

Janet Gourlay 1863-1912 by William H. Peck

Janet Agnes Gourlay was the daughter of Henry G. Gourlay and Agnes Christine Burell. She was born in Dundee but very little is known about her early life until 1896 when she was introduced to Margaret Benson in Luxor by Lady Jane Lindsey, a mutual friend. From the letters of Margaret to her family it is evident that between the two women there was an immediate mutual attraction and sympathetic understanding. Janet Gourlay worked with Margaret Benson in the excavations in the Precinct of the goddess Mut at Karnak temple for only two seasons, 1896 and 1897, but she was the co-author of the report on the work, *The Temple of Mut in Asher* published in 1899. There is some indication that Benson and Gourlay intended to continue the work beyond 1897 but Margaret Benson's fragile physical and mental condition seems to have prevented this.

The work of the two English women at the Temple of Mut is often dismissed as an amateur effort worthy of little note but there is evidence that Janet Gourlay attended lectures by Flinders Petrie at University College before her excavation experience and presumably had at least some theoretical knowledge of Egyptology. Gourlay later collaborated on a work related to the excavation with Percy E. Newberry on the Fourth Prophet of Amun, Montuemhet. After their introduction in 1896 Janet Gourlay and Margaret Benson were inseparable friends and constant companions for many years. Janet died unmarried in 1912.

Bibliography

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