

25 July 2006

## **Egyptian fairytale ending gets an extension**

In late April, a visitor to the Fitzwilliam Museum sparked off an exciting competition. The visitor is an ancient Egyptian papyrus, on loan from the British Museum, recording the so-called 'Tale of the Doomed Prince', and the competition allows budding writers to finish off the unfinished story or to write a completely new fairytale. The competition, which was launched at the Cambridge **word**fest in April, seems to have caught people's imaginations.

"We've been thrilled by the response so far from visitors to the museum", says Helen Strudwick, Outreach Officer for Egypt at the Fitzwilliam Museum, "and the postcards advertising the competition are obviously being picked up all over the place. We've had to have a second batch printed."

Helen Taylor, Literature Development Officer for Cambridgeshire County Council, is also delighted by the response. "Libraries have been holding workshops to help people understand the structure of a fairytale and enable them to make a start on putting pen to paper, and they've also put on some wonderful displays to fit in with the theme of the competition."

In fact, the response has been so positive that the deadline for submissions has had to be extended. "We have had so many requests for workshops in early September that we've simply had to respond by giving people longer to write", says Helen Strudwick, "so the deadline for submitting entries has been extended to 30 September."

The new deadline and details of the workshops are advertised on the competition website, [www.writeafairytale.org.uk](http://www.writeafairytale.org.uk), and through participating libraries and museums across the region. And there's still time to see the papyrus whilst it is on show at the Fitzwilliam Museum, because the British Museum have generously agreed to extend the loan until the end of the competition.

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### **Further information and images are available from:**

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Full details of the competition, including workshop dates, are available on-line: [www.writeafairytale.org.uk](http://www.writeafairytale.org.uk)

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## NOTES FOR EDITORS

### **The Fitzwilliam Museum and its Egyptian collections**

The Fitzwilliam Museum houses the University of Cambridge's art collection and is a public museum and art gallery with an international reputation. More than half a million objects and works of art are held in five curatorial departments: Antiquities, Applied Arts, Coins and Medals, Manuscripts and Printed Books and Paintings, Drawings and Prints.

The Fitzwilliam Museum's collection of Egyptian antiquities is widely regarded as one of the finest in the country. It is very popular with visitors and is consulted regularly by scholars from all over the world. One of its most important pieces is the famous sarcophagus lid of Rameses III, given as a gift by G B Belzoni in 1823. The collection grew in importance towards the end of the 19th century and in the early years of the 20th century, benefiting from the work of Sir Flinders Petrie, the Egypt Exploration Fund and the British School of Archaeology in Egypt. Among other notable benefactors, R G Gayer-Anderson (1943) and Sir Robert Greg (1954) deserve to be singled out; their bequests to the Museum provided the Egyptian collection with some of its most significant artefacts.

The Museum's Egyptian galleries reopened to the public on 25 May following a £1.5 million project to re-display the Museum's outstanding Egyptian collections. Years of planning and eighteen months of refurbishment, research and conservation work have resulted in stunning new displays of over 1,100 objects, many exhibited for the first time. A special week of Egyptian events, held over May half-term during Museums and Galleries Month 2006, included talks, tours, trails and workshops and resulted in a 76% increase in visitors over the same period in 2005.

The Fitzwilliam Museum attracts around 300,000 visitors a year. It is open Tuesday to Saturday, 10.00 am to 5.00 pm, Sundays and Bank Holidays, 12.00 noon to 5.00 pm; closed Mondays. Admission to the permanent collections and to temporary exhibitions is free.

Website: [www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk](http://www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk)

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