



TUTANKHAMUN





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Max Irons and Sam Neill join forces in the new epic four-part mini series Tutankhamun, produced by ITV Studios.

Tutankhamun is based on the compelling story of Howard Carter played by Max Irons (*Woman In Gold*, *The White Queen*) and his discovery of the tomb of one of Ancient Egypt's forgotten pharaohs, the boy-king Tutankhamun. Sam Neill (*Peaky Blinders*, *The Tudors*, *Jurassic Park*) takes the role of the dashing and eccentric Lord Carnarvon who keeps faith with Carter and continues to back his expeditions when no one else will.

Further cast includes Catherine Steadman (*Downton Abbey*), Amy Wren (*The Last Kingdom*), Jonathan Aris (*Sherlock*) and Rupert Vansittart (*Game of Thrones*).

The story written by leading screenwriter Guy Burt (*Jekyll and Hyde*, *The Bletchley Circle*, *The Borgias*) focuses on the legendary personal story of Carter, a solitary man on the edge of society who became an iconic figure and an unlikely hero.

Set against the great sweep of ochre sands, looming cliffs and baking heat of Egypt's Valley of the Kings, the story unfolds in 1905 when Carter, an eminent British archaeologist who we meet in his early 20's, is fervently leading an expedition. Amidst the chaos scattered across the Valley floor, Carter's grim determination to find lost antiquities is only too apparent. He has an easy manner with the Egyptian men who work alongside him, but when tempers fray Carter is hotheaded and puts the dig and his career in jeopardy.

With his license to dig revoked by Cairo's Antiquities Service, Carter spends years ostracised, dishevelled and living rough and resorting to selling previously discovered archaeological relics to buy food.

A chance meeting with the privileged and fast-living British aristocrat, Lord Carnarvon, brings a change of fortunes as the enthusiastic amateur needs an experienced archaeologist to help him with a series of random excavations. Carter and Carnarvon begin the most unlikely friendship, in spite of their differences in background and character. After years of searching for the tomb, Carter and Carnarvon successfully discover the last resting place of the boy-king in 1921 against all odds and at great personal expense.

The drama is produced by Simon Lewis (*The C Word*, *The Paradise*, *Five Daughters*), directed by Peter Webber (*Girl with a Pearl Earring*, *Hannibal Rising*, *The Stretford Wives*) and executive produced by ITV Studios Creative Director of Drama Francis Hopkinson (*Home Fires*, *Jekyll & Hyde*, *Lucan*) and Catherine Oldfield (*Home Fires*, *Collision*, *Foyle's War*).

INTRODUCTION BY WRITER

GUY BURT

This is a story that's fascinated me since I was eight years old, which I suspect is something I have in common with a lot of grown-up little boys (and girls) out there. Beyond the sheer romance of buried treasure and a three-thousand-year-old mystery, though, there's a different tale – of courage, tenacity and relentless self-belief.

Howard Carter was an unbelievably driven, stubborn, difficult man whose conviction that Tutankhamun's tomb lay in the centre of the Valley of the Kings contradicted every expert archaeological opinion and decades of exhaustive digging. He should, by all accounts, have been utterly wrong. Instead he was spot-on correct. But the willpower to drive that point of view home, get the concession to dig, and see the job through made him socially awkward to a fault. I think perhaps writers are particularly drawn to socially awkward outsiders, since that's probably how we often see ourselves, so telling Howard Carter's story had a certain magnetic attraction to me.

Also compelling, from an author's standpoint, was the deep, affectionate friendship that developed between Carter and his patron, Lord Carnarvon. On the surface the two of them made for the classic mismatched couple, but they shared a trust in their own intuition: Carnarvon as something of a racy gambling man, Carter in his dogged faith in the tomb's location. In the end, Carnarvon bet his fortune on Carter's hunch, and it paid off... or rather, it nearly did. The details of how exactly the gamble panned out form their own strange, painful story.

Finally, the documentary evidence and the letters exchanged by the key players in the story also hint that the relationship between Carter and his patron's daughter, Evelyn, may have been deeper than just a friendship. The hints are just hints, and expert opinion is divided to say the least; but I choose to believe that the same romance that calls to us from a hundred years ago must have been still more powerful in person. In Egypt, in the Valley, it seems to me that anything can happen – a boy can become a pharaoh, a royal tomb can be lost and forgotten, and perhaps two people divided by class and station can fall in love.

CHARACTER BIOGRAPHIES

MAX IRONS PLAYS HOWARD CARTER



Down on his luck archaeologist Howard Carter stumbles upon evidence of an undiscovered tomb of one of Egypt's forgotten Pharaohs, Tutankhamun, right at the heart of the Valley of the Kings. Other archaeologists dismiss Carter's theories as impossible. Only one man believes in Carter's dream and puts up the money he needs, the dashing aristocrat Lord Carnarvon. Together, this unlikely pair overcome all odds – corrupt officials, rival digs, World War and revolution – in pursuit of this impossible dream. It seems as if nothing can come between them – until Carter falls in love with Carnarvon's daughter, Evelyn...

SAM NEILL PLAYS LORD CARNARVON



Privileged heir and fast living gambler, Lord Carnarvon, is Carter's patron and the man who makes their extraordinary discovery possible. After a devastating car-crash, Carnarvon is ordered to Egypt for his health. But he's soon bored of seeing the sights and hears that about archaeologists digging for treasure in the Valley. A chance meeting with archaeologist Howard Carter begins the most unlikely friendship, in spite of their differences in background and character. But when Carter falls for Carnarvon's daughter Evelyn, that friendship threatens to be torn apart.

AMY WREN PLAYS LADY EVELYN CARNARVON



Carter meets Lord Carnarvon's daughter Evelyn in Egypt when she's just a teenage girl. It is Evelyn who plants the first seed in Carter's head about the possibility of finding an intact royal tomb, forgotten by history. Evelyn is the only person able to break through Carter's solitude and single-mindedness. When Carter meets Evelyn again, she's no longer a girl. She's blossomed into a beautiful young woman. Evelyn finds love with Carter: a forbidden love that crosses class boundaries, between two people who can't possibly expect a future together. But in Egypt, perhaps anything is possible... Evelyn finds herself torn between her love of Carter; loyalty to her father; her desire for independence and sense of duty to her family and estate.

CATHERINE STEADMAN PLAYS MAGGIE LEWIS



Maggie is an American archaeologist and the only woman selected as part of the New York Metropolitan Museum's dig team in Egypt. Maggie's has put her career first, at the expense of her personal life. She's attracted to Carter's wild genius, however, her attempts to domesticate Carter and establish him in polite society are a constant source of friction. When Egypt descends into political turmoil, Maggie's forced to question whether her future really lies with this untamed nomad – or back in the lecture halls and drawing rooms of Manhattan.

MAX IRONS IS HOWARD CARTER



Q: How much did you know about Tutankhamun before this drama?

"I had spatterings of knowledge most people have from reading books as kids and seeing those iconic images. So it was a bit of a learning curve for me. It really is an astonishing story. An incredible adventure. Pure and simple. A story of discovery and imagination and I think that's what people will enjoy about it.

"When I read the script it was a real joy. As an actor you read a lot of scripts and some of them are a bit of a chore. But this one reminded me of those adventure books you read as a child.

"I know this is rose-tinted glasses and the English got up to a lot of terrible things at this time but the adventure of exploring for buried treasure, which ultimately was what these men were doing, is an extraordinary thing. Nothing really has compared to it since. It's magical."

Q: What set Howard Carter aside from other archeologists in Egypt?

"It's interesting to look at the world Howard was operating in at the time. Enormous hotels were constructed in the middle of the desert in Egypt and they were full of wealthy Englishmen, Americans, French and experts sent out there by various museums to conduct explorations.

"It was a time when Egyptology and archeology were very fashionable and had really captured the public's imagination. So there was a real hunger for discovery. And

there was a way of doing things dictated by the English upper classes and wealthy Americans. You had to be inside that circle and Howard wasn't.

"Howard was a different breed of a man. When you hear people's opinions on Howard Carter it ranges. Some people put him firmly on the autistic spectrum. Other people say, 'No, he wasn't. He was just very single-minded.' Very focused and passionate about what he did with a true love and imagination for this period that wasn't shared by his contemporaries.

"Howard didn't have some of the airs and graces and social platitudes that were needed. He was a one-off. He was said to prefer the company of dead people, thousands of years old, to the living.

"To get to play a part like Howard Carter was wonderful. A man who was simply very good at what he did. Very knowledgeable, capable, forward-thinking, modern-thinking, coming up with new techniques left right and centre which can still be found today - and in forensic science today."

Q: How would you describe his relationship with Lord Carnarvon (Sam Neill)?

"Lord Carnarvon needed someone like Carter. But Carter also needed somebody like him. They had a mutually beneficial relationship and also there was a love affair between two minds.

"Carnarvon was very tolerant of Carter, who was spending a huge amount of his money over the course of more than a decade, digging around in areas of Egypt that every expert would tell you was completely the wrong place to be looking.

"And yet Carter was so focused and Carnarvon had his back and believed in him. Sure, there were many conflicts along the way. But ultimately they didn't give up on this challenge. They nurtured each other. And together they did this amazing thing. It was a beautiful friendship."

Q: What was it like working with Sam Neill?

"Working with Sam was wonderful. When you first meet him he's so still and peaceful. So self-possessed and quiet that I found it super-intimidating. But then you realise he's actually one of the kindest, wittiest, dangerously funny people around. I really loved him. He was also a bit of a hero. Sam is a bit special."

Q: Where did you film Tutankhamun?

"We were filming on the border between Namibia and South Africa in this valley. Which meant there was often no wind. So it was stiflingly hot. To the extent that on the first day they had to fly in five or six extra trailers for all the people that were fainting. And from that day on they were giving us electrolytes and water constantly.

“But it was so helpful for us as actors because you’re hot, you’re sweating, you’re dusty and thirsty. All that stuff you usually have to fake. It was just what we needed. While the set designer has produced the most beautiful recreation of Egypt. It did all the work for you.”

Q: Would you have the patience to be an archeologist?

“No, I don’t think I would have that patience. When I was a kid I used to go to Lyme Regis and dig for fossils. But that fascination didn’t last for that long. So I don’t know if I’d be out there for decades, looking for something while everyone was telling you what you were looking for wasn’t there and you were a mad man. That requires a real belief.”

Q: Why was Carter so bloody-minded about being right over such a long period of time?

“If you look at the kind of people out there alongside Carter, there was a real appetite for gold, jewels and all of that. But Carter had something else. He could feel the connection to a family thousands of years ago through just a fragment of pottery they would have used.

“That allows you to build a world in your imagination. That’s how Carter saw this. And if you have that attitude to what you’re doing, it’s not going to be as tedious and boring as it might be for other people.”

Q: Tell us about filming the historic scene where Carter breaks the seal of the tomb?

“It was a very special scene to film. Usually you cheat these things. But they built the whole tomb. So when we were poking a little stick with a candle attached to it through the tiny hole in the outer part of the tomb we could see all the recreations of the gold and the jewels inside. It was pretty special. Focusing in on that moment was memorable.

“It was an incredible discovery and achievement. You spend years and years in the desert with the notion that in some place, some location beneath your feet there is this network or rooms full of this incredible stuff. Beneath your feet. Beneath the sand. It’s just other-worldly. Amazing.”

Q: How did he spend the rest of his life?

“Carter’s life was an anti-climax after that discovery. Where do you go from that? Carter left Egypt, he went to America, he did the university and college tours, tutoring and so on. And quietly wound down. What else could you do?”

Q: The pharaohs built these huge tombs to journey to the next life. Do you share their optimism?

"I don't know if I do believe in another life. I think you just get one. And you do the best with it as you can."

Q: Carter found the solution to a huge riddle. Are you good at solving puzzles?

"No, I'm hopeless. I'm dyslexic. I'm terrible at solving puzzles."

Q: Space is at the frontier of exploration today. Is that something that enthuses you?

"It's quite sad that some people think space exploration is a giant waste of money. There is something wonderful about searching for the unknown. That hunger for discovery. I wish we did more of that. When President Kennedy made that speech about going to the Moon, they didn't know how to do it. But they set the target and then went about achieving it. I think we could do with a bit more of that spirit now."

Q: Where in the world do you want to explore?

"There are so many places I want to see. I'd love to go to Japan and Russia. I have a real fascination with all things to do with Russia and I'd love to spend a few months there and get to see the place."

Q: How do you look back now on the whole experience of filming Tutankhamun?

"It was a privilege. To be surrounded not only by the most beautiful sets in the most incredible environment but working with the director Peter Webber - who has a forensic approach to what he was doing - and with such a wonderful cast. And being so involved in it. Shooting six days a week in almost every scene. Really getting submerged in this story. It's what you hunger for as an actor and you are lucky if you get that to enjoy. I have very fond memories of the whole production."

SAM NEILL IS LORD CARNARVON



Q: Why did you want to play Lord Carnarvon?

"I found the story intriguing, having just basic general knowledge about it before this came along. But also I liked the character. Which is important if you're going to spend quite a few weeks with him. I thought it would be fun to play.

"And, of course, the other consideration is where are you going to film it? We couldn't go to Egypt for insurance reasons. So we ended up in South Africa, right beside Namibia. An incredible landscape. It was a privilege to do.

"But it was hot and windy. We'd get back from work, red-eyed with tears streaming down our faces from the dust. Max Irons took the brunt of it. He really took a beating."

Q: Tell us about the sets, including Tutankhamun's tomb?

"They completely recreated authentically the interior of those tombs with some amazing props. Exact replicas of what they found and how they found it. It was very well researched and crafted.

"The historic scene where Carter and Carnarvon break the seal of the outer chamber of the tomb was special to film. You did feel like you were discovering something

quite marvellous. Sadly the replicas were all too valuable to have a bit of a plunder and take a souvenir home."

Q: What was an English Lord doing in Egypt in the first place?

"He was there for health reasons. He had a bad leg and the heat suited him. So he found himself in Egypt with no particular interest in archeology but then became increasingly intrigued by what was going on because it was all the rage at that time. Everyone was looking for tombs and he got himself caught up in it. As you do.

"It's a bit like me and my wine-making business. You find yourself becoming more and more involved. It nearly bankrupted him. But what a thoroughly admirable thing to get involved in."

Q: Carnarvon's quest involved incredible patience.

"There was a lot of investment in time and money. You also need people who know what they're doing around you. And Howard Carter knew what he was doing. Carnarvon started off as a dilettante but ended up being extraordinarily involved in the whole procedure and was immortalised in a sense. Having been somewhat clueless at the start.

"I can't think of anything more thrilling than finding an intact tomb. And I know the First Emperor of China's tomb will not be excavated in my lifetime. Where they found the clay soldiers, the Terracotta Army. There's so much more to discover there. But they're taking their time. As they should. I can't think of anything more thrilling than what they're going to find there."

Q: The Tutankhamun find was described as the greatest archeological discovery the world has ever seen - over 5000 items including his death mask and coffin.

"It's amazing. And while we were filming this there was a lot of publicity about the possibility the tomb of Queen Nefertiti - the wife of Tutankhamun's father - is behind Tutankhamun's tomb somewhere. Although others have expressed doubts. But how incredible would that be?"

Q: How would you describe Carnarvon's relationship with Carter?

"Their working arrangement developed into a close friendship. I don't know in reality how strained that became but it did."

Q: Carnarvon makes a huge leap of faith when it comes to Carter's gut feeling about something being there. Have you ever made a significant leap of faith?

"I think every time I say yes to a film, that's a leap of faith. But it's hardly as significant as an archeological hunch."

Q: Did the upper class English accent come easily to you?

"I don't pretend to be any kind of an expert with accents. But I'm prepared to give them a go. I'm sure those thoroughly conversant with upper class accents will criticise me. You always get a bit of that.

"I did work on it before we began with a very nice dialogue person in London. Some of those slightly anachronistic expressions I had to cut back a little because they just seem extraordinary now. Certain words no-one pronounces that way today. A modern day audience would be a bit baffled."

Q: Tell us about the period Rolls Royce Silver Ghost Carnarvon drives?

"It's insured for millions of pounds and the owners were there during filming. They're rather hard to drive, those old vehicles. The brake is in the wrong place and it's quite a business."

Q: The tombs were about the pharaohs journeying to an after life. Do you share their optimism?

"I don't think there is a second life in any way we understand. I think we dissolve. Whether or not consciousness persists is an interesting philosophical question because science doesn't understand what consciousness is.

"Every atom of our being is as old as the universe and every atom of our being we know will survive for all time. But you won't be assembled in the same way as you are now. I certainly don't believe in a Heaven that good people go to. And if there was, it probably would be a rather dull place. 'Look at all these good people. Where are all the interesting ones?'

"There's nothing I'd take with me if I'm going to somewhere the pharaohs are off to. I don't own anything that would be useful there. Don't bury me. I'll go to the wind."

Q: Carnarvon's daughter Evelyn talks about the tomb being lost and says, 'People lose things all the time and forget where they put them.' Are you forgetful?

"All the time. I spend my time looking for my keys. Half my days."

Q: What was it like working with Max Irons as Howard Carter and Amy Wren as your screen daughter Evelyn?

"Max is a lovely fellow. I know his parents. A well brought up fellow and a very good actor. We got on very well. Amy is just a delight. We had a thoroughly fun time."

Q: When we talk of exploration today, most people think about space. Is that something that interests you?

"I've not booked a seat to go into space. I'm perfectly happy with business class on Qantas, thank you very much. They say the long-term spin-offs could be flights from London to Sydney in just a few hours. That's not enough time to watch a movie.

"The great thing about getting on a plane is you get a movie, a meal, you get another meal, you watch another two movies and have a bit of a nap. I don't want to be in Sydney in three hours. Not for me."

Q: The search for Tutankhamun's tomb was a huge puzzle. Are you a good puzzle solver?

"Generally life is a puzzle enough for me. It is an extraordinary thing what Carter did. But the problem with doing something as brilliant as that is nothing is going to be quite as good ever again, is it? You get the feeling with Carter that the rest of his life was a bit of an anti-climax. That's the catch about doing something brilliant."

Q: Have you ever discovered anything significant?

"I discovered wine. And that's the journey I've been on. I've been drinking it for half a century but discovering wine in a profound sense and growing wine has been an extraordinary discovery for me."

SYNOPSIS

EPISODE ONE



In 1905, archaeology in Egypt is a rich man's game, the preserve of aristocrats and tycoons... except for the lone figure of Howard Carter.

Carter is a genius and someone that even expert archaeologists turn to for advice. One of them is Maggie Lewis, a member of the New York Met Museum's dig team. Maggie is fond of Carter and tries to get him to join her dig but Carter is determined to plough his own furrow.

Maggie brings to Carter's attention a faience cup and sets the archaeologist off on a trail of discoveries that points to something incredible. Carter becomes convinced that there is a royal tomb that's forgotten by history and waiting to be discovered. He believes the tomb belongs to the boy king Tutankhamun, a little known Pharaoh whose legacy has been lost to the sands of time. Maggie dismisses Carter's theories out of hand but he pursues it with single-minded determination.

Only one man has enough faith in Carter's brilliance to financially back him, Lord Carnarvon. He and Carter form the unlikelyst of partnerships: the dashing maverick aristocrat and the outcast genius, who had no formal training in archaeology. Together they join forces to unearth the greatest archaeological marvel the world has ever seen...

Carnarvon's teenage daughter Evelyn is swept away by the magic of the Valley of the Kings and she believes Carter's theory of a lost tomb. An off-hand comment from Evelyn leads Carter to think that the tomb might be right under their noses, in the centre of the Valley of the Kings.

But the outbreak of World War 1 means that Carter's dream has to be put on hold – perhaps forever.

EPISODE TWO



In 1918, World War 1 is drawing to a close. Determined to renew his search for the lost tomb, Carter resumes work at his dig site. Also, returning to Egypt is Maggie – keen to pick up romantically where she left off with Carter.

Lord Carnarvon comes out to see what progress is being made and is accompanied by his daughter, Evelyn, now a beautiful young woman. Evelyn shares Carter’s passion for Egypt and the two form a deep bond.

Maggie’s keen to take her relationship with Carter to the next level. But it’s clear to her that his heart lies elsewhere with Evelyn.

Meanwhile the dig has hit a dead end. Carnarvon, having spent vast swathes of his family fortune, can no longer afford the dig and he has to cut his losses. Carter tries to convince his patron to stick with him and vows to sell his home as well as all his belongings to finance the dig himself. Evelyn takes Carter’s side and Carnarvon gives into his daughter’s persuasion. Carnarvon allows Carter one last roll of the dice not knowing that his daughter and Carter have embarked on a clandestine love affair.

The gamble pays off and they discover a tomb entrance under the sand. Could this be Tutankhamun’s tomb?

SYNOPSIS FOR EPISODES 3 AND 4 ARE AVAILABLE FROM THE ITV PRESS OFFICE



Tutankhamun Cast

Howard Carter	Max Irons
Lord Carnarvon.....	Sam Neill
Lady Evelyn Carnarvon	Amy Wren
Maggie Lewis.....	Catherine Steadman
Winlock	Jonathan Aris
Theodore Davis	Anthony Higgins
Flinders Petrie	Rupert Vansittart
Sir Gaston Maspero.....	Vincent Grass
Pierre Lacau.....	Nicolas Beaucaire
Selim.....	Waleed Elgadi
Merton	Martin Hutson

Production Credits

Executive Producer	Francis Hopkinson
Executive Producer	Catherine Oldfield
Producer.....	Simon Lewis
Director	Peter Webber
Writer.....	Guy Burt
Production Designer.....	Mike Berg
Costume Designer	Diana Cilliers
Hair and Make-up Designer	Francesca Van Der Feyst
Composer	Christian Henson