

Robert Grenvill Gayer-Anderson, 1881 - 1945 aka R.G., John, Pum, the Major, the Pasha

After qualifying as a doctor at Guy's Hospital in 1904, Robert GayerAnderson joined the Royal Army Medical Corps and after a brief stay in Gibraltar was transferred to the Egyptian Army in Cairo as a Major.

He spent two years in the Sudan followed by two years in the Congo where he worked to eliminate sleeping sickness. He contracted a lifethreatening disease and was sent back to Cairo. There he spent most of the rest of his life, initially as Recruiting Officer.



When war broke out in 1914 he served with Army Intelligence in Cairo. He was at Gallipoli with a Field Ambulance and then on the Red Sea coast as Political Officer. On his return to Egypt in 1916 he caught diphtheria which left his heart seriously weakened. He was sent to Oxford to recuperate. During that same year his brother D'Arcy died at sea. The Major was able to return to service in the War Office and only in 1918 could he regain his beloved Cairo.



Egypt in 1919 was subject to Communist-inspired uprisings. The Major was put in charge of investigating riots and executing those found guilty. At one time an attempt was made to assassinate him. He retired from his army posts in 1920 and worked thereafter for the Ministry of the Interior in Lower Egypt, becoming Oriental Secretary to Lord Allenby in 1922.

In 1924 he had a son, John, and joined with his twin in purchasing the Great House in Lavenham as a base for his family and his twin, now serving in England. In 1927 they were joined by his recently widowed mother.

Robert continued to live in Cairo restoring and dealing in antiquities. He established a significant reputation with a number of illustrious clients. He is pictured here escorting the Crown Prince of Sweden on a buying expedition.



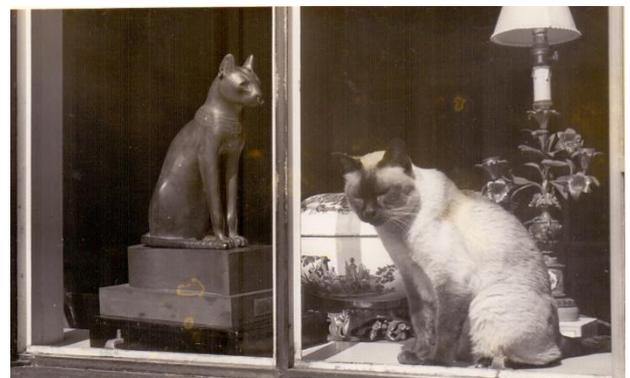
In 1923 he was in the first official party, the Queen of Belgium's, to enter Tutankhamun's tomb. He described the chamber as "untarnished, not a stain, not a scratch, not a spot of dust on the vibrant, shining gold and blue surfaces, as if it had been dusted and polished but a moment before".



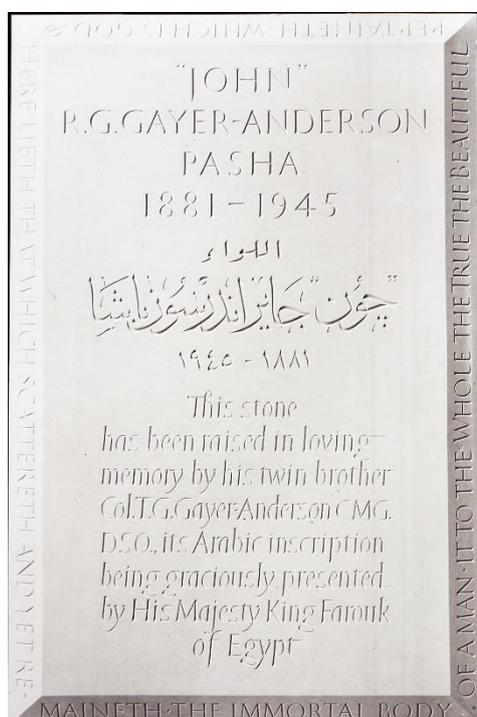
In 1934 the Egyptian government offered him the Beit el Kretliya, the House of the Cretan Lady, a seventeenth century house attached to the Mosque Ibn Tulun in the heart of the old city, if he would restore and furnish it. This became his greatest project lasting for the rest of his life and consuming his energies and interests. He created an astounding home which he relished.

On the outbreak of the Second World War the Major went to work for the Red Cross. By 1941 both twins were suffering from heart disease and it was time to return to England. The Major handed over Beit el Kretliya and its contents to the Egyptian Government and it was renamed the Gayer Anderson Museum.

During the next two years Robert finalised the dispersal of his huge collection, including the famous Gayer-Anderson Cat, among various museums across the world. In 1943 at a ceremony in London King Farouk gave him the rank of Lewa (Major General) and the title of Pasha in recognition of his services to Egypt both medical and cultural.



The Gayer-Anderson Cat and companion in a Little Hall window; it spent much of World War II down the well in the house.



Sick as he was, the Pasha had to return to Cairo in 1944 to settle his affairs. On his return to Lavenham in May 1945 he was mortally ill and died on 16th June 1945.

A man of immense talent - doctor, soldier, artist, writer, antiquarian his ashes were buried in Lavenham Cemetery. The tomb was designed by his friend Eric Gill and includes an inscription composed by King Farouk.