammamat Metagreywacke Grey greywacke often mistaken for basalt.

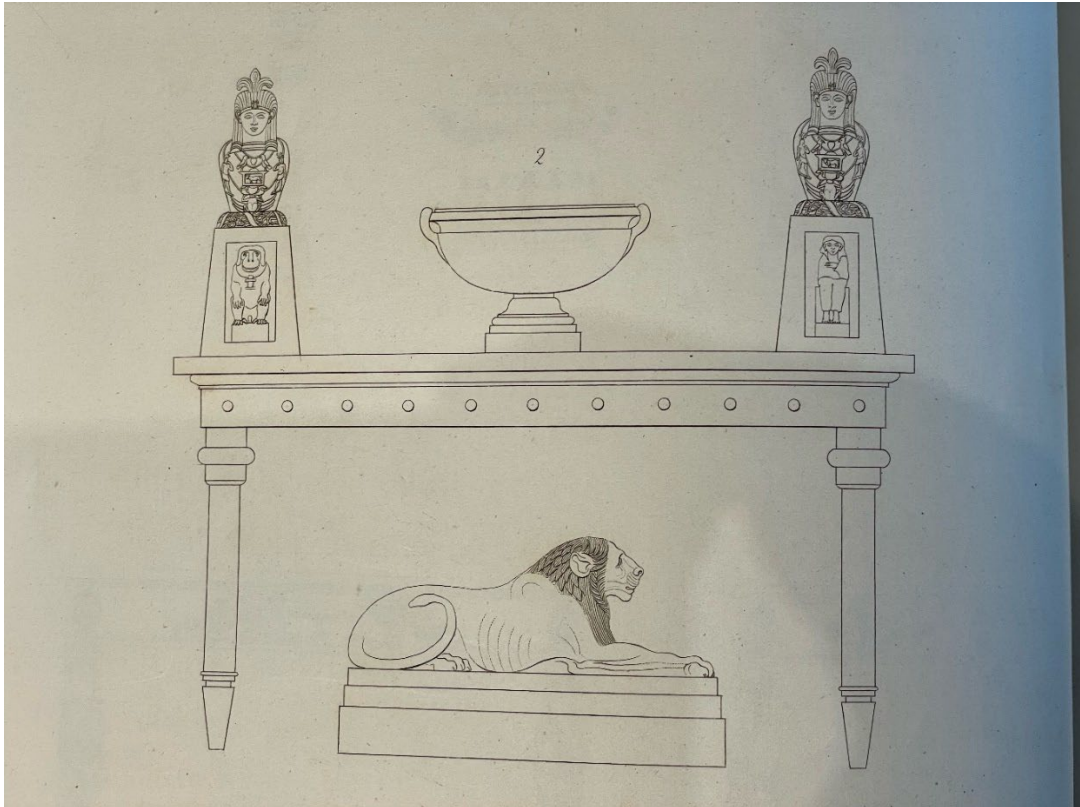


The metagreywacke of the Wadi Hammamat quarries, as well as rocks of similar appearance, were called bhn (bekhen) by the ancient Egyptians. A number of inscriptions associate the rock bhn with the Hammamat quarry sites, where metagreywacke was the main rock type. Some stone artifacts were also inscribed with this name bhn and are made of metagreywacke or similar looking sedimentary rocks. The darker grey varieties of this rock are also often mistaken for basalt during archeological identification by Egyptologists.

As well, starting in the Old Kingdom, and through the rest of ancient Egyptian history, both metasiltstone and metagreywacke were used for large items such as sarcophagi, stelai, naoi, and statues.

This allows for fine detail and intricate shapes to be carved into objects. Metasiltstone is also misidentified as slate, and both metagreywacke and metasiltstone have been misidentified in some cases as a basalt.













Fragment with working traces, ca. 1353–1336 B.C. Egyptian, New Kingdom, Amarna Period, Dynasty 18. Indurated limestone; H. 8 x W. 7 x D. 6.3 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 1957 (57.180.142)



Scientific analysis, using scanning Close-up photograph of the protruding stump of the broken tubular drill core, surrounded and partly covered by the granular material that provided the sample for analysis.

Electron microscopy and energy dispersive X-ray spectroscopy (SEM-EDS), has identified the material as a mixture of predominant angular grains of corundum (aluminium oxide, Al_2O_3) with jagged edges and a few other minerals such as quartz, rutile, feldspar, apatite, ilmenite, augite, biotite, and chromite, usually smaller in size and with high angularity (figs. 4–5). Very fine particles of calcite surround the bigger particles, which are most likely remains of the indurated limestone that had been drilled. Several particles of corroded bronze and green copper corrosion products are intimately dispersed among the above-mentioned particles, imparting the light green colour.

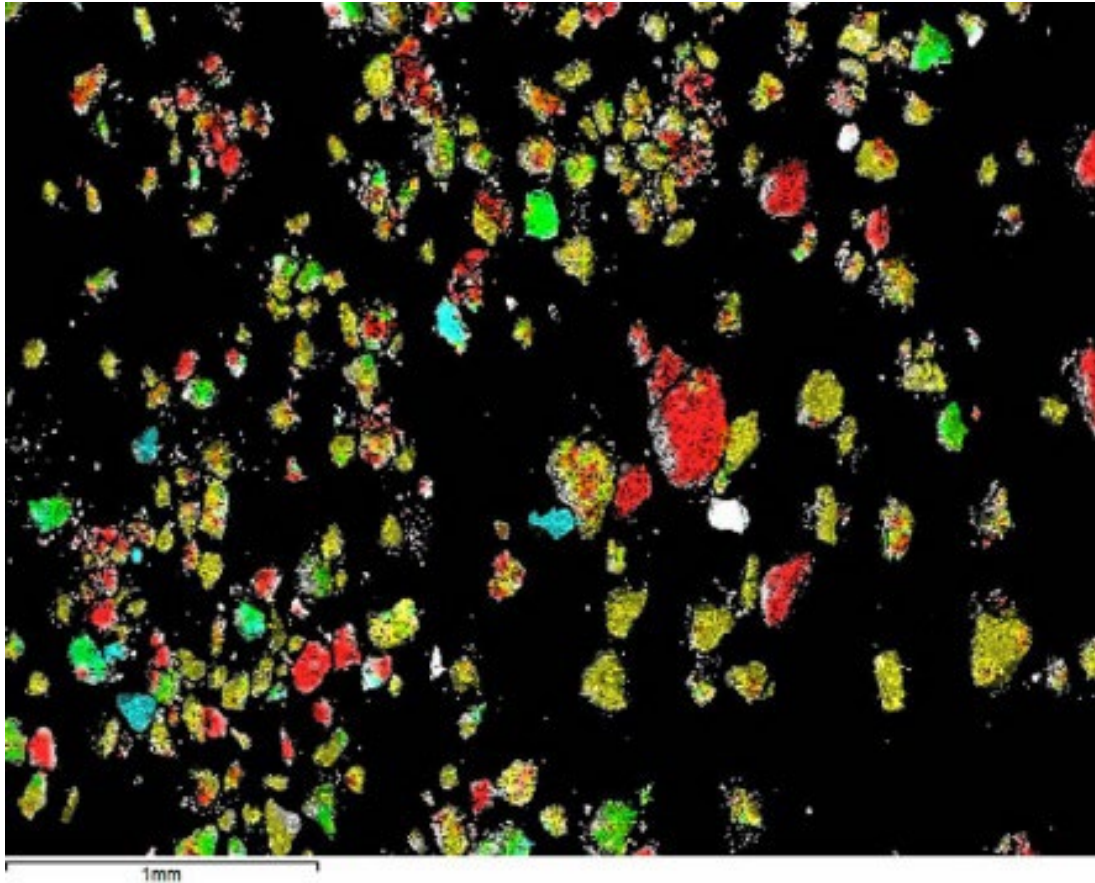


Fig. 5. An X-ray elemental map showing the distribution of aluminium (Al, yellow), silicon (Si, blue), and calcium (Ca, red) in the abrasive sample. The yellow particles are corundum fragments.

The presence of abundant corundum particles conveys high abrasive efficiency to this material, and strongly suggests that this mixture was deliberately used in the drilling process of the hard limestone fragment. Remains at the bottom of the drill hole thus consist of a mixture of the abrasive, the powdered limestone, and corroded fragments of the bronze drilling tool. All together, these findings suggest the use of a bronze tubular drill in conjunction with a corundum-rich abrasive mixture.

Although the use of corundum would appear to be established, it is still quite difficult at this time to indicate where and how such abrasive material was obtained, although the assemblage of minerals identified can help to narrow down its plausible origin. Most of the historically exploited abrasive was in the form of emery—a complex mixture of different minerals that includes abundant corundum. The major source of abrasive in the ancient Mediterranean, located on the Greek island of Naxos, was indeed an emery deposit. However, the minerals so far identified on the Amarna fragment differentiate this material from usual emery and pose some questions regarding its source, manufacture, and possible recycling history.

Among possible sources of abrasive other than emery, byproducts from the mining of gem-sized crystals could have potentially provided corundum-rich loose material with a technical and economic value of its own. In Egypt, the only known corundum deposit of this type is located in the southern part of the Eastern Desert, at Hafafit.

This scientific investigation continues. In order to verify the consistency of these first findings, new samples from other worked objects will need to be found and analyzed. Additionally, samples from corundum-bearing deposits, including both the well-known historical emery deposits and the lesser-known Egyptian source of Hafafit, should be analyzed for comparison.

The full report about this research was published in the spring issue (14) of Horizon, the Amarna Project and Amarna Trust newsletter. ⁸

The potter's wheel allows for a practical precedent that would allow the art of turning to be used on stone as distinct to clay. The Egyptian clay pot is raised against a fixed hand spinning on a wheel presumably powered by another human strong enough to power the abrasion of the bowl. The weight of the Hope bowl stone would I suggest at this date precludes horizontal turning.



Egyptian Potter turning vessels on a wheel, Old Kingdom, 5th Dynasty (2565-2420 BC). Limestone model, from the Oriental Institute, University of Chicago

My investigations into engine turned English pottery discovered that really skilled potters were seriously rare for example only one turner in Long Lane Longton could engine turn pottery in the leather using a horizontal lathe in the last quarter of the 18th century a matter taken up with some success by Wedgwood before 1800.

If the Hope Vase dates from the end The First Dynastic period (c.3150 - c.2613 BCE) and the start of the Old Kingdom. Probably only one person ever mastered the skills required to make such an object. As a result, he was given a rare and special variant block of this particularly hard green stone to attempt a successful construction of the Hope Bowl, and the start the Old Kingdom (c. 2613 - 2181 BCE). These dates are not arbitrary, but they help to clarify the long history of Egypt by dividing this story into sections of cohesive development.

Scholars now believe the first king may have been a man named Narmer who united Upper and Lower Egypt at some point c. 3150 BCE. The Narmer Palette depicts a king, positively identified as Narmer, as a military figure conquering a region which is clearly Lower Egypt.



The Narmer Palette also known as the Great Hierakonpolis Palette, grey metagreywacke cm. 64 cm × 42 cm 3200 to 3000 BCE discovered 1897/98 in the Temple House at Nekhen, by Quibell and Green Collection the Egyptian Museum Cairo.

The First Dynastic Period of Egypt was founded by Menes/Narmer after the unification of the country. The great Egyptologist Flinders Petrie (1853-1942) accepted Narmer as the first king of the first dynasty claiming that the two names designated one man. Flinders Petrie, and others following him, claim that whether Narmer united Egypt by force is considered irrelevant in that it is almost certain he had to maintain the kingdom through military means, and this would account for his depiction in inscriptions on the Narmer Palette.

The Old Kingdom (c. 2613–2130 B.C.) was an incredibly dynamic period of Egyptian history. While the origin of many concepts, practices, and monuments can be traced to earlier periods, it was during the Old Kingdom that they developed into the forms that would characterize and influence the rest of pharaonic history. A number of broad artistic, historical, and religious trends distinguished this period. Yet, the specific elements and manifestations of these overarching commonalities changed dramatically over time, and the end of the Old Kingdom differed remarkably from the beginning. Although several important settlement sites provide some insight into everyday life, our knowledge of Old Kingdom material culture is largely based on funerary evidence.

Dynasty 3 (ca. 2649–2575 B.C.) Dynasty 3 began with king Netjerikhet (r. ca. 2649–2630 B.C.), who would later be called Djoser. Djoser's funerary complex at Saqqara exemplifies the notable architectural and cultural developments that occurred during his reign. This was the earliest stone structure in Egypt, and at its centre stood Egypt's first pyramid, the Step Pyramid. The complex consisted of multiple cult buildings and an enormous series of underground apartments within a large rectangular enclosure that was oriented from north to south. Symbolically, it aligned the deceased king with the circumpolar stars and the gods, enabled him to eternally celebrate the rituals of kingship, and provided a place for his funerary cult to be performed.

Dynasty 3 high officials-built mud-brick rectangular superstructures, known today as mastabas, above their tombs in Saqqara, continuing the practice of the previous dynasty. In many of these, what had before been offering niches were enlarged into small chapels that were lined with stone and decorated. An offering scene, which depicted the tomb owner seated before a table of bread, with lists of food and other provisions, was usually depicted inside the chapel. This scene magically provided for the deceased in the afterlife, thus guaranteeing his continued existence. Such scenes were ubiquitous for the remainder of Egyptian history

Dynasty 6 (ca. 2323–2150 B.C.) and the End of the Old Kingdom. The funerary apartments of all subsequent Old Kingdom kings were inscribed with Pyramid Texts, and by the end of Dynasty 6, queens' pyramids had them as well. This is one sign of the changing role of the king, which further evolved over Dynasty 6 as the men and women who surrounded him became increasingly wealthy and powerful. Both Pepi I (r. ca. 2289–2255 B.C.) and Pepi II (r. ca. 2246–2152 B.C.) seem to have married an unusually large number of women, probably between six and eight, with many being from outside the royal family. At the same time, the status of kings' wives seems to have increased. Their funerary temples became larger and more complex, and they could be buried under pyramids, a practice that had formerly been limited to queen mothers.

The state's interest in the provinces grew throughout Dynasty 6, and the wealth and influence that had previously been localized among high officials at the capital spread across the country as the prominence of officials residing in and governing the provinces increased. By the reign of Merenre I (ca. 2255–2246 B.C.), many of these men were choosing to be buried there, often in rock-cut tombs. While Upper Egyptian officials had used this type of architecture before, the size and decoration of late Dynasty 6 provincial tombs was greatly expanded. Scholars debate whether this trend was a sign of a weak central government with high officials acting on their own outside of the king's grasp, or part of the state's effort to extend its authority by sending agents to establish its presence in the countryside. However, to some degree, it could reflect a gradual decline in central power and influence during Dynasty 6, even as the state maintained control over these regions and attempted to exploit provincial resources.

Effectively, the last king of Dynasty 6 was Pepi II, who, according to tradition, ruled for more than ninety years. Though recent scholars have questioned this, his reign was undoubtedly long, and it is often cited as a primary reason for the subsequent breakdown of the central government. Yet, while dynastic issues may have played a role in the collapse of the Old Kingdom, there were many contributing factors, including increasing decentralization, provincial policies, growing hostility and pressure from Nubian populations to the south, and climate change and the desiccation of the region. Several ephemeral kings followed Pepi II and comprise Dynasties 7 and 8 (ca. 2152–2100 B.C.), but the degree to which the capital retained control of the rest of the country during this time is debatable. As the governors of the provinces became autonomous, the Old Kingdom came to an end.⁹

Four important green metagreywacke sculptures

Pepi(y) I was the third king of the 6th dynasty and commissioned the building of a complex at Saqqara for his funerary cult. One of the most notable works of art associated with Pepi I is the Kneeling Statuette of Pepi I, depicting the king offering nu-pots. It is a finely detailed piece of ancient Egyptian art that showcases the skill of the sculptor. The statue's purpose was to serve as an image of the king offering holy water to the gods during his funerary ceremonies.

It could be suggested that the Hope bowl is related to this miniature statuary figure.

In addition to the Kneeling Statuette, Pepi I also left behind a large copper statue of himself, which is currently housed at the Egyptian Museum in Cairo. This statue is a testimony to Pepi I's wealth and power as pharaoh.

During Pepi I's reign, the power of the monarchs grew leading to the decline of the Old Kingdom. Despite this instability, the art of ancient Egypt was still remarkably consistent in its style and motifs. Ancient Egyptian art is best understood from the viewpoint of the ancient Egyptians, who valued order, balance, and continuity. To modern viewers, it can appear formal and abstract, but when viewed within the cultural and historical context, ancient Egyptian art reveals deep spiritual and religious significance.



This statuette depicts King Pepy I kneeling and offering nu-pots, ritual vessels that held milk or wine. A king would kneel only before a god, so this statuette must have been placed before the statue of a deity in a temple. Inlaid eyes of black and white stone set in copper rims enhance the finely carved figure. The hole above Pepy's forehead originally held a uraeus-cobra, probably metal, signifying royalty. Greywacke, alabaster, obsidian, copper, ca. 2338-2298 B.C.E., Dynasty 6th, Old Kingdom. (15.2 high x 4.6 wide x 9 cm deep). <https://www.brooklynmuseum.org/opencollection/objects/3448>



Pepi(y) I kneeling this green metagreywacke statue in the Brooklyn Museum of Art height has the same rounded tactile feel of the Hope Bowl.



Late Dynastic period (27th Dynasty) green ¹⁰ with agate and travertine inlaid eyes (height: 9 cm: New York). This head of an antelope is a masterpiece of Late Period animal sculpture. The sculptor carved the hard, fine-grained stone so alabaster and banded agate, creating an especially alert and lifelike gaze. The horns, probably made of ivory or gilded wood, were once attached to the head with tenons. The head probably graced the prow of a ceremonial boat that stood in a temple sanctuary. Boats decorated with antelope heads were sacred to the god Sokar, who was the overseer of the desert and the royal cemeteries near Memphis, Egypt's capital in the north.

Another fine example of Late Period animal sculpture in the Metropolitan Museum is the statue of the god Horus as a falcon (34.2.1).



Late Dynastic period (30th Dynasty) Green ¹¹ (height: 71.1 cm, width: 20.3 cm, depth: 45.7 cm; ¹² New York). The God Horus Protecting King Nectanebo II, 360–343 B.C.E.; Dynasty 30, reign of Nectanebo II; late period Egyptian Rogers Fund, 1934 (34.2.1)



Late Dynastic period (30th Dynasty) Green ¹³ from Saqqara (height: 10.2 cm: ¹⁴ Boston.)

From this small number of surviving green metagreywacke objects, it becomes obvious that this stone was only used in the finest of the fine Egyptian creations. The Hope *cup of basalt* is indicative of the advanced taste of Thomas Hope as epitomised in his iconic creation the Duchess Street Egyptian Room.

John Hawkins 11 September 2024

¹ <https://www.vam.ac.uk/articles/thomas-hope-and-the-regency-style/>

² <https://collection.maas.museum/object/76726>

³ *Extraction and Use of Greywacke in Ancient Egypt Ahmed Ibrahim Othman.*

file:///C:/Users/User/Downloads/Extraction_and_Use_of_Greywacke_in_Ancient_Egypt.pdf

⁴ <https://collections.soane.org/b9188>

⁵ <http://arachne.uni-koeln.de/item/marbilderbestand/892666> <http://arachne.uni-koeln.de/item/marbilderbestand/892670>

⁶ <https://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2015/treasures-115303/lot.16.html>

⁷ <http://www.eescience.utoledo.edu/Faculty/Harrell/Egypt/Quarries/wh-ss-4.jpg>

⁸ <https://www.metmuseum.org/blogs/now-at-the-met/2015/ancient-egyptian-technology>

⁹ https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/oking/hd_oking.htm

¹⁰ [metagreywacke head of an antelope](#)

¹¹ [metagreywacke statue of the god Horus protecting Nectanebo II](#)

¹² [Metropolitan Museum of Art](#)

¹³ [metagreywacke portrait sculpture head of a priest](#)

¹⁴ [Boston Museum of Fine Arts](#)