

New Generation Group Edition



THE
ANGLO-OMANI
SOCIETY

REVIEW 2016

Across the Rub al Khali



...IN THE STEPS OF
BERTRAM THOMAS AND BIN KALUT



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COVER PHOTO:
In the Footsteps of Bertram Thomas
Photo Credit: John Smith

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REVIEW 2016

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THE ANGLO-OMANI SOCIETY ANNUAL LUNCHEON

The Anglo-Omani Society Annual Luncheon will be held on **TUESDAY, 11th OCTOBER** at the Army and Navy Club

Advance booking necessary.

DO YOU HAVE A CONNECTION WITH OMAN?

ARE YOU INTERESTED IN JOINING THE ANGLO-OMANI SOCIETY?

You will find full details and application forms to download on the Society's website:

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You can also receive membership details and application forms by post. Just contact the Manager at 34, Sackville Street, LONDON, W1S 3ED.

The Anglo-Omani Society in 2016

CHAIRMAN'S OVERVIEW

BY ROBERT ALSTON

In this its 40th year, The Anglo-Omani Society is in good heart.

In this its 40th year, The Anglo-Omani Society is in good heart. We have enjoyed a full programme of activities, the stand out among which has been the celebration of the Society's 40th Birthday at Lancaster House in January in the presence of HRH the Prince of Wales, and of HH Sayyid Shihab bin Tariq as the representative of our Patron, HM Sultan Qaboos. Some 200 members joined our royal guests, our President and other invited guests to hear speeches of celebration from Prince Charles, Sayyid Shihab, the FCO Minister for the Middle East, Tobias Elwood, and myself.

We have also again been honoured by Royal attendance at a Reception held at 34 Sackville Street in July 2016 on the occasion of major Omani British Friendship Association seminars on logistics and tourism at Mansion House with the participation of the Lord Mayor of London, Alderman Lord Mountevans. It was a pleasure to welcome again HRH Prince Andrew and HH Sayyid Haitham.

Our Members programme for 2015-2016 has followed its established pattern of 10 lectures on a wide range of topics relating to Oman, with the Annual Lunch at the Army and Navy Club in October attended by 80 members and their guests. Membership remains buoyant. We have admitted 75 new members in the course of the past year and membership figures at the time of the AGM in July stood at 524 individual members, 237 Joint Members and 29 Corporate Members.

The New Generation Group, under the leadership in London of Ollie Blake and in Oman of Sheikh Ma'an Al Rawahi, also continues to thrive with regular meetings in both countries. A further visit by



the Omani Delegation of the Group took place at Corpus Christi College Cambridge in July 2016. The Group now has over 800 members in the two countries.

I have mentioned the Receptions held at Sackville Street in cooperation with the British and Omani Chairmen of OBFA, Sir Sherard Cowper Coles and HE Maqbool Sultan. In association with a review of our own Corporate Membership programme we are also in discussion with them to see how the synergies between the two organisations can be further exploited to the advantage of business and trade links between Britain and Oman.

A major event was the publication last autumn of the second edition of the Review. I hope readers will agree that it was handsome, well produced and informative, more than maintaining the high standard set with the first edition in 2014 and the Society is indebted to Trustee Ian Kendrick for his leadership of the team which created it.

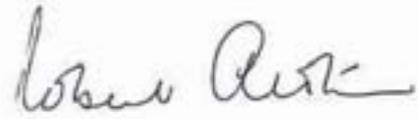
The Society has continued its support at the Sultan's School and at Manah for young Britons with an interest in Oman and in the Arabic language; and in Britain for young Omanis from the Sultan's School embarking on the IB programme. Since 2001 some 90 young Britons have benefitted from the chance to spend a term at the Sultan's School in Muscat – a programme ably organised by Vice-Chairman Nigel Knocker, Trustee Richard Owens and former Head of the Sultan's School Alan Henderson. Each summer 10 British undergraduate students of Arabic take part in a month long course at Manah, the arrangements for which are undertaken by Trustee Elizabeth Kendall.

Under the expert guidance of Richard Owens in 2015-6 the Society awarded 22 grants totalling £126,000 to help to enable a wide range of activities which we believe to be deserving in their own right and contributing to our aims of enhancing knowledge and understanding between the two countries. We are budgeting to raise this figure to £150,000 for the calendar year 2016, a target which reflects the continuing healthy state of the Society's finances.

We are grateful to our President, HE Abdul Aziz Al Hinai, the Sultanate's Ambassador in London, and his staff for their support of the Society's activities. I am personally grateful also to all my fellow Trustees, all of whom, I am glad to say, have indicated their willingness to continue to serve, for their various contributions to the Society's work, and to our staff here at Sackville Street, as well as successive groups of interns, for all they do to make all our activities the success which they have been.

I would like to thank here two whose terms of service have come to an end. Rocio Corrales left in June after two and a half years in which she made an especially

notable contribution to building up the New Generation Group into the successful activity which it is today. Gretchen Hines left us in the spring after four years in which she has been responsible for membership administration, an unsung but crucial role in a Society like ours. We wish them both well in their future activities. They have been replaced respectively by Isabelle Habib and Ami Amiani. ■



Robert Alston



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THE 40th ANNIVERSARY OF THE ANGLO-OMANI SOCIETY

On the 27th of January this year, the 40th Anniversary of The Anglo-Omani Society was celebrated in the magnificent setting of Lancaster House in Central London.

Over 300 guests joined HRH Prince Charles and HH Sayyid Shihab bin Tariq Al Said at a reception with a number of other distinguished guests, including the British Ambassador to Oman, Jonathan Wilks, the Minister for Middle East, North Africa and Central Asia, Tobias Ellwood, and the joint Chairmen of the Omani British Friendship Association, HE Maqbool Sultan (Oman) and Sir Sherard Cowper Coles (UK).

Members and guests were welcomed on arrival to the sound of traditional Omani music being played by the 2nd Royal Band, who had travelled from Salalah by Royal command.

HH Sayyid Shihab bin Tariq Al Said, representing His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said, greeted HRH Prince Charles in the Entrance Hall. The two principal guests proceeded up the Main Staircase to the State Drawing Room where Society Chairman, Robert Alston, introduced selected guests to Prince Charles, starting with Society Trustees and former UK Ambassadors, followed by corporate members, GCC Ambassadors and representatives of the Omani British Friendship Association. The Oman Ambassador, HE Shaikh Abdulaziz Al Hinai, President of the Society, introduced these guests to HH Sayyid Shihab.





The two principal guests then moved to the general reception in the Long Gallery where their arrival was announced by musicians of the RAF Regiment Band playing the fanfare “Renaissance” composed by Trustee Ian Kendrick. They met the wives of Trustees and were introduced to members of the New Generation Group by the joint Chairmen, Mr Oliver Blake (UK) and Sheikh Ma’an Al Rawahi (Oman). Then came the opportunity to meet other members and guests. The Omani musicians had moved from the Entrance Hall to the Long Gallery and provided background music while Prince Charles and



HRH Prince Charles expressed his joy at being invited to attend the 40th Anniversary celebration.

Sayyid Shihab spoke to members and guests.

Chairman Robert Alston then thanked HH Sayyid Shihab for representing HM The Sultan as the principal Omani guest and said that the Society is highly indebted to its Patron, HM Sultan Qaboos.

Minister Tobias Ellwood told the audience how Oman had flourished from a country with a population of one million 40 years ago to four times that number today with half aged under 25. He also pointed to the UN Development Programme which credits HM The Sultan for having achieved the highest rate of development of any country in the world in the last 45 years.

HRH Prince Charles then expressed his joy at being invited to attend the 40th Anniversary celebration, wishing more success to the Society. He affirmed that His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said had been far-sighted in establishing the Society to become a living example of the strong relations between the two friendly countries. Prince Charles said that he particularly welcomed the formation of the Society's New Generation Group which is working with the Prince's Trust in Oman. He pointed to work of the Trust, which, following his visit in 2013, is now supporting the Public Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises Development (Riyada) in Oman helping to mentor entrepreneurs.

HH Sayyid Shihab delivered a speech thanking His Majesty The Sultan for delegating him to attend the Society celebration. He appreciated the efforts and activities initiated by The Society's members, which served as an example of the sustainability of the strong relations between the two



countries since the 1798 Convention.

HRH Prince Charles then left the Long Gallery, stopping to congratulate the Omani musicians on their performance before he departed.

As guests left Lancaster House, there was general agreement that it had been a superbly successful evening largely due to the organisation by Society Trustees and Lancaster House staff co-ordinated by Trustee Richard Owens.

On the day of the Reception, the Society received the news that a 49 day and 1,300 kilometre trek across the Empty Quarter on foot and by camel had been completed, and this was referred to by Prince Charles in his speech. This expedition, which the Society supported with funding, followed the 1930 trail of explorer Bertram Thomas and his Omani guide Sheikh Saleh bin Kalut. Read the full story in this magazine. ■







IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF BERTRAM THOMAS

ARTICLE BY MARK EVANS

Timed to perfection, as members celebrated the 40th year of the Society at Lancaster House on January 27th 2016, after 1,300kms and 49 days on foot and by camel, Omani's Mohammed Al Zadjali and Amur Al Wahaibi, with Mark Evans arrived at Al Rayyan Fort in Doha, having followed the 1930 trail of forgotten explorer Bertram Thomas across the Empty Quarter of Arabia.

The achievements of the little known Thomas, and his Omani guide Sheikh Saleh bin Kalut, have been lost in the sands of time, overshadowed by Wilfred Thesiger's beautiful black and white images and poetic writing. One of the aims of the journey, the first time in 85 years anyone had been given permission to attempt the same route from Salalah in

southern Oman, to Doha, the capital of Qatar, was to put Thomas back on a pedestal, and give him the recognition his achievements deserved; it was also an opportunity to celebrate the 45th year of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said, and the deep and enduring trust and partnership between Oman and the United Kingdom.

Thomas was born into a humble background in the village of Pill, near Bristol; his father was a pilot on the Avon River, and his mother ran the post office. In the First World War he signed up for the North Somerset Yeomanry, and found himself in Mesopotamia, mixing with the



IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF BERTRAM THOMAS

greats that were Gertrude Bell and Arnold Wilson. His talents did not go unnoticed, and once the war was over, Thomas found himself appointed as financial advisor to The Sultan of Oman, where over a period of four years, aware that Philby in Riyadh had similar desires, he secretly hatched plans to cross the largest sand desert on earth.

The world of exploration at the time was a vibrant one; Peary and Cook had both laid claim to the North Pole, Amundsen had reached the South Pole, and Mallory and Irvine were at the cutting edge of efforts to reach the summit of Everest. With the poles claimed, attention was focused on the vast interior of Arabia. The exploits of TE Lawrence in the Hejaz had attracted the attention of the American reporter Lowell Thomas, and the moving images he captured of the dashing Lawrence played to over four million people, from Covent Garden in London to Madison Square Garden in New York; the world was obsessed with the romance of Arabia, and in 1930 the race was on to become the first person to cross the Empty Quarter.

On December 10th 1930, Bertram Thomas set off from Salalah, walking into the unknown, with no maps to follow. He would survive through his own wits, good fortune in terms of rains and grazing, and the skills of a local Bedouin Sheikh Saleh Bin Kalut. Sheikh Saleh was the only person



Thesiger sought out Bin Kalut to assist with his own journey planning.



For 49 days the team covered between 30-40kms per day, often under the shadow of enormous star dunes.
Photo credit: John Smith

IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF BERTRAM THOMAS

who accompanied Thomas all the way to Doha, the others only daring to go to the edge of their tribal areas. Much of his journey took place during the holy month of Ramadan, and was racked with constant uncertainty, as relay teams of camels and men were needed for him to achieve his goal. Had rains not fallen the previous year, there would have been no grazing, and no grazing meant there would be no people, and no camels. In such a situation, the only option would have been to retreat back to safety along the line of wells they had followed to date.

After 56 days, having crossed what he later described in his book *Arabia Felix* as 'an abode of death', Thomas and Bin Kalut walked into the Emir's mud-brick fort in Doha. Such was the level of interest that the news quickly made the front page of 'The Times' in London, and in New York. Thomas first lectured at The Royal Geographical Society, where he was awarded the Founders Medal, and his early images of southern Arabia are carefully stored in the archives today. His contribution to science was considerable, not only through his anthropological work, but also through the collections he made of flora and fauna.

2015 was the 85th year since Thomas

and Bin Kalut had left Salalah, and coincided with the 45th year of the reign of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos as the ruler of Oman; the planets were in alignment to attempt to retrace this historic journey. His Highness Sayyid Haitham bin Tariq Al Said was appointed Expedition Patron in Oman,



Our first formal gathering was under a large ghaf tree at Shisr, our arrival celebrated with singing, poetry and generous hospitality.

Photo credit: Sim Davis



Mark Evans with his two Omani companions, Mohammed Al Zadjali and Amur Al Wahaibi.

along with HRH Prince Charles in the UK, and His Excellency Sheikh Joaan bin Hamed Al Thani in Qatar.

Our main challenge was to find the key to unlock the door, and get permission to not only enter Saudi Arabia at a remote, unmanned location, but also to spend one month walking with camels across the sensitive eastern province. An issue of equal concern was to find camels tough enough to withstand the demands of walking for 30-40kms per day, for 50 or so days, with limited food and water. Camels,



A gathering west of Shisr at Al Hashman, where our four camels awaited our arrival.

Photo credit: Sim Davis



Another remote gathering in small dunes between Shisr and Al Hashman; herds of sand gazelle up to 13 strong were in evidence in the area.
Photo credit: John Smith

like humans, have gone soft in recent years; rather than wandering the sands in search of rain-fed grazing, today they tend to lead static lives, with water trucks bringing water to them, and locally grown fodder crops being served up each day.

To give them every opportunity of succeeding, and to protect the sensitive pads on the base of their feet, we parked our four camels (all female, from the Royal Cavalry) at a Bedouin community on the

southern edge of the sands, and on December 10th 2015, 85 years to the day since Thomas and Bin Kalut started their own journey, my two Omani companions Mohammed Al Zadjali, Amur Al Wahaibi and I set off on foot from the old souq in Salalah, on the edge of the Indian Ocean. As we did so, playing in cinemas throughout Oman, and on the Oman Air In-Flight entertainment systems was an awareness raising 60 second video clip that used some

of Thomas's original footage shot in 1930, digitised in a project funded by the society.

Our journey, that took place primarily thanks to the unstinting efforts of His Excellency Sayyid Badr Al Busaidy, Secretary General at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Muscat, did not set out to be a first, or fastest, but was, amongst other things, a celebration of slowness that attempted to reconnect Omani, Saudi and Qatari people to their rich culture and



'You cannot pass through the land of the Bin Kathir without accepting our hospitality'; over 1,000 people assembled in impromptu gatherings between Salalah and the border with Saudi Arabia. Photo credit: John Smith



Reconnecting people young and old to their heritage; a village elder proudly shows a black and white image of him as a young man travelling with Mubarak bin London. Photo credit: John Smith

heritage, and to show a side of the Middle East different to that which normally dominates the media. With the Empty Quarter now being emptier than it has ever been, many of the waterholes used by Thomas are long abandoned, and full of sand. With much uncertainty regarding water supply, we made the early decision to use two 4x4 support vehicles to carry tightly rationed water, that would be supplemented by the possible discovery of water in the sands; Thomas had used a sextant to record the location of the wells he used, accurate enough for his needs, but little help in reality when searching for a small well on the ground in what could be an area of up to 15km square.

At the start of the journey, our vehicles carried 50 days'-worth of food, carefully

labelled, packed and sorted into 25 plastic crates. In the first two weeks we barely touched a crumb, overwhelmed by more than 1,000 unexpected visitors who sought us out even in the most remote of locations in southern Oman each day. A desert expedition in Arabia is no place for a vegetarian; "You cannot enter the land of the Al Kathiri without accepting our hospitality," announced a proud Omani Sheikh, and in an ongoing effort to out-do the hospitality of the previous gathering, by the time we had reached the border with Saudi Arabia we had consumed twenty-seven goats, in addition to several camels and sheep. Any hope we had of losing weight was initially slim. Amongst the visitors were some so old (none knew exactly how old, as nothing was

documented at the time of their birth) that, despite having limited sight, and being unstable on their feet, several produced well preserved black and white images of them as young men, standing proudly with Thesiger and his camels at a waterhole.

After trekking through the frankincense clad Qara Mountains, where we followed the footprints of Striped Hyenas, and discovered 4,000-year old pre-Islamic rock art, we were re-united with our own camels. Our passage across the border into Saudi Arabia was uncertain until the eleventh hour; verbal assurance had been given, but we had nothing as yet for us to show a dubious, heavily armed border guard at one of the most remote of unfenced and unmarked borders. One day from arrival, word reached us that we were in, by Royal Command of the King himself. The enormous star dunes of Dakaka, where it had not rained for seven years made for the most beautiful of landscapes, and whilst the night-time temperatures dropped to a low of 0.4 degrees, for the most part a northerly wind made daytime progress bearable.

On days when that wind did not blow, temperatures rose and camels bellowed, kicked and spat in protest. Our daily routine was a simple one; each night we would sleep on the sand, and Amur would rise first before dawn to pray, and by 0630 we would have un-hobbled the camels and were on the move, keen to get as many kms under our belts in the cool morning air as we could. We would always walk for the first couple of hours, by which time the camels would have settled, ready for us to ride along at a steady speed of 6kph. Our



Route-finding in the sands of Dakaka and Sanam was determined by the needs and capabilities of the camels. Photo credit: John Smith



Amur Al Wahaibi from Bidiya leads the team through the streets of Doha on day 49. Photo credit: John Smith

day would end some 30-40kms later an hour before sunset, when we would hobble the camels, gather wood for the fire, bake bread under the sand and settle down for the nightly star show.

After a few weeks that saw us following a line of small wells to the north west, the large dunes of Dakaka gave way to the flatter sand sea of Sanam, and we were able to start what Thomas described as ‘The Northward Dash’ for Doha, still several hundred kms ahead. As we steadily descended to the Arabian Gulf the sands gave way to gravel, and eventually to the dreaded subkha, a salt encrusted mudflat that after rains can be treacherous territory for the camels. Like Thomas, at this point we were beset by several days of heavy dew, and thick fog, making navigation a challenge, but hiding the sun from view until midday.

On January 27th 2016, some 49 days

after we had left Salalah, riding fresh camels sent by the Emir of Qatar, we arrived at Al Rayyan Fort in Doha; the Empty Quarter had been crossed.

As with all expeditions, the end of the physical journey does not mean the end of the project. One of the key aims of our journey was to create role models to which young Omanis could aspire, and to that end Mohammed and Amur have been busy delivering a series of 30 lectures to more than 5,000 young people at schools and colleges throughout Oman. Twenty-three hours of film are being edited into a documentary, due to be released later this year, and the book has been written, and is currently being proofed ready for launch on December 1st 2016. Remaining firmly in the footsteps of Thomas, a lecture is scheduled at the prestigious Explorers Club in New York on October 31st, where Thomas was made an honorary member in

1932. On November 28th an exhibition will open at The Royal Geographical Society in London, which will run until December 16th. The RGS was the first place Thomas lectured on his return from Arabia; his expedition images are stored in the archives, and will form the basis of an evening lecture to be held in the Ondaajite Theatre on December 1st, to be followed by the book launch. A UK lecture tour, funded by the Anglo-Omani Society, will take place in the spring of 2017, and will include Bristol, where Thomas grew up, and Cambridge, where he studied. ■

About the Author: *Mark Evans (www.markevans.global) is the Executive Director of Outward Bound Oman, Founder of The University of the Desert, and Patron of the Andrew Croft Memorial Fund. He was awarded the MBE in 2012 for his work in the field of intercultural dialogue.*

Royal Geographical Society Lecture – 7pm • December 1st 2016

**Crossing the Empty Quarter
in the Footsteps of Bertram Thomas and Sheikh Saleh Bin Kalut**

Society members are invited to attend this lecture by Mark Evans at no cost in recognition of The Society’s support for the expedition.

Tickets can be ordered from: www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/crossing-the-empty-quarter-tickets-26443548365

The lecture will be followed by the launch of the expedition book, copies of which can be pre-ordered at: www.crossingtheemptyquarter.com/book/

Further details of the expedition can be found at www.crossingtheemptyquarter.com

THE ROYAL CAVALRY OF OMAN

PHOTOGRAPHY BY KHALIL AL ZADJALI

The Royal Cavalry of Oman provided the largest horse contribution of any nation invited to perform at HM Queen Elizabeth's 90th Birthday Celebration at Windsor in May. They joined 1500 participants and 900 horses from around the world in an equestrian spectacular. The Royal Cavalry were invited to take part after their previous appearance at The Queen's Diamond Jubilee in 2012, and once again, their unique combination of expert riding and mounted music proved to be highly popular with the audience.



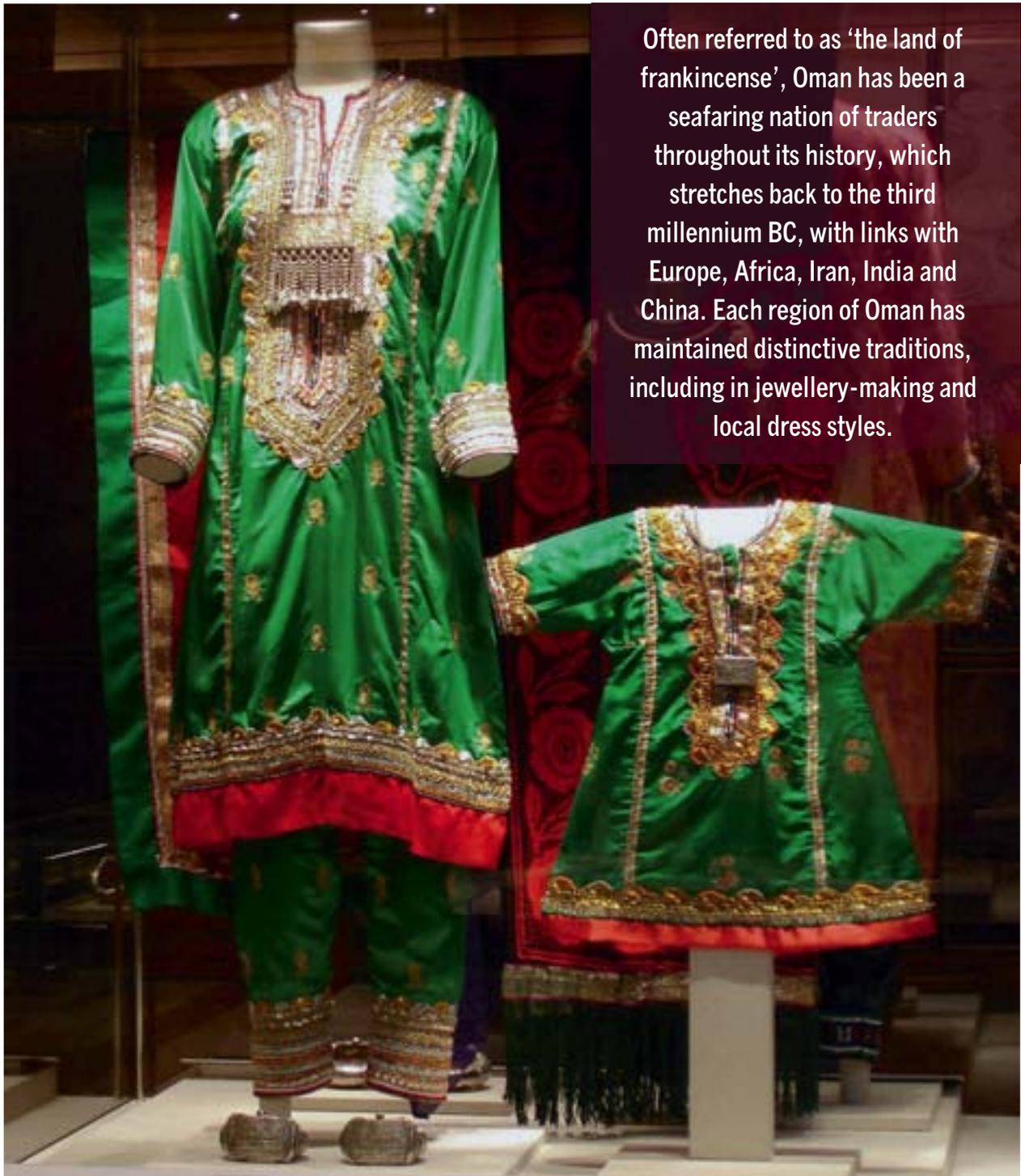
The Queen admires a gift from the Royal Cavalry with Brigadier-General Abdulrazak Al Shahwarzi, Commander of the Royal Cavalry, and Brigadier Ramis bin Juman, Director General of Bands.

The Royal Cavalry unit was established by HM Sultan Qaboos in 1974, initially with just 20 horses. Since then, it has grown to 140 horses and 200 riders (both male and female), filling the vast Al Safinat stables. The mounted female band appearing with the Cavalry is believed to be the only unit of its kind in the world. ■



UNDER THE MICROSCOPE: A CLOSER LOOK AT OMANI SILVER

ARTICLE BY AUDE MONGIATTI, FAHMIDA SULEMAN AND NIGEL MEEKS



Often referred to as ‘the land of frankincense’, Oman has been a seafaring nation of traders throughout its history, which stretches back to the third millennium BC, with links with Europe, Africa, Iran, India and China. Each region of Oman has maintained distinctive traditions, including in jewellery-making and local dress styles.



Silver jewellery and ceremonial weaponry have always been considered hallmarks of Omani craftsmanship. On special occasions, Omani women traditionally adorn themselves from head to toe, with individual pieces often imbued with religious significance as well as beauty and function. A woman's jewellery indicates her financial and marital status, often represents her tribal or regional identity and protects her from the 'evil eye'.

In 2009, the Middle East Department at the British Museum acquired a substantial collection of 1950s silver jewellery from northern and central Oman. The objects were purchased from two British private collectors, Alan and Denise Costley, who bought them in Oman between 1987 and 1995 when Alan Costley was working there as an oil engineer. Their collection of over 240 silver items handcrafted in Oman was acquired mainly in the markets of Nizwa, Mutrah and Rustaq; a small number of pieces came from Sur, Wadi Bani Ouf, Bahla, Ibra and Ibri. The collection comprises a large number of women's objects of adornment, including headdresses and hair ornaments, earrings, necklaces, bracelets, anklets and kohl pots. It also includes several silver artefacts for children such as forehead pendants, buckles, necklaces, bracelets and anklets, as well as silver objects for men in the form of kohl containers, sets of tweezers and picks and a gunpowder horn.

The precise dating of individual pieces in

this collection is extremely difficult, as Omani silversmiths have never followed a tradition of stamping hallmarks or signatures on their jewellery, while dating pieces based on their coin pendants is also highly problematic. An important aspect of the tradition of Omani silver jewellery is that pieces are purchased and worn by an individual and rarely passed down from one generation to the next; bridal jewellery in particular is always new and produced by melting down old pieces. It is very difficult, therefore, to find Omani jewellery that is more than a generation old, even though styles and designs are sustained over generations.

The scientific investigation of a selection of artefacts from this collection was initially undertaken upon its acquisition in order to characterise fully and better understand their manufacturing technologies and raw materials. The inclusion of this material in the exhibition, *Adornment and Identity: Jewellery and Costume from Oman* (21 January-11 September 2011), supported by BP in association with the Ministry of Tourism of the Sultanate of Oman, provided further impetus to conduct a major technological study of the collection. Non-invasive scientific techniques available in the Department of Scientific Research at the British Museum allowed the analysis of the metal composition as well as the identification of the construction methods and physical features such as tool marks, surface textures and joins.

All the pieces of jewellery studied, except for one pair of C-shaped child bracelets believed to be an import from Pakistan, were manufactured from hand-worked high-purity silver sheet and wire. Silver sheets are produced from a rod or bar of silver bought commercially or cast from melted coins and/or scrap jewellery, which would be hammered and annealed to the desired thickness and shape, possibly with the initial use of a hand-turned rolling press. Silver wires are produced using a metal drawplate, a tool with several holes of decreasing diameters





The beauty of Omani jewellery lies not only in its intricate patterns and gold highlights, but in the pleasing jingling sound it makes when worn.

examined with a scanning electron microscope, chasing was generally used to create long grooves. Chasing is a technique for which the silversmiths of various regions in Oman are famous. In contrast, punching results in the impression of a single, usually repeated, design using a patterned punch that is struck with a hammer. Patterned punches can create textures such as graining or matting onto the smooth silver surface, or rows of repeated patterns, such as circles, short grooves, flowers, crosses and diamonds. Punched designs can be identified by the regularity of the repeated motifs on an object using a microscope. The contrast between matt textures or lightly hatched lines on shallow surfaces against polished raised areas of silver enhances the three-dimensionality of the punched areas. This contrast is further emphasised by the dark-coloured dirt that accumulates in these recessed punched areas, through years of wear on skin that would have been covered in cosmetics such as oils, creams or henna. Hence, it is best to leave one's Omani silver unpolished in order to fully appreciate the intricate details of the silversmith's craft.

The beauty of Omani jewellery lies not only in its intricate patterns and gold highlights, but in the pleasing jingling sound it makes when worn. This is particularly true for the northern Omani

down to less than one millimetre through which wires are pulled. Drawn wires are typically recognisable under an optical microscope from their uniform diameter and the numerous fine parallel grooves clearly visible on the surface along their length. The various components are next assembled by extensive and meticulous silver brazing with a zinc- and copper-rich silver solder or mechanically as with loop-in-loop wire chains and joining rings.

The pieces are then embellished using

the techniques of chasing and punching, which create decorative motifs, and the surfaces are finished through treatments such as polishing and gilding (i.e. adding gold leaf or gold plating). Both chasing and punching require the use of a small tool with a narrow, blunt tip, called a punch. Chasing involves creating patterns by gently deforming the metal sheet from the front by hammering punches of various shapes across the surface to produce decorative designs. On the objects





hollow elbow bracelets (*adud*) worn on the upper arm and the open crescent-shaped anklets (*hajul*) of Baluchi origin, both of which rattle in response to movement of the body. A selection of 17 pairs of hollow bracelets and anklets were examined non-destructively through X-radiography in an attempt to identify the rattling objects sealed in the hollow tubes that produced the rattling noise. The X-radiographs showed that these small objects were a combination of beads, spheres and irregular-shaped fragments of various materials, sometimes mixed together in the same object, as shown by difference in densities (the paler the area, the denser the material).

Necklaces and hair ornaments are also occasionally decorated with beads and amulets composed of other materials, such as coral, carnelian, ceramic and glass. Most of these amulets carried symbolic meanings connected to their material and colour. For example, coral was believed to possess curative powers, red carnelian is said to banish poverty and a mammal's tooth was thought to cure a sick child.

The documentation of this collection is very important because of the rapid decline in demand for Omani silver as it is increasingly replaced by gold jewellery. Most of these objects are no longer manufactured, and the techniques may soon be forgotten as silversmiths in Oman age without passing their craft on to the next generation. There is, unquestionably, scope for more research, as many questions about the manufacture of Omani silver remain unanswered. Future fieldwork is planned to study the traditional



techniques used by the remaining few Omani silversmiths in order to understand the differences in construction sequences, tools and materials in various workshops in northern and southern Oman. To this end, the British Museum has also expanded its holdings of Omani silver with a more recent acquisition of over three hundred pieces of jewellery and objects of adornment from the southern region of Dhofar collected by Ian McLeish and published by Dr Miranda Morris and Pauline Shelton. ■

FURTHER READING

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THE *ESMERALDA* SHIPWRECK OFF AL HALLANIYAH ISLAND

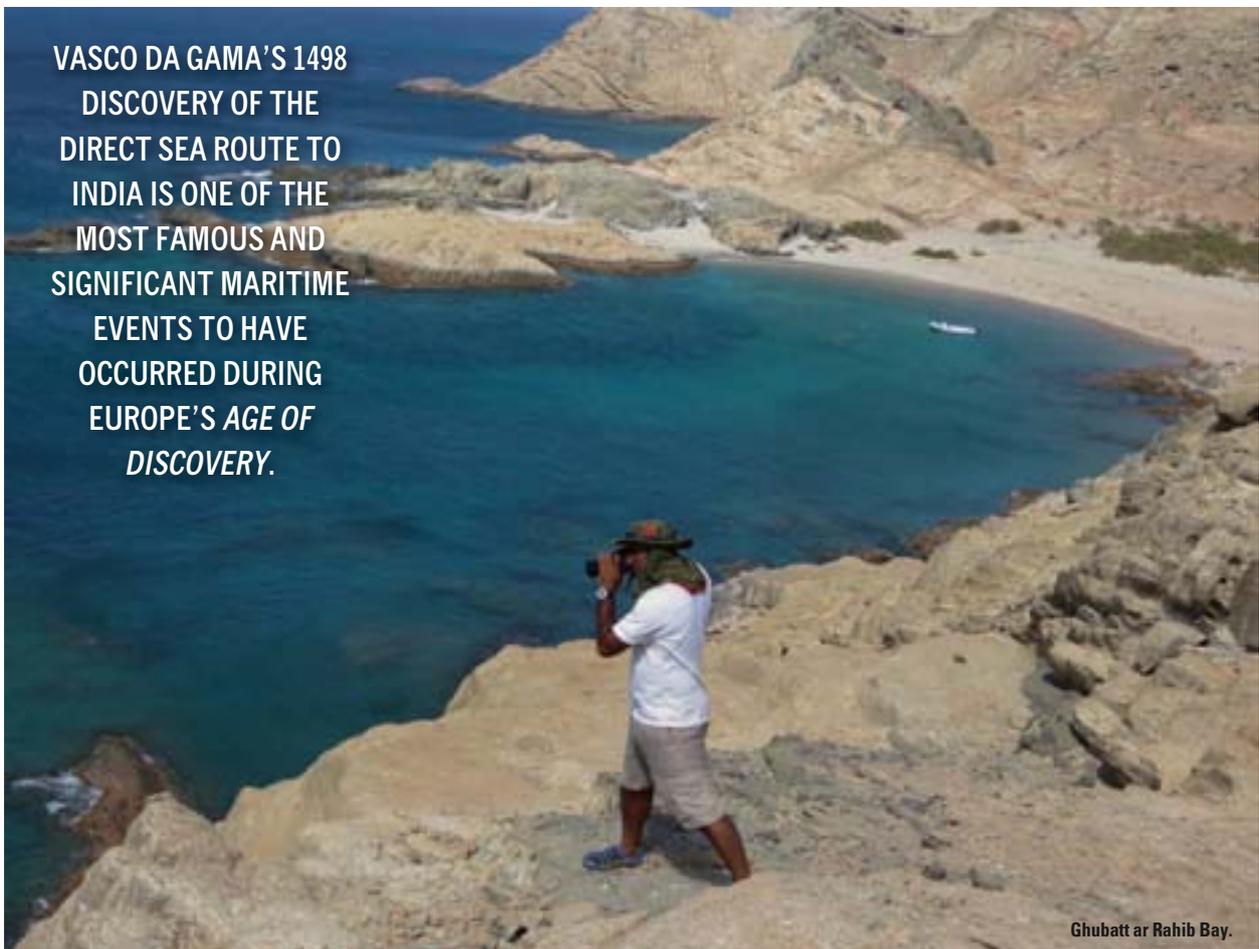
ARTICLE BY DAVID MEARNS

This treacherous journey, which the Portuguese used as a springboard for their centuries-long exploration and exploitation of the Indian Ocean and the Far East, sits alongside Columbus' 1492 discovery of the Americas and Magellan's 1521 circumnavigation of the world as the starting point for what we now call globalisation – the worldwide increase in trade, communication and cultural exchange. Although hundreds of ships were involved in the earliest of these voyages, with many being wrecked in the process, not a single one had been

found dating before 1533, leaving archaeologists with a large gap in their knowledge of many aspects of how the Portuguese conducted navigation, maritime trade and warfare in the Indian Ocean.

Against this backdrop, media outlets around the world took notice when it was announced by Oman's Ministry of Heritage and Culture (MHC) during a press conference in Muscat on 15 March 2016 that a remarkable archaeological discovery had been made on Al Hallaniyah, a remote island situated in the Arabian Sea approximately 45km off the

VASCO DA GAMA'S 1498
DISCOVERY OF THE
DIRECT SEA ROUTE TO
INDIA IS ONE OF THE
MOST FAMOUS AND
SIGNIFICANT MARITIME
EVENTS TO HAVE
OCCURRED DURING
EUROPE'S AGE OF
DISCOVERY.



Ghubatt ar Rahib Bay.

Searching the wreck site.



southern coast of Oman. The discovery was of the wreckage of an early 16th century Portuguese nau tentatively identified as the *Esmeralda*, which was wrecked in this location along with a second ship, the *São Pedro*, during a severe storm in May 1503. The two ships, which were the leading vessels of a five-ship squadron of three *naus* and two *caravels*, had a direct connection with the legendary da Gama as they were part of his second voyage to India (the fourth Portuguese overall) and were commanded by his maternal uncles Vicente and Brás Sodré, respectively.

The wreck site was initially discovered in 1998 by Blue Water Recoveries (BWR) of West Sussex, UK after an intensive 6-month historical research programme was conducted to pinpoint its probable location. In April 2013, the MHC represented by His Excellency Salim Al Mahruqi, Under-Secretary for Heritage Affairs and His Excellency Hassan Al Lawati, The Minister Advisor to the Minister for Heritage Affairs, agreed with David L. Mearns of BWR to jointly conduct and co-manage this project to excavate, conserve and scientifically analyse all cultural material from the wreck site of the Sodré ships off *Al Hallaniyah* island in keeping with the UNESCO Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage. This project represents the first such government led archaeological excavation of an ancient shipwreck in Omani waters.

The ships were lost due to the stubbornness and arrogance of the

Portuguese commanders, who refused to take heed of warnings from the local Omani fisherman living on the Island that an impending and dangerous wind was coming and that their European guests should move their ships to the opposite, sheltered coast of the island. Confidant that their iron anchors would hold their *naus* in place, the Sodré brothers kept their ships where they were and moved only the smaller *caravels* to the leeward coast. When the winds came, as the fisherman had accurately predicted, they were sudden and furious and were accompanied by a powerful swell that tore the Sodré brothers' ships from their moorings and drove them hard against the rocky shoreline smashing their wooden hulls and

breaking their masts. Both the Sodré brothers paid for this miscalculation with their ships, their lives and the lives of roughly half their crew. The surviving Portuguese completely salvaged the *São Pedro*, which had been driven hard aground, and much of the *Esmeralda* that sank further out to sea. It was left to five hundred years of the pounding surf to destroy all remnants of *Esmeralda*'s hull, although a considerable quantity and volume of artefacts remarkably survived in this high-energy environment.

The successful collaboration between the MHC and BWR started in 2013 with a comprehensive geophysical survey of the bay and anchorage where the ship was lost. Full-scale excavation of the wreck site took place during two expeditions in 2014 and 2015 directed by David Parham, an Associate Professor in marine archaeology at Bournemouth University. The excavations were based from the Royal Omani Naval vessel *Al Munassir*, which proved to be a perfect vessel for this type of work with its huge open deck for handling the recovered artefacts and comfortable accommodation for the expedition's teams of up to 18 persons. The success of the project also relied on crucial air-support from the RAF to mobilise heavy equipment at the remote location. Over the three field seasons a total of 50 days were spent on site and the teams of archaeological divers, including seven MHC staff who received on-site training, completed 977 dives that accounted for 1,079 hours working

Geophysical Survey Operations.



THE ESMERALDA SHIPWRECK OFF AL HALLANIYAH ISLAND

underwater. The most important statistic, however, was that 2,810 artefacts were recovered during the excavations including some unique and extremely rare objects that helped identify the wreck as Vicente Sodré's *nau Esmeralda*, including:

- an important copper-alloy disc marked with the Portuguese royal coat of arms and an *esfera armilar* (armillary sphere), which was the personal emblem of King Dom Manuel I.
- a bronze bell with an inscription that suggests the date of the ship was 1498.
- gold *cruzado* coins minted in Lisbon between 1495 and 1501.
- an extraordinarily rare silver coin, called the *Indio*, that was commissioned by Dom Manuel in 1499 specifically for trade with India. The extreme rarity of the *Indio* (there is only one other known example in the world) is such that it has legendary status as the 'lost' or 'ghost' coin of Dom Manuel.

The entire collection of recovered artefacts are currently being conserved by the MHC and several of the key objects listed above are already being displayed in the new National Museum in Muscat that opened to visitors earlier this year. An important objective of the project has been to use the best possible cutting-edge scientific and technical methods in the examination and investigation of the recovered artefacts. With the help of a top group of contributing archaeologists and scientists, a variety of scientific analysis were used to determine the age, provenance and identity of the shipwreck. These results were recently published in an academic article in the *International Journal of Nautical Archaeology*. A full copy of the article, which quickly became the most popular article in the history of *IJNA*, can be downloaded from <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/1095-9270.12175/abstract> A project website that includes photographs of some of the most interesting artefacts was also created <http://esmeraldashipwreck.com>

More archaeological and scientific studies are planned in the future to learn as much as possible about how the Portuguese conducted maritime trade and warfare in the Indian Ocean during this historically important and culturally



Excavating the site by airlifts.



Bronze ship's bell.



Gold Portuguese Cruzado.



Bronze Arquebus barrel.

significant period. From a Portuguese perspective this is an extraordinary discovery with immense scientific and historical interest, as it represents – in their long and glorified history of overseas expansion – the earliest 'Ship of Discovery' ever to be found and as such is a rare opportunity for nautical archaeology. For Oman, as legal owner of the wreck owing



Laser scanning of VS mark.

to its location within their territorial waters, the wreck site has national importance with respect to its own history of maritime commerce and its strategic position in relation to early Indian Ocean navigation and international exchange between Europe and the Far East. As Oman's official governmental body responsible for the protection, promoting and preservation of the Sultanate's underwater cultural heritage, the Ministry of Heritage and Culture have used this project to enhance the experience and capabilities of their underwater archaeology programme. This programme has only been recently established to begin the process of cataloguing and investigating possible archaeological sites throughout the territorial waters of Oman. With the discovery and excavation of *Esmeralda* the MHC has achieved worldwide recognition and brought new attention to Oman's rich and varied underwater cultural heritage. ■

David Mearns will be giving a lecture about the *Esmeralda* to Society members on Thursday 15th of December. Details will be on the Society website: www.angloomanisociety.com

MUSCAT “THE ANCHORAGE”

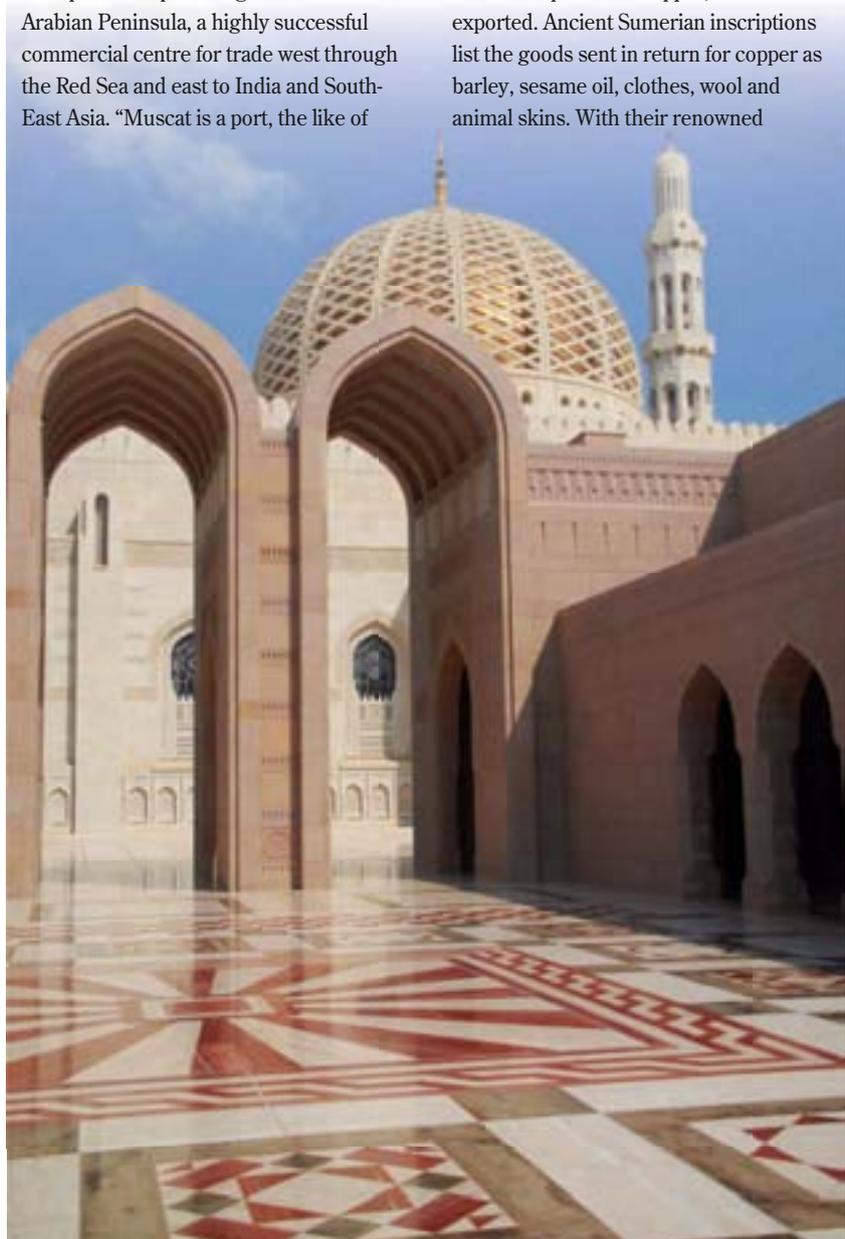
WRITTEN AND PHOTOGRAPHED BY JULIET HIGHET

In 1903 Lord Curzon, Viceroy of India, described Muscat, capital of Oman, as “probably one of the most picturesque places in the world”. Happily that has not changed.

What is now the Sultanate of Oman was historically the link between East and West, Arabia and Africa, ocean navigation being the key to Oman’s mercantile history. For countless centuries Muscat occupied a strategic position as the main entrepôt for ships throughout the Gulf and Arabian Peninsula, a highly successful commercial centre for trade west through the Red Sea and east to India and South-East Asia. “Muscat is a port, the like of

which cannot be found in the whole world, where there are merchants and all ships aim for it,” wrote Ahmed ibn Majid in 1490. Its very name means “anchorage”.

During the fourth and third millennia BCE, when Oman was named Magan, its hinterland produced copper, which it exported. Ancient Sumerian inscriptions list the goods sent in return for copper as barley, sesame oil, clothes, wool and animal skins. With their renowned



Right: Arches in the Sultan Qaboos Mosque.

maritime skill and prowess at boat building, Omani sailors mastered the monsoon winds and sailed as far as China, Indonesia and down the African coast. By sea, the great civilising influences of Arab literature, art, medicine, perfumery, astronomy and mathematics spread out.

As copper supplies ran out, Oman’s chief export became frankincense and myrrh, its own products, as well as luxury goods from further afield. Ships returning to Muscat from South East Asia carried cargoes of spices, Chinese silk and porcelain, musk and agarwood (both used for perfumery.) After the ninth century, Malaysia sent camphor, tin, and bamboo. Teak and sandalwood came from India, and from East Africa ivory, gold dust, tortoiseshell, tamarind, ostrich feathers, leopard skins, ambergris, and beeswax.

In the 16th century, when it was taken by the Portugese commander Alfonso de Albuquerque, he admired the industry of the Muscatis, and their buildings, before destroying them. He described the scene he found: “Muscat is a very large, populous town, with fine elegant houses, flanked on both sides by high mountains. There are orchards, gardens and palm groves, with pools for watering them by means of wooden engines. It is of old a market for carriage of horses and dates... supplied

from the interior with much wheat, barley and dates for loading as many vessels as come for them.” For countless centuries Muscat had provided food, water and cargoes for visiting ships. In their heyday those ships riding at anchor in the harbour of what is now the port of Mina Qaboos, varied in size from 300 to 600 tons, the most famous being the *Baghalas*, which had high poops, elaborately carved like European galleons.

Nowadays it is very dramatic to descend upon the traditional commercial area of Muscat called Muttrah from between the hills above, as active now as then. The smooth, orderly flow of limos and 4x4s swishes along the palm-lined Corniche, a promenade curving languidly around the entire edge of the crescent shaped bay of deep blue water, the ocean beyond. Both Muttrah and old Muscat nearby have all the charm and atmosphere you might expect, with fairytale forts, a palace, period merchants’ houses, a picturesque *souk*, colourful fish and fruit markets – all the riches of the Arabia of *1,001 Nights*.

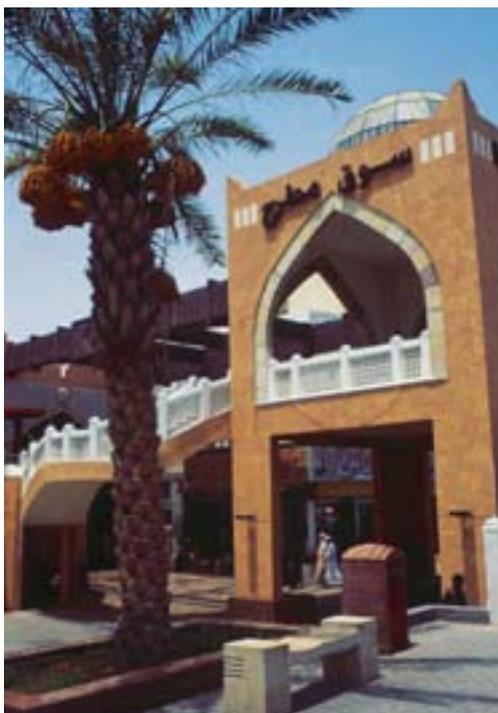
But what also strikes one about Muscat as a city, is its modernity – prosperous business complexes, palatial administration areas, glossy suburbs and model industrial estates, all constructed in an attractive hybrid architectural style – contemporary yet rooted in the inspiration of traditional Arab aesthetics. Buildings are restricted in height to three or at most four storeys, generally painted white, often with domed roofs, arches, screened windows with a number of coloured panes, carved stuccowork and carved wooden doors. The usual legacy of rapid development has somehow, miraculously, resulted in a backbone of aesthetic homogeneity in a ‘new’ capital, not a hotchpotch of styles and influences. Interestingly, the process of urbanisation is the very Arabic word used historically for ‘civilisation’ – *al hadarah*.

Arriving at night, the drive from the airport into Muscat is an eerie experience, since it

seems as if one is entering a ghost town. There are few vehicles on the highway, which is lined with flowering herbaceous borders, lemon and lime trees, as well as palm trees. Lush parks can be glimpsed on either side of the highway, complete with fountains and waterfalls. All this verdant luxuriance in a region of less than abundant rainfall, and evidence of the conscious greening of the Arabian Desert. The secret is the use of recycled water from sewage treatment and desalination plants.

Alongside the motorway nearer the city is a line of modern ministry buildings, each one quite different in design, yet harmonious in style. They exemplify the Modern Mughal genre – a blend of creative contemporary architecture and satisfactory Moorish aesthetics – think Alhambra. Exquisitely tiled mosques glitter between more austere yet gilded banks. Of course there is striking evidence of the “trickle-down” of oil and natural gas wealth – the swooping four-lane highways, the dramatic fly-overs cut through mountain gorges, as the capital has spread along great swathes of the coastline and hinterland in one tranquil valley after another.

Muscat is one of the most attractive capitals in the world and the most peaceful city I know. Life never seems to be rushed, though it’s the powerhouse for both government and business, and nowadays mobiles are more in evidence than khanjars, the traditional silver daggers. It’s also the cleanest – it’s illegal to drop litter. Why do people keep returning to Muscat? It’s laid back to the point of languor, so different from that ode to commerce, Dubai – not a steel and glass high-rise in sight, not a whiff of the sex ‘n shopping culture that has come to define tourism there. Oman retains a sense of pre-oil ancient Arabia – especially beyond the capital and in Muscat too – history is still tangible. Despite rapid redevelopment, life never seems to be rushed in this haven of unspoilt, small-town charm. Its people have self-respect and evident pride in their distinctive heritage, as well as the modernisation introduced over the last 46 years by their benevolent Sultan. In the past, Oman was isolated from its neighbours by deserts, mountains or sea, and this has had a subtle effect on its



Entrance to Muttrah Souk.

inhabitants, who tend to be reserved and dignified, yet with a relaxed bonhomie.

Modern Muscat is nothing short of a miracle within the desert, the capital of a nation that little more than five decades ago languished in fettered obscurity. In 1970, a new era dawned when H.M. Sultan Qaboos took over as ruler, and introduced modern, enlightened government, in effect an economic, social and cultural renaissance. Without losing sight of Oman’s rich heritage, nor of the potential dangers to the environment through rapid development, he set about putting Oman’s wealth to work for her people, above all in universal health and educational facilities, as well as developing a high growth economy. From being one of the most backward countries in the Arab world, the Sultan has turned it around, with – at that time – no educated elite to help him. It is moving to visit Oman and experience the way people believe in their nation, their ruler, and therefore in themselves. “He doesn’t put a foot wrong,” I was told again and again. “He puts Oman first and no-one wants to let him down.” His social programmes, particularly those for women and children, are exemplary, and as many women as men receive higher education.

Until 1970 the gates of the old walled

town of Muscat were locked at night and its inhabitants had to carry lanterns. Now the capital has spread along great swathes of the coastline and hinterland in one tranquil valley after another, linked by highways dramatically swooping between the mountains. Old Muscat is still intensely atmospheric, dominated by two 16th century Portuguese forts high above the harbour. They flank Sultan Qaboos’ fairytale Al Alam Palace. This is a formal palace used for official functions, and not open to the general public. However, curiously, in the endearingly relaxed Omani fashion, the approach road is surprisingly empty of guards, so one can get right up to the gates and take photographs there. Built in 1972, its Pharaonic Art Deco style blue and gold columns soar upwards, topped with an elaborate frieze. Replacing the old, simple two-storey palace, it is a jewel of modern architecture, on a modest scale compared for example with Buckingham Palace. At the front, there is a formal garden, and yes – guards do parade there. Another garden, at the back of the Palace leads down to the waterfront.

On either side of the Al Alam Palace, in the distance, are the imposing late 16th century forts of Jalali and Mirani, high on

rocky promontories on opposite sides of Muscat harbour, guarding its port entrance. They give the city its unique character, and date from the relatively brief phases when Muscat was conquered by the Portuguese in order to control international trade. When they occupied Muscat in 1507, during the reign of Philip of Spain, they chose the most commanding spaces, high above the city, to build their two great forts. The western fort, Mirani, was completed in 1587; the eastern, Jalali, in 1588. Simple in design and apparently very strong, nevertheless, following sackings of the city by the Turks, the forts themselves proved invincible though their fortifications were extended in the early 17th century. The Omanis reconquered their city in 1653. Together with the third Portuguese-built fort of Muttrah, they are closed to the public and used by the military and police.

Muttrah Fort, again on a steep, rocky outcrop, also occupies a strategic position. To the east of Old Muscat town and west of Muttrah on the bay, it towers above the only route between the two conurbations. It is on a tight corner, with the sea on one side, the mountains behind. The Portuguese added two towers to the existing Omani fort in the late 16th century, and in the 17th, further strengthened it

Al Alam Palace in Muscat.



with a curtain wall. Then, in the early years of the Al Bu Sa’idi dynasty (1744 to the present), further fortifications were added around the original tower to house a permanent contingent of troops. So Muttrah Fort not only defended the ruling dynasty from attacks by sea, but also potentially from uprisings immediately to the east – from Muttrah, always an economically vital area, with its *Souk*, mercantile headquarters and fishing harbour, which had always been inhabited by a mixed, largely non-native community – therefore possibly disloyal.

Until 1970, when Sultan Qaboos took over, the city walls used to enclose old Muscat completely and the only access was through one of the four gates that were locked three hours before sunset, and the inhabitants had to use lanterns since there was no electricity. Before 1970, the road from the former palace in old Muscat to the harbour of Muttrah was the only one in the capital, and in fact the only asphalted road in the Sultanate. The old town was a maze of narrow, sandy lanes. Today so much has changed, but old Muscat remains a quiet, almost secretive place.

The Al Alam Palace crowns one side of the main, spacious, white marble-paved piazza, around which are some particularly elegant ministerial offices, including that of the Diwan (Palace) administrative buildings. These minimalist style icons were also built in the Seventies, but incorporate aspects of Omani architectural heritage, such as huge carved teak doors, embellished with large bronze studs, whose original purpose was to keep loaded camels and donkeys from brushing too close to the doors.

In the heart of Old Muscat there are two renovated historic homes that have been converted into a museum and an art gallery. The Bait Al Zubair Museum has lively displays of artefacts of Omani heritage, including period photographs, clothes, jewellery and room-sets which give a pungent, authentic flavour of traditional Omani life. Bait Al Zubair also has a miniature recreation of a rural village in the Museum garden complete with a tiny *aflaj* (irrigation system). Across the road the Bait Muzna Gallery exhibits contemporary Arab art on the ground and upper floors. Since its inception in 2000, the policy has

been to introduce Omani artists to the international art scene, and so this charming old house is now considered Muscat’s contemporary art haven.

The road from Old Muscat leads to the bustling Corniche around the bay of Muttrah in Mina Qaboos harbour, where working *dhow*s are either anchored between large modern shipping, or unloading their cargo day and night. The sea remains an integral part of Omani life, the *dhow*s skirting round edgy little motorboats bringing in their catch to Muttrah Fish *Souk* – including sea bream, kingfish, and the most intensely flavoured lobster in the world.

Much of Muttrah’s old market area has been swept away to make room for modern development. However, the superb merchants’ houses on the Corniche are historic with a dash of Mughal influence, since they were built by Shi’ite merchants, who traded with India. This area, called Sur Lawatiyah, was built in the 19th century, and aside from a few other isolated buildings, is the only vestige of vernacular architecture remaining in Muttrah. These graceful white houses, with their delicate latticed windows, have long, narrow rooms grouped around a central courtyard, preserving a cool, secluded interior. When they have been continuously inhabited, as those on the Corniche have, they are in good condition; as opposed to those deeper in the old city away from the sea breeze, many of which have been abandoned for air-conditioned modern homes in the suburbs, and are rapidly returning to nature. It is in fact a walled-off private residential area, with guards sitting at the mansion gates. What one sees is but a tantalizing glimpse of life inside.

Behind these beautiful old homes is Muttrah *Souk*, the pulsating hub of a cosmopolitan nation that has been trading for thousands of years. Its local name is *Souk A’Dhalaam*, the Market of Shade, since its sprawling warren of narrow alleyways are covered with palm-fronds, creating a dancing pattern of light and shade. In this ancient *souk*, there’s a symphony of rich cultural layers – the evocative fragrance of frankincense burnt in funky painted clay censers used in rural Oman, or more elegant, urban, chased silver ones. The woody, yet slightly



Detail of 18th Century building.

astringent scent of frankincense mingles with Indian sandalwood and precious Arab essential oils like *oudh*, extracted from the heart of agarwood, imported from Cambodia and Myanmar. Some of the best quality *oudh* costs upwards of £80 for a small bottle, considered so precious it’s kept in safes. In up-market hotels anywhere on the globe, Arab women and men drift by in a cloud of this strongly evocative fragrance.

Walk on further into the heart of the *Souk* and these sweet scents interact with spices like cloves and cardamoms, which the Omanis introduced to their colony of Zanzibar as a result of trade links with the South-East Asian Spice Islands. They blend with pungent dried limes once used to prevent scurvy amongst sailors. Then your nose will pick up rosewater perfuming milky tea, coffee, the warm, rounded aroma of dates, and intensely sweet *halva* stirred in giant copper pots.



Hi-tech goods have penetrated Muttrah *Souk*, but in essence it's one of the most authentic in Arabia, certainly the oldest in Oman and has hardly changed at all in its complex character. It's divided into various sectors, each dealing with specific products, such as household goods, textiles, the gold and silver *souk* within the *Souk*, spices, perfumes and incenses. The whole kaleidoscope is intersected with coffee shops, snack outlets and *halva* sellers. You will still have to flatten yourself against a wall to allow a donkey to pass by loaded with bundles of Indian *pashminas*. Women go shopping together, dressed in bright *kangas* from East Africa, or *abayas* (cloaks) floating open to reveal colourful embroidered dresses and trousers. Few are veiled – Oman is a very open society in which women evidently exercise considerable power. Muscati women drive to their high-flying jobs in government ministries, or to Ruwi, heart of the modern business district.

Visitors to Muttrah *souk* seek out antique silver *khanjars*, the traditional curved daggers worn on ceremonial occasions to this day, antique silver and amber jewellery, silver rose-water sprinklers and also silver *qu'ran* holders, some of which are suspended on chains with conical silver beads. People prepared to ship goods



Ayallah music.

home invest in old studded wooden chests from Zanzibar, carved wooden doors or rugs. Fine old lithographs of the 18th century mansions lining the Corniche outside are also very collectable. Behind the actual mansions, one plunges into the Gold *Souk's* miniscule alleys, so narrow because these were once the passageways of the great old merchant mansions. 22 carat gold jewellery has supplanted the traditional silver on the wish-lists of most Arab women. I recall an epiphanous moment one evening at Muttrah. It was Ramadan, and at sunset as I emerged from the *Souk*, crowds of people were sitting outside in circles, breaking their fast by eating together. That sense of collective celebration after self-discipline, often shared between strangers, was heightened by the call to prayer of the *muezzin* singing from the top of the mosque immediately above us.

To visit the Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque is an absolute must. It is the largest in the world, taking over six years to complete, and accommodating 20,000 people in three different arenas. It was inaugurated in 2001 by His Majesty praying on the world's largest single example of Persian carpet, woven in 28 colours by 600 weavers and taking four years to complete. The *musalla* or main prayer hall is enormous, lit by 35 gold-plated Swarovski crystal chandeliers,

including “the largest and most beautiful chandelier ever made”, according to the Guinness Book of Records, weighing eight tons, suspended from a 50-metre high gilded dome. The walls are panelled with white marble and lit with superb stained-glass windows. Superlatives roll on, the interiors of the various prayer halls masterpieces of classical Arab design, traditional craftsmanship and the finest materials, such as the marble paving used throughout the complex. The *riwaqs* or open-air arcades are a museum of global Islamic ceramic tile art, with, for instance, an exquisite niche of Mughal *pietra dura*. They demonstrate the aesthetic unity of Islamic creativity, despite the great cultural diversity in Muslim regions. A contemplative courtyard garden reflects the Islamic concept of gardens as a vision of paradise to come.

Yet innovative structural techniques were used, modern design and new interpretations applied throughout the vast complex. Resident architect Godfrey Heaps comments: “We tried to create an architecture recognisable as a development of Omani building traditions, and consistent with the contemporary aspirations of the country.” The conceptual architect, Dr. Mohammed Salah Makiya, adds: “The concept came from a heart-felt belief that a mosque is an integral part of the everyday life of a Muslim. As such, it is not only a place for prayer, but for meditation, debate, education and even a cool afternoon nap.” Quite simply, the Grand Mosque is nobly beautiful, an experience of utter tranquillity. ■

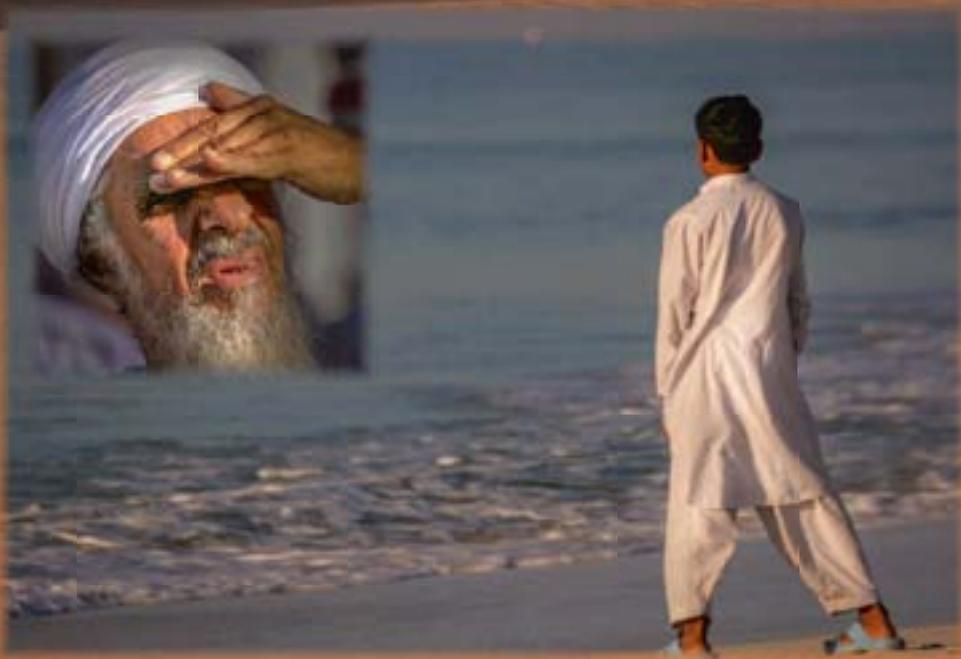


Ceiling at Al Bandar Resort.

OMAN THROUGH THE EYES OF SUE O'CONNELL

Sue O'Connell is an English language teacher and author with a passion for travel and photography. Her experience of teaching Omani students in the UK led her to visit (and quickly fall in love with) Oman. She has since returned several times both as an educator and photographer, often with her husband and fellow-photographer, Peter Brisley. To see more of Sue's award-winning images visit her website: sueoconnell.photography





BAT OASIS HERITAGE PROJECT

ARTICLE BY RUTH YOUNG

Mudbrick villages are a distinctive and ubiquitous part of Omani landscapes, and although most (if not all) are now abandoned, they represent rural ways of life of the recent and memorable past.

From 1932 until 1970 Sultan Said bin Taimur maintained a near-feudal society in Oman, with little international contact and development. Since taking power in 1970, Sultan Qaboos bin Said embarked on a series of five year plans to develop and modernise Oman, and mudbrick villages were rapidly replaced by modern concrete block houses.

Exploring and recording mudbrick villages while the physical remains are still present, and while they are still part of 'living memory' is very important – once lost, a large part of Oman's everyday, rural past will be lost too. Visiting the Muscat Festival for several years running has shown me two things: firstly, that there is a huge appetite among Oman's burgeoning

middle class for viewing traditional crafts and rural practices, such as pottery making, rope making, seeing cows and goats in the flesh, and particularly showing these to their young children; and secondly, that this urban middle class feels increasingly estranged from such rural, traditional practice. Never mind that their parents may well still be able to make ropes and mats from date palm fibre, this new socio-economic group are both physically and ideologically removed from the pre-mechanised, pre-digital lives of their parents and grandparents. This shows that Sultan Qaboos' *nada* or renaissance in Oman society and economy has been incredibly effective and the country has been transformed within a generation.



Mudbrick houses with their modern replacements in Bat oasis.

The mudbrick village core of Bat oasis in the Al Dhahira District offers a timely opportunity to document, investigate and understand aspects of this rich traditional Omani culture while structures are still standing and the people who occupied this village are still alive. Bat has an extant mudbrick castle with a number of mudbrick houses, a mosque and other building types clustered at its base, and so represents a 'typical' village landscape. Members of Bat community are also keen to participate in the project work, particularly older people who are very willing to share their memories and knowledge of the old village. Thus the 'Bat Oasis Heritage and Archaeology Project' was set up to explore the material culture of the village (buildings and objects), the memories of villagers, and the heritage potential of all these things.

Historical Archaeology deals with material remains from the last 500 years or

Surveying the mudbrick village.



so and is well established in North America, Britain, Europe and Australia, yet very few archaeology projects dealing with the recent past have been carried out in the Middle East. As far as I am aware, this is the first such project in Oman itself. The use of archaeological methods (e.g. mapping structures, building analysis, targeted excavation, and artefact analysis) alongside ethnographic methods (e.g. interviews and observations) allows us to explore ordinary, rural lives in a depth that they are not accorded in traditional histories. Equally importantly, combining archaeological and ethnographic approaches provides us with a means to learn about women, children, and older people – essential social constituents often under-represented or even ignored in many histories, which are usually written by the literate elites.

Using all of these different approaches (mapping, interviews, building analysis, excavation and artefact analysis) has allowed us to collect varied and interesting data about the village and the ways that people lived here during the 20th century. For example, detailed mapping of the mudbrick village and analysis of individual buildings has shown us that while houses may be similar in terms of the number of rooms, there is no 'standard' when it comes to the size of rooms, nor the ways in which

The main gate to Husn Al-Wardi.



they are connected to each other. We have also observed that the houses that are clustered closest to the castle are smaller than those located further away, but they may be more prestigious in terms of location, not least because of the greater protection proximity to the castle offered in times of insecurity.

We carried out excavations in a number of different houses and in the keep area of the castle. In houses we found that wooden posts for grinding coffee beans were centrally placed in the main living room, indicating the important role of coffee and conversation in all houses. The vast majority of pottery we found was locally made, with a lot of glazed Bahla ware in most trenches, and two or three shards from imported European ceramics, indicating how isolated this village and region was during the 19th and 20th centuries. We found objects that our interviewees identified for us, such as vessels used to make date honey, and beads used on children's clothing, that are no longer part of everyday life. The move from mudbrick to concrete has been accompanied by a switch to the use of imported, mass manufactured objects and

away from handcrafted goods. In upper layers linked to post-abandonment activity (often rubbish dumping) we found some local replicas of European perfumes and perfume bottles, which raises all sorts of interesting questions about contacts and influences post-1970, and how these might be filtered through local and regional

manufacturers, and the impact of European contact on changing taste.

In one house where we excavated we found a human burial under the living room floor. Although we sent samples of the skeleton for Radiocarbon dating, this was not possible due to a lack of CO₂ in the bone. However, on the basis of burial style



Students excavating a former shop.

and ceramics we suggest that this burial dates possibly to the late Iron Age. In another room in the same house we found pieces of an Iron Age ironworking mould and ceramics, and below these Bronze Age ceramics around a Bronze Age wall section. This shows that our mudbrick village had been built right over much earlier prehistoric layers.

We also carried out excavations in the castle at the centre of the village, and these excavations showed a whole series of mudbrick walls, floors and pits. Sometimes doorways had been blocked, and at other times surfaces had been levelled with debris and new floors created over the top. All of this tells us that the castle is a dynamic structure, being altered according to changing needs at different times in its history.

Two Open Days were held (one in each season) where all members of the local community could visit us and ask questions not only about excavations in the village, but about all aspects of our work. In turn, we were given a great deal of useful information about the artefacts and features we had uncovered, and we made good contacts for interviews and had feedback which helped shape our project aims.

Interviews with many men and women who had lived in the mudbrick village gave us a lot of valuable information about past lifestyles, social organisation, and the economic base of the village. These interviews also showed us how powerful the mudbrick village is in terms of



Open Day discussions.

memory, both individual and collective. For many of our interviewees the mudbrick is a link to family, often deceased parents or siblings, who lived with them or near them. Mudbrick also represented a time of community, of close neighbours and sharing and support. These things had all been seemingly lost with the move to concrete houses, although the convenience of indoor kitchens, bathrooms, plumbing and electricity were acknowledged. Many interviewees said they still dream of the mudbrick, and that they would like to be able to keep their mudbrick houses intact. A great sense of nostalgia pervaded discussions about the mudbrick village,

and this was accompanied with an awareness that those who lived in the mudbrick village are the last enactors of a vanished way of life; one that will never be reprised, and one that their children often do not know or care about.

We also talked about 'heritage' and what it means in a village such as Bat where the UNESCO World Heritage (WH) status of the nearby prehistoric sites (see <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/434>) overshadows the mudbrick oasis. Local people feel strongly that the mudbrick village could have significant heritage and tourist potential, yet most government strategy is directed at the WH area; in turn, interpretation of the prehistoric towers and cemeteries for tourists remains minimal and there is very little in the way of tourist infrastructure in place. These kinds of issues and tensions need to be addressed, and we hope that our discussions can help to inform future heritage developments at Bat.

Working in Bat to develop an archaeology project dealing with the recent past and incorporating community engagement and heritage issues has been incredibly rewarding on many levels, and the project is greatly indebted to the people of Bat and the Ministry of Heritage and Culture. ■

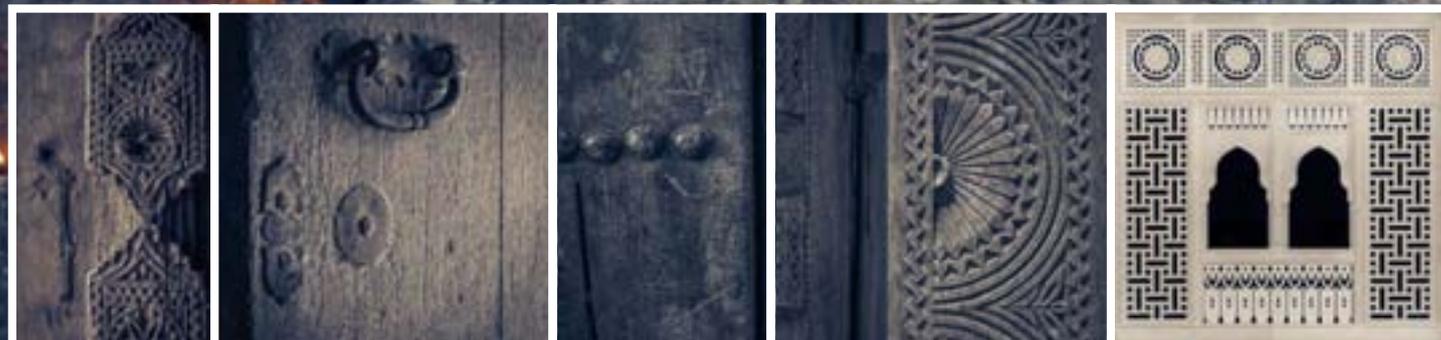


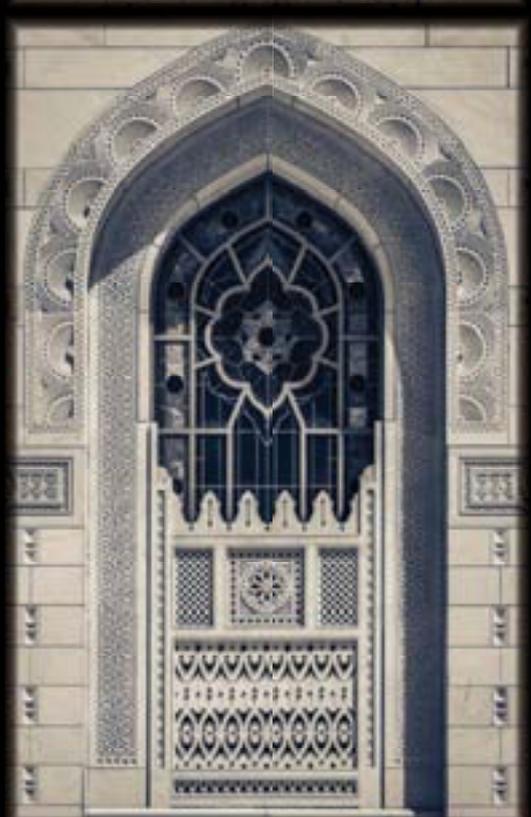
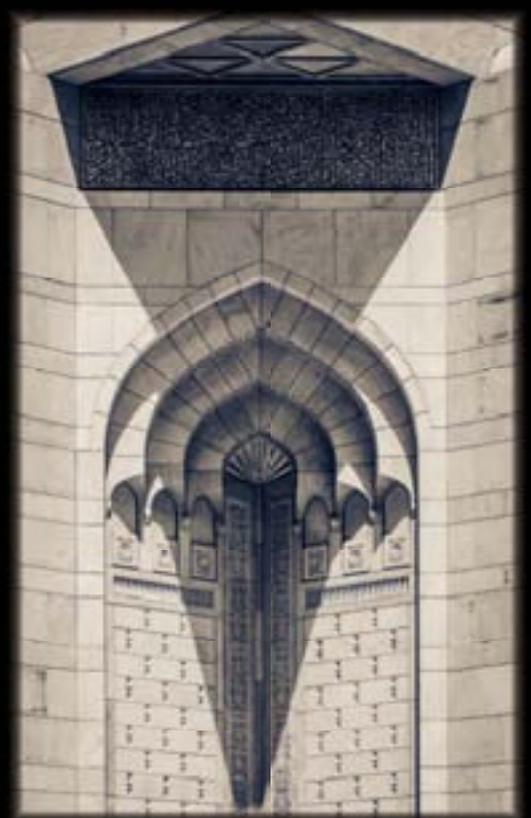
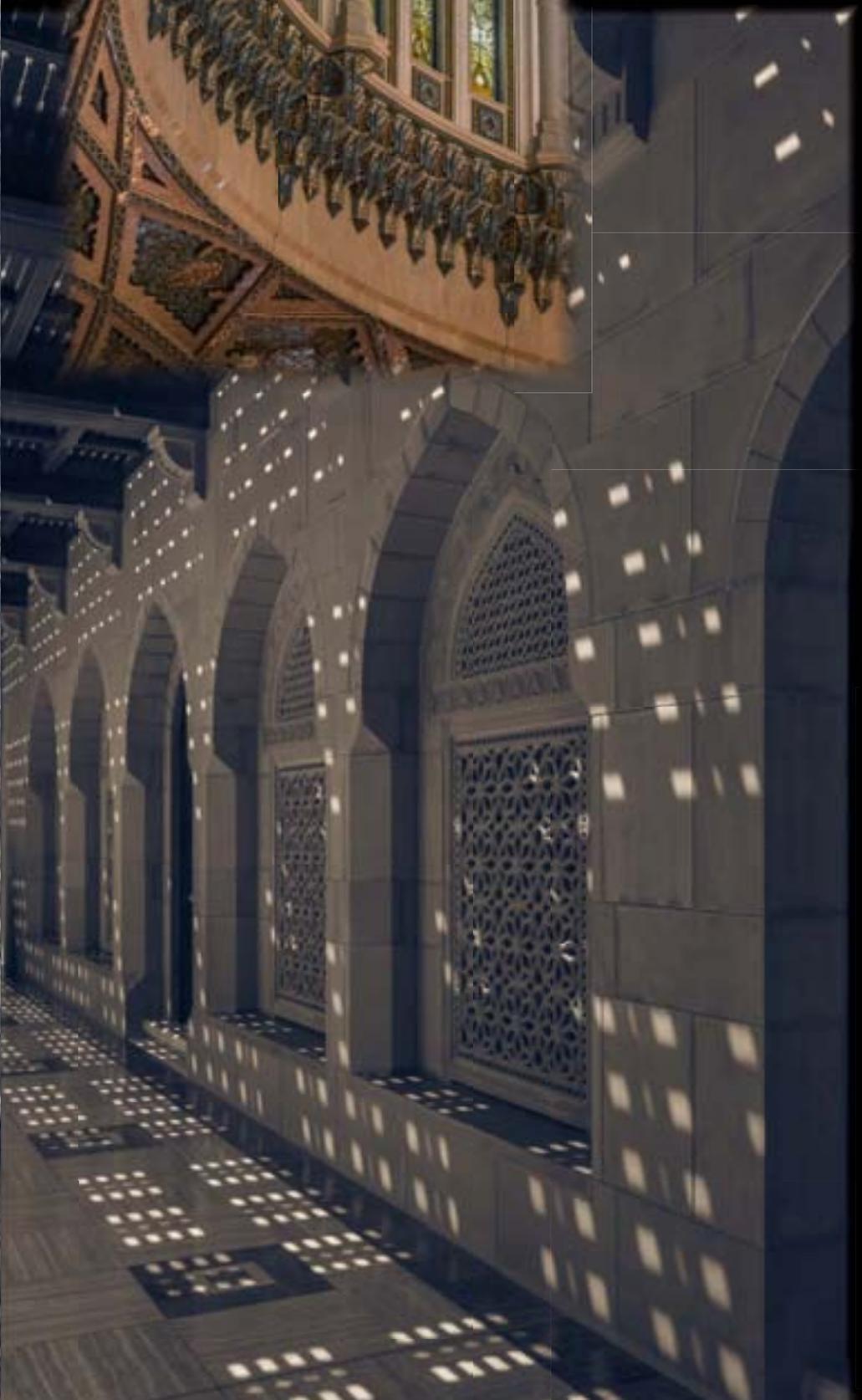
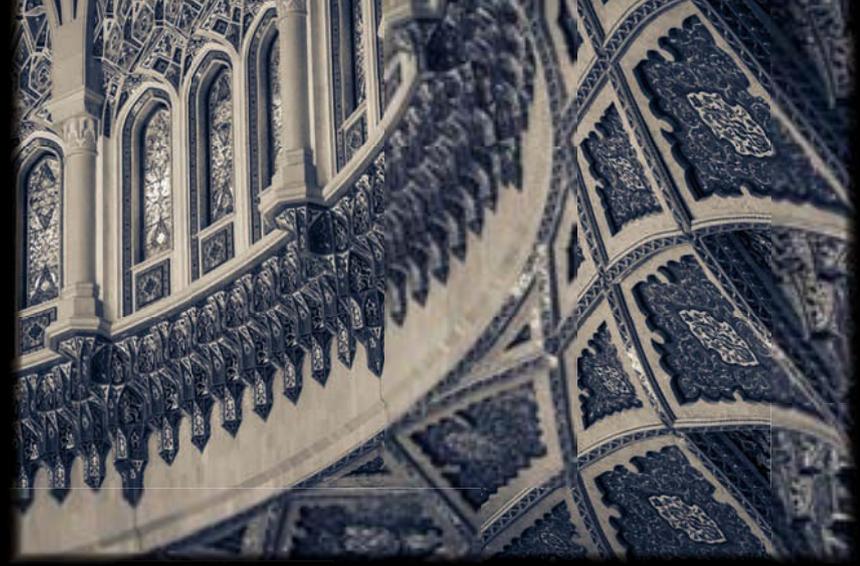
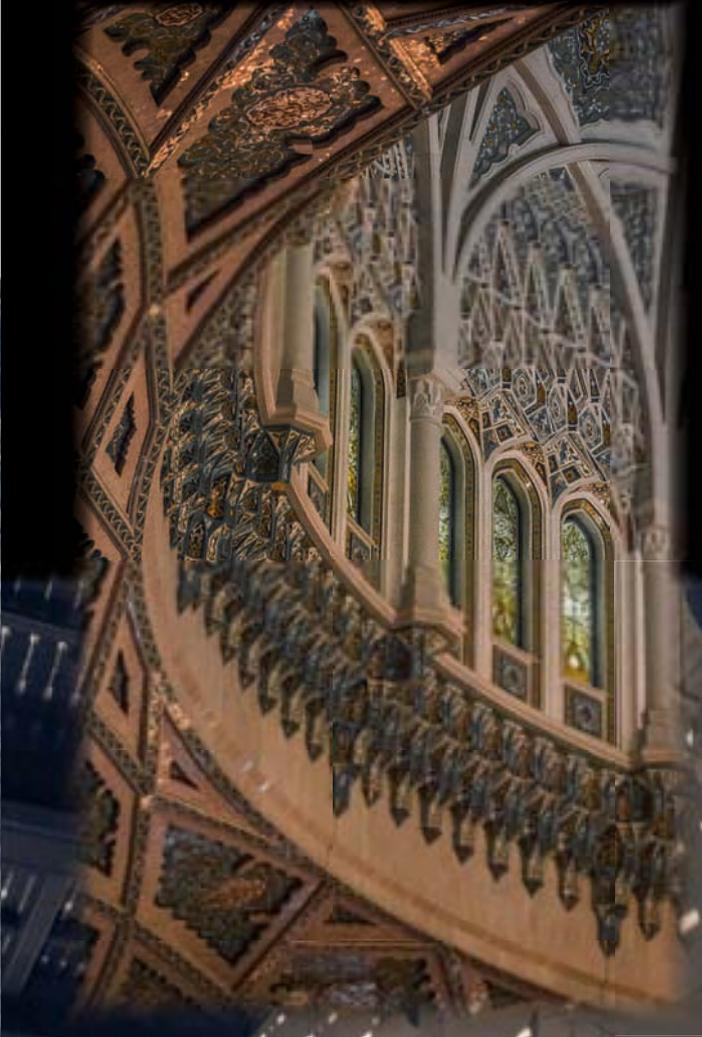
Villagers viewing the project Open Day.

The Project is funded by: Society for Post Medieval Archaeology; National Geographic; Anglo-Omani Society; British Foundation for the Study of Arabia.

OMAN THROUGH THE EYES OF PETER BRISLEY

Peter Brisley's first love is monochrome photography and his work has appeared in various photographic periodicals and in gallery exhibitions. He has travelled extensively in the Middle East with his wife and fellow photographer, Sue O'Connell, and Oman remains a favourite destination. To see more of Peter's work visit his website: peterbrisley.photography





THE BRITISH EMBASSY: RECOLLECTIONS OF THE FIRST AMBASSADRESS

ARTICLE BY LADY (RUTH) HAWLEY

The accession of HM Sultan Qaboos bin Said in July 1970 led to the British Mission in Oman being upgraded from Consulate General to Embassy. My husband, Donald, was to be appointed as the first Ambassador.

After a delayed departure from Iraq we arrived in Muscat in the Spring of 1971, direct from Baghdad – or nearly, as the only planes able to fly in to Bait al Falaj airport were Fokker Friendships, necessitating a night stop-over with the Political Resident in Bahrain. The Sultan was away so Donald arrived as Consul General for a month or so. When His Majesty returned from overseas the Ministry of Foreign Affairs asked Donald to leave Oman briefly so that on return he could be received properly with all due honours as first Ambassador (of any country) to the Sultanate and Credentials presented. On arrival, with our three daughters aged almost 6, 4 and 15 months,

we were met at the airport by John Shipman, the senior diplomat at the Consulate. The driver having just been dismissed, John personally drove us in the ancient Humber, one of only five saloon cars in Muscat, to our new home. This was a fine building with a courtyard accessed through a grand doorway, and the Deputy Head of Mission's house opposite: it occupied the far corner of the harbour right under Fort Jalali. The rest of the harbour consisted of the Sultan's two-storey palace, the Customs House and the Cable and Wireless building. By the palace, under Fort Mirani, was a small jetty on which building materials and general goods were unloaded.

The Consulate/Embassy, completed in 1890, was built in the Indo-Arab style, with a central well and rooms around this, and with a large veranda overlooking the sea. The offices were on the ground floor, and a red carpeted wooden staircase, lined by a Rogues' Gallery of photographs of past incumbents, led to the Residence above. This was totally unprotected until a wrought iron gate was installed after I complained that I had been tracked down in the bathroom a year or so later by an irate British national incensed that he had not been invited to the Queen's Birthday Party!

There was a further "back" stairway for domestic staff and deliveries. There was a small garden and a swimming pool, suitably shielded from prying eyes. (For further details of the building see *The British Embassy in Muscat, a Short History*, which I had published in May 1974.) As part of the "up-grading", we extended the dining room on to part of the veranda and incorporated into the drawing room what had been a small study (and apparently in the 1940s the only air-conditioned room in the building, where the then Political Agent kept his butterfly



Presentation of Credentials by Ambassador Donald Hawley to HM Sultan Qaboos, 23rd July 1971.

Muttrah waterfront, February 1972.



collection). A little balcony outside the private sitting-room enabled one to watch the *houris* (dugouts) come on to the beach in the morning with their catches of fish, and send one of the staff down to purchase *hammour* or whatever had caught one's eye. An archway in the courtyard led to a pathway behind the waterfront buildings along which the Agent/Consul/Consul General would walk to the palace, preceded by an attendant carrying two silver-mounted sticks, to call on the Sultan. Sadly when we got there we found that these had recently been thrown out, together with the sedan chair in which dignitaries including Sir Rupert Hay were carried ashore on arrival in Muscat.

In the centre of the courtyard was a vast flagpole from which the Union Jack was flown until its removal in 1973 to the relief of those Omanis who felt that it sent the wrong message in the new era under Sultan Qaboos. The pole was regularly painted by sailors from visiting ships; it also served as a navigational aid with the light at the top lined up with a light on the mountain behind. Until 1963 it was also used for the manumission of former slaves who had only to clasp it to claim their freedom. Behind the Embassy complex was a tennis court, also used in those early days as a cinema with the walls as a screen; behind that again were the Sepoy Lines where all our laundry was done.

The Consul-General was provided with a motor boat to call on naval ships visiting the harbour. Its advantage to us was



The Embassy flagpole being painted by sailors from HMS Andromeda, October 1972.

recreation, before the amenities one takes for granted in the modern age became available as the country developed. Formerly a Singapore harbour launch she was a bit shabby but seaworthy and, with a small cabin, ideal for short excursions along the coast with our jolly boatman Khalifa. One evening, swimming out from the boat to a nearby sandy beach, one of our guests had the uncomfortable experience of 'being nudged' (as he put it) by some aquatic creature. A sea snake? A small shark? We shuddered to think of the fate that might have been ours! Shortly

afterwards we were told that as an economy measure the boat would have to be removed from our establishment and sold. 'The African Queen' – as she was affectionately known – had outlived her original purpose but we said farewell with regret.

Life was a lot simpler and more informal then: Omani merchants gathered in the Wadi el Kebir every afternoon for coffee; the Sultan came to dinner in the Embassy and visited us at home when we were on leave, as did his mother; we could still have the entire British community to carol singing round the verandah until it was condemned as not sufficiently robust. But life was not without its challenges. Not least was education for the children. There was initially a very small school in the old Consulate Club in Muscat but as the expatriate community began to grow it was plain that a proper English language school was required. A trained teacher in the community took the school out to premises in Ruwi and together with the British Council representative, David Phillips, I, and commercial representatives on the school board, sought to raise funds for expansion of both premises and staff. Subsequently the numbers rose to some 500! Medical facilities were limited to the Matrah hospital run by dedicated American doctors of the Dutch Reform Church and a small maternity hospital, run by a Dutch lady doctor, behind the Embassy in Muscat. It was to this that she asked me to bring the children shortly after we arrived

when they were suffering from measles, brought from Baghdad. When one of the children fell scrambling up the rocks and I was concerned about a wound to her head, I could find no doctor anywhere to consult. Food was limited to local produce and what was available in the one supermarket, Spinneys Matrah Cold Store between Muscat and Matrah and on the only paved road in the whole country. Delicious mangoes from India might appear on the jetty but we were mainly confined to tomatoes, cucumbers, onions and white radishes for fresh produce, unless invited to a PDO household where such “luxuries” as lettuce could be served, as they had their own commissariat, and indeed school, hospital and airstrip.

The only hotel was the Al Falaj in Ruwi, so many of the endless stream of senior officials and businessmen arriving as the Sultanate rapidly developed stayed at the Residence. When we had an Inspection to establish allowances, the Inspectors told me we seemed to entertain as many people as the Ambassador in France – perhaps hardly surprising given the current circumstances. But the food and toiletries we could offer were rather more limited!

Despite the challenges it was a wonderful experience with so much to see and experience as the country rapidly propelled itself into the 20th century.

Our first National Day, on 23rd July 1971, was celebrated on the airstrip at Bait al Falaj, with inexperienced soldiers dropping like nine-pins and being stretchered off in the heat. There were then only two diplomatic missions – ourselves and the Indians with a Consulate General. Thus there were only two diplomatic wives at the parades. We, the Indian Consul General’s wife and I, were given front row seats with our husbands,

that is until the arrival of some young royals from further north. When they came in, looking for appropriate seats, I could see a look of great consternation on the face of the poor Protocol Officer, until I said to my colleague we should cede place. Much was his relief as we took back row seats! The British Council started out in Ruwi – in a converted caravan. David Phillips invited me to visit his office/library/home. On a hot afternoon, his offer of a drink was either a beer cooled in front of the air-conditioner or a glass of positively hot water. As I was driving I felt obliged to go for the latter.

Despite the challenges it was a wonderful experience with so much to see and experience as the country rapidly propelled itself into the 20th century. We travelled widely to see the country and call on the sheikhs of the Interior, but travel took time: four hours to Nizwa, 14 to Sur for example, often bumping over corrugated gravel and bed-rock. When we called on the Wali of Dhank he had prepared a meal for 40 – which he thought was a suitable entourage – and was disappointed to find only Ambassador, wife and a member of staff! Wherever we went





Ruth Hawley with the British Army Training Team at Sarfait.

we were made enormously welcome and I was always respectfully ushered in though I always asked if I might visit the women. Sometimes we flew, by Skyvan, and noticed the number of wrecked aircraft on various airstrips. Dhofar trips, by air of course, would sometimes involve me. On one I was left at the beach “home” (a structure made of burmails/fuel drums) of the British Army Training Team (BATT) whilst the official party made a trip on to the jebel: the inside was plastered with garage-style posters and I wondered how they would cope, but they were kindness itself. I was, however, privileged to accompany the official party to lunch with the CO at Sarfait

on the Hornbeam line and to see first-hand what conditions were. I remember, whilst using the “facilities” (a hole in the ground), hearing a whistling sound and wondered whether or not it was an in-comer; I moved fast!

Summer recreation centred round Blackpool Beach, Qurm beach below the site of the Gulf Hotel and Bandar Jisr; in winter it tended to be trips to the Interior, often camping out under the stars. Memorable excursions included picnics in remote wadis, an Eid visit to al Hamra where the young watched the slaughter of sheep with fascination and were happy to learn that they would be safe from the

witch near Bahla as their diet included pork; dhow trips to the Damaniyat Islands; and long walks into the Jebel Akhdar. In November 1973, a small party of us set off for the mountains with Philip Horniblow, Ross Urquhart and I, reckoning we must have been the first people to walk/climb to the top of Jebel Shams. We also had a splendid week, starting from Birkat al Moz up the Wadi Muyadin to Saiq, and then along the top and down to Al Nid on the Rostaq side, camping from one water hole to another.

We had arrived in Oman just before Donald’s birthday. What was I to get him? Surely what every well-dressed man would have – a silver kohl set to go on his belt. This started my interest in Omani silver, leading to a lecture to PDO, followed by publication of Omani Silver by Longmans in 1978. Sadly this was pirated, by someone in the Ministry of Defence getting a poor quality reproduction made in India, so the answer was to republish, this time with Stacey International, in colour. When we left Oman in Spring 1975 it was with great sadness but we, or at least I, had redeemed ourselves by producing a son. Christopher was born at the Al Khola Hospital in June 1974. He was quickly initiated to the delights of camping when cooler weather arrived. From there we had a home posting during which Donald initiated the Anglo-Omani Society, becoming its first chairman. ■



Presentation of MBE to Christopher Kendall, November 1972. L-R: David Glazebrook, Christopher Kendall, Ambassador Hawley, Colin Maxwell and Courtney Welch.

ROYAL GUESTS AT A RECEPTION

HOSTED BY THE
TRUSTEES OF
THE SOCIETY
AND THE
BOARD OF THE
OMANI BRITISH
FRIENDSHIP
ASSOCIATION

AT 34 SACKVILLE
STREET ON
21st JULY 2016

HRH The Duke of York and HH Sayyid Haitham bin Tariq Al Said were present at a Reception hosted by the Trustees of the Society and the Board of the Omani British Friendship Association at 34 Sackville Street on 21st July. The Reception was held in conjunction with OBFA's Oman Logistics and Tourism Symposium being held at the Mansion House. Guests included Oman's Minister of Transport and Communications, HE Dr Ahmed Al Futaisi, and the UK's Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Transport, Lord Ahmad, together with many senior executives from the UK and Oman, diplomats, corporate members of the Society and representatives of OBFA.



The Society's Chairman welcomed the many guests to the Society's premises and introduced the Chairman of OBFA, HE Maqbool Sultan, who spoke warmly of the relations between the UK and Oman and encouraged further British trade with the Sultanate. Sir Sherard Cowper-Coles, OBFA's UK Chairman, then indicated that the Society and OBFA were exploring possibilities

to enhance effective bilateral economic and commercial relations. He advised that OBFA UK would be re-designated the Omani British Business Council to bring it into line with similar business to business organisations. The Duke of York emphasised the opportunities for UK companies to develop investment in Oman and this was further highlighted by HH Sayyid Shihab.

This was the third year that the Society and OBFA had hosted a Reception for those attending OBFA's Mansion House conference and the large number of guests present was a reflection of the importance of this event in furthering UK – Oman relations. ■



ROYAL GUESTS AT A RECEPTION





ROYAL GUESTS AT A RECEPTION



OMAN IN THE YEARS OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR

ARTICLE BY ROBERT ALSTON

This article is a summary of a lecture given to the Society in November 2015.

The title is deliberate. Conflict never came directly to Oman during the First World War. The years 1913 to 1920 were nonetheless seminal in the country's 20th century history. The key fact in Omani politics in 1914 was the revival in Nizwa the previous year of the Imamate challenging the rule of the Sultan in Muscat. Under the Imamate system The Imam, a ruler chosen by a mix of tribal and religious peers, governed according to the religious principles of Ibadhi Islam. The other significant event in Oman in 1913 was the death of Sultan Faisal and the succession of Sultan Taimur. Faisal had occupied the throne in Muscat since 1888. It had been a tumultuous reign in which British Indian naval help had been deployed several times to assist Faisal in holding Muscat in the face of challenge from the interior.

Sultan Taimur, who had as a young man showed sympathy with the religious revival which underpinned that of the Imamate, was rapidly reminded of this tutelage and

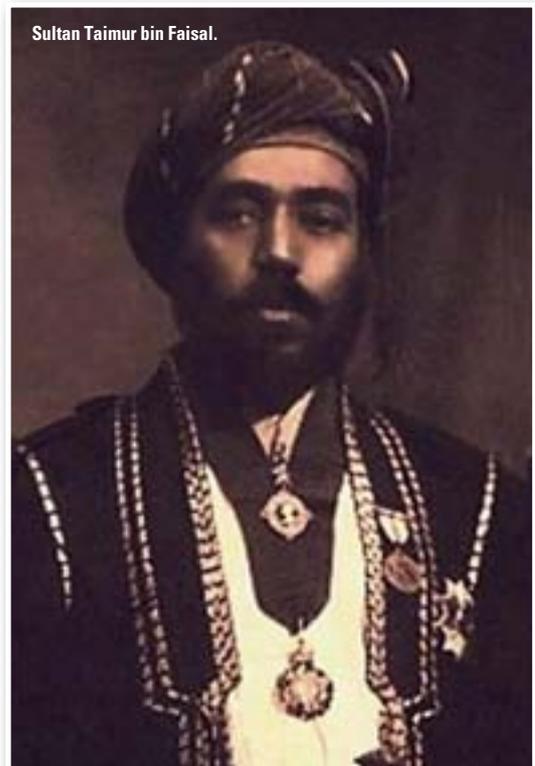


Sultan Faisal bin Turki

his obligation to accept the same restraints as those imposed upon his father in return for the guarantee of support for his position in Muscat. By August 1914, in political terms, the two main forces in Omani politics were already in stalemate. In the autumn of 1913 Imamate forces had moved swiftly to seize control of the Samail Gap from tribes loyal to the Sultan and thus command the route between the interior and the coast. From there they were poised to move to strike at Muscat. For the first time this produced a military as opposed to a naval reaction from India and in the autumn of 1913 a detachment of British Indian troops was for the first time deployed to Muscat. Their orders were exclusively defensive – to resist any attack on Muscat by Imamate forces.

The immediate impact of the outset of war in Europe was minimal. Much more significant was the declaration of war by Britain and France against the Ottoman Empire, which was in alliance with Germany, in the autumn of 1914.

The leaders of the Imamate reached two conclusions which proved to be disastrous. Knowing of the deployment of Indian troops to Mesopotamia and the strains this would put on both Indian Army manpower and on the limited resources of the British Indian navy, they judged that it was unlikely that the Indian government would react on any significant scale to a move on Muscat. Further they concluded, apparently on the

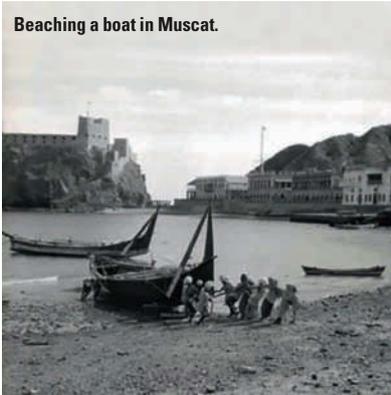


Sultan Taimur bin Faisal.

basis of one incident in which soldiers from the Indian deployment in Beit al Falaj had deserted with their weapons, that morale there was low and that numerically superior Imamate forces would successfully overwhelm them.

When the assault was launched in February 1915 the Imamate commanders also made the tactical mistake of concentrating their force at the centre of the defensive line opposite Beit al Falaj, which was in fact the strongest point in the defences. Little or no effort was made to turn the line at its weakened flanks. From the accounts of the Indian Grenadiers the Imamate troops fought bravely and determinedly but casualties were very uneven. Imamate forces were estimated to

Beaching a boat in Muscat.



have lost 186 dead, whereas Indian casualties were just 7 dead and 15 wounded – including one British officer.

Taimur was subsequently forcefully encouraged by the Viceroy in person – visiting Muscat on his return from a visit to Mesopotamia – to pursue a political accommodation with the Imam, and the services of the Political Agent were offered as a go-between between the two sides. The political track alone offered any chance of moving from stalemate to accommodation between Sultan and Imam. That process was to take five years, culminating in the Treaty or Agreement of Seeb in 1920.

During the years of the War contacts between the Imamate and successive Political Agents got nowhere, with neither side prepared to give significant ground. At the same time the economy of Oman and standards of governance both deteriorated sharply. Before the First World War British Indian influence in Oman had been applied diplomatically at different levels, and with moderate military and naval support when



Lord Hardinge, Viceroy of India.



Indian troops on parade in Muscat.

required. But by 1918 much more direct British involvement was seriously on the agenda. Five years after Taimur's accession the Political Agent Major Howarth concluded in 1917 that his Government was 'so bad that to continue to support it in its existing condition is nothing short of immoral'. The continuing strategic interest of British India in the Gulf, heightened by the events of the war, meant that for the first time it was conceivable, as the only alternative to chaos (or further expansion of the Imamate) to envisage direct British involvement in Government in the shape of people, Government loans and the support of a permanent modern Omani military force which would allow the withdrawal of Indian troops but Indian interests demanded a more forward approach.

The situation which resulted in the 1920s has been described in various ways – informal empire, client state, or veiled protectorate. Comparisons have been made with the relations between Delhi and the Rulers of India's Princely states. The 1920s were to prove the high water mark of direct British intervention in Omani affairs. The foundations for this were being laid in the last three years of the war. In light of the deteriorating situation in 1917 Haworth proposed to India

a package of reforms – a loan to get rid of Taimur's debts to the Indian merchants, a force of 600-1000 men to enable the Sultan to take the military initiative in the interior, a programme of education, and the appointment of a British adviser and a European superintendent of customs.

When War ended in November 1918 agreement in principle had been reached in Delhi that something must be done but Oman was still stuck in the downward spiral which had continued since the military impasse was reached in 1915. War, as such, had passed Oman by though its consequences had not. It took two more years for those consequences to play out. Agreement between Sultanate and Imamate was finally brokered by Ronald Wingate, the Political Agent, at Seeb in 1920 which established a stable basis for relations between the two entities which lasted until the 1950s. ■

Unshook Till The End Of Time, a book co-written by Robert Alston with fellow former ambassador Stuart Laing, covers a history of Britain and Oman from 1650-1975. To find out more, follow this link: <https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/14573857-unshook-till-the-end-of-time-a-history-of-britain-and-oman-1650-1975>



British Indian troops in Muscat.

NEW GENERATION GROUP

... the first five years

We inaugurated the New Generation Group (NGG) in 2011 as a means of continuing the very special Anglo-Omani friendship into the younger generations of our two countries. After five years of hard work we now have operations in both London and Muscat with frequent events, gatherings, lectures and partnerships. Through a range of topics including art, business and culture, to travel, tourism and sport, we aim to share ideas and exchange knowledge with our members based in the Sultanate and the UK. From humble beginnings, we now reach thousands of followers across our social media platforms and frequently post virtual updates on all of our activities. Ultimately, the NGG is about new friendships and new frontiers. We hope you enjoy reading about our five year journey in the pages that follow.

Feature Contents

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The Oman Ambassador cuts the tape at the NGG's initial event.

INTRODUCTION BY

MR OLIVER BLAKE AND SHEIKH MA'AN HAMED AL RAWAHI

It has been another busy year for the New Generation Group with numerous events in London and Muscat, university outreach programmes, charity initiatives, international exchanges and our annual NGG Delegation amongst many other exciting bridge-building initiatives. We have broadcast all of this activity through a network of Tweets, Facebook postings, YouTube videos and website updates.

The architect of our many social media platforms, Rocio Corrales, has done a wonderful job spreading the NGG word far and wide – we now have over 2000 Twitter followers! After three years of her incredible work helping to build and establish the New Generation Group, Rocio is moving on and will be spending the next few months in Oman in order to practise and improve her Arabic – we wish her all the very best in her endeavours and thank her for being an incredible team player.

After an extremely competitive process involving over 300 applications, we very warmly welcome Isabelle Habib who is the Society's new Communications and NGG Officer. Isabelle has already got off to a flying start helping to organise the annual Delegation as well as taking on the unenviable task of chasing contributors for this publication! Please do introduce yourself and say hi to Isabelle at our various events in the coming months. In other news, we have appointed a small NGG board to assist with planning and strategy and our thanks go to Elisabeth Simpson, Callum Maxwell and Rocio who have all agreed to be part of it. In this 2016 edition of the Review, we have decided to celebrate five years of NGG activity. In the coming pages, we hope to give you a flavour of the many events, gatherings and ideas that have defined our journey so far, from the early days of our initial London events and homemade website to the international, media and tech savvy operation we have become!

Finally, a big welcome to our two new interns, Isobel Ransome, who recently graduated from Oxford with a BA in Arabic and Islamic Studies and Amy Whight, who was awarded an MA from SOAS in International Studies and Diplomacy. The Internship programme has proved to be a huge success and we are delighted that another two bright and creative team members have joined the Society.



Oliver Blake
NGG Chairman, UK



Ma'an Al Rawahi
NGG Chairman, Oman



It has been another busy year for the New Generation Group with numerous events in London and Muscat.

NGG EVENTS THROUGHOUT THE YEARS, UK AND OMAN HISTORY OF EVENTS BY THE NGG

2012

- **JUNE** The Anglo-Omani Society hosted its first NGG photo exhibition on Thursday 21st June. We were treated to some incredible photos captured by Khalil Al Zadjali from the Royal Cavalry performances in the UK.
- **SEPTEMBER** The New Generation Group had the pleasure of meeting Captain Saleh Al Jabri, who gave an excellent talk on his historic voyage from Muscat to Singapore.



- **DECEMBER** The NGG hosted a relaxed evening of refreshments, mince pies and an incredible Omani sculpture by Domenica de Ferranti.



2013

- **FEBRUARY** On their first Academy Weekend of the new term, five Omani Sandhurst Officer Cadets visited Sackville Street with Brigadier Tamtami, Military Attaché for the Sultanate of Oman.



- **MARCH** Aisha Mazin Stoby, presented her work on Contemporary Omani Art to the NGG.
- **OCTOBER** In partnership with Leighton House we offered members the opportunity to 'walk and talk' through the rooms of Leighton House with Dillwyn Smith and Aisha Mazin Stoby, reflecting on Omani contemporary creative culture inspired by the intervention of artworks in the house.



Aisha Mazin Stoby presentation on Contemporary Omani Art.

- **SEPTEMBER** The NGG hosted its very own Majlis at the Anglo-Omani Society in London.
- **NOVEMBER** The NGG hosted a social dedicated to celebrating the Christmas season.

2014

- **FEBRUARY** Dr Cadden Hunter, BBC producer of Wild Arabia spoke about filming in Oman.



Oliver Blake introduces Dr Cadden Hunter, BBC producer of Wild Arabia.

- MARCH** The New Generation Group were proud to partner with the Royal Geographical Society and to enjoy the pleasure of a private viewing of 'Oman's Natural Heritage' exhibition.



Royal Geographical Society.



BES Exhibition.

- APRIL** The NGG hosted a relaxed evening with a selection of photographs and audio visuals by the British Exploring Society team 2014.
- APRIL** Members of the New Generation Group in Oman had an inspirational talk in Muscat from Raoul Restucci, Managing Director of Petroleum Development Oman.



NGG members with Raoul Restucci in Oman.

- **JUNE** After launching NGG Oman, we held an inaugural New Generation Group event June 2014, Muscat. A fantastic gathering of young and dynamic Omani men and women from across the public and private sectors met for an informal evening of networking.



Oliver Blake starts proceedings at the Bank Muscat event.

- **JUNE** NGG Oman were privileged to have an afternoon with the Chief Operating Officer of Bank Muscat, Ahmed Al Abri. Discussing the evolution of banking in Oman and Bank Muscat's own journey, the NGG were given informative insights into current market opportunities and challenges.



An afternoon with Ahmed Al Abri, Operating Officer of Bank Muscat.

- **NOVEMBER** The NGG marked the Omani National Day with a celebration in London.
- **SEPTEMBER** The NGG UK opened its new season of talks with a lecture by our NGG Chairman, Oliver Blake.
- **SEPTEMBER** NGG Oman met with Wael Al Lawati, CEO of Omran. The board had a fascinating hour learning about Omran's current and horizon projects and hugely valued the chance to understand more about the challenges and opportunities in this strategically critical sector.

2015

- **FEBRUARY** Alexander Stewart gave a lecture on the Middle Eastern sugar trade, focusing on its continued importance in the modern world and examining how the Middle East continues to play a major role in the global trade of this commodity.
- **MAY** Networking event on Wednesday 27th May, in the presence of HH Sayyid Faisal bin Turki Al Said, Trust International, in Oman.



- **JUNE** The NGG hosted a joint event with Chatham House's Jane Kinninmont on the political, social and economic development of the Gulf monarchies.

- **SEPTEMBER** On September 9th the New Generation Group of the Anglo-Omani Society hosted motor racing Champion Ahmad Al Harthy in a fantastically well received event in London.



- **NOVEMBER** Members of the New Generation Group were honoured to speak with Caitlin Kennedy, Deputy Director of The Prince's Trust International (PTI).



Caitlin Kennedy, Deputy Director of The Prince's Trust.

2016

- **FEBRUARY** The NGG were delighted to be joined by Omani sailor Mohsin Al Busaidi, the first Arab to sail non-stop around the world. He was joined by David Graham, CEO of Oman Sail at this event in Sackville Street.
- **MAY** We were honoured to be joined by HE Mohsin Al Balushi, an Advisor to the Ministry of Commerce and Industry and Chairman of Oman International Exhibition Centre. His talk entitled 'The Sultanate of Oman in the World Expo' explored the importance of such an event in showcasing Oman's natural beauty, opportunities and main attractions.



Omani sailor Mohsin Al Busaidi presentation.

NEW GENERATION GROUP OMAN

ARTICLE BY SHEIKH MA'AN HAMED AL RAWAHI

This report covers the activities and projects carried out by NGG-Oman board members since its inauguration in 2014.



This ranges from networking events and strategic talks, to facilitating the induction of entrepreneur programmes for the Omani youth, links between the younger generations of both countries and ways to bridge the gap between the private and public sectors across the Sultanate.

Among our recent successes is the creation of a comprehensive annual review. NGG-Oman board members have, through this, reviewed the progress and the objectives of the group, with a particular aim to identify improvement opportunities. This will take place annually to evaluate NGG-Oman's planned activities. Our most recent workshop was successful in creating two teams tasked to follow-up NGG-Oman's programmes: The Mosaic Programme and SME Development.

The Mosaic Programme will work in tandem with the Sultanate's vision to generate job opportunities for the increasing youth population, forming a generation of job creators rather than job seekers. To get the Programme started there was a meeting with the Mosaic team in the UK, where Oliver Blake was briefed on the basic principles and objectives of the Programme. This was followed by discussions among the NGG-Oman board members during the annual review on how to progress. The Programme was showcased to HE Sayyid Badr, who gave his support and enthusiasm for the idea and assisted logistically with approaching the Ministry of Education (MoE). Encouragingly, the MoE expressed strong interest, alongside that of HE Sayyid Badr and the Omani-British Joint Working Group. We are



currently awaiting an official approval from the MoE to implement the Programme and approach the private sector for funding.

We developed the SME in coordination with Oman Railway, with a view to implementing British best practice in Oman. A meeting took place with the CEO of Oman Railway, where we discussed ways in which the Sultanate can import these key ideas that have proven to be fruitful. As the railway project in Oman has currently been put on hold until further notice, the SME team will be brainstorming on how to venture into other areas.

NGG-Oman has hosted and partaken in a variety of events over the last two years, all with the aim of bringing together young Omanis to celebrate the ties between the UK and Oman. One such event was the 40th Anniversary of the Society at the beginning of this year. It was a chance for some of our members from Oman to attend the Reception at Lancaster House, celebrating His Majesty's founding of the Society. Prince Charles' speech emphasised the importance of continuing the exceptional relations between both countries into future generations as well as acknowledging the principles and progress of the Mosaic Programme in the Sultanate.

Prince Charles' speech emphasised the importance of continuing the exceptional relation that both countries enjoy into future generations as well as acknowledging the principles and progress of the Mosaic Programme in the Sultanate.

We have also had the pleasure of hearing from some fantastic speakers, as well as holding networking events for our members. Examples of such talks have are hearing from Raoul Restucci, Managing Director of Petroleum Development Oman and Wael Al Lawati, CEO of Omran. Additionally, we have been able to organise social gatherings, including bringing NGG members together for Iftar in order to celebrate Ramadhan in a casual setting to

discuss NGG issues informally. This is something we hope to see more of in the future.

It has been an exhilarating few years for NGG-Oman, having expanded our network to include more than 200 young people from around Oman. You can find the latest news from NGG-Oman on the website and on social media. Our upcoming events for the rest of 2016 are as follows:

- BP President Oman to present in the next networking event in September.
- Zahir Al-Bahlani Charity Wing: Al-Bahlani was the first participant from the military sector (COSSAF) in the NGG-Oman Delegation in 2013; he sadly passed away suddenly two years ago. In honour of his role, participation and memory, the team would like to initiate a programme where we participate/ coordinate with other local Omani charities.
- NGG-Oman is in the process of creating strategic partnerships/collaboration with Sultan Qaboos University, Al-Rafd Fund, Oman Oil Company, British Council, National Youth Commission, to name but a few, to strengthen the role of the group and at the same time promote its initiatives. ■

NGG DELEGATIONS 2013-2015

We launched our first NGG Delegation in 2013, two years after we had inaugurated the New Generation Group.

We were inspired by those senior members of both our countries' political, military, diplomatic and commercial sectors who have been close friends for over 40 years and hoped to replicate that special friendship within our younger generations.

In a world that is increasingly experienced via virtual communication and defined by speed and efficiency, we aspired to carve out some quality space and time for young Omani and British high flyers to get to know one another. We wanted to slow life down for a few days so that we could exchange knowledge, compare notes, debate ideas and generally learn more about each other – our

cultures, opinions and thoughts. And so the NGG annual Delegation was born.

In 2013, the UK delegates travelled to Oman and were treated to an incredible week of meetings and experiences. Amongst many senior ministers, we were addressed by the HE Sayyid Badr al Busaidi on that first trip and he continues to be a great supporter and believer in our activity and for that, the NGG is hugely grateful to him. The Delegation travelled up into the Jebel al Akhdhar mountains, spent a night in the desert under the stars and explored life in Oman from the Grand Mosque to the Muttrah souk. Most had never been to the Sultanate and with this visit, a new love and passion was born.





Later that year, the Omani delegates joined us in London during a delightfully sunny summer. We were hosted in the House of Lords for tea and scones, had meetings at No. 10 Downing Street, visited the FCO and marvelled at the Google Campus and Shell HQ amongst many other appointments. During some down time, we floated down the river to Henry VIII's Hampton Court Palace, picnicked in the grounds and later visited the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst.

The seed was planted and an idea was born: knowledge exchange through friendship – an annual NGG Delegation alternating between Oman and the UK. We have continued to deliver on this idea and in 2014, Oxford University hosted our gathering in the historical buildings of Pembroke College. Over three days we explored the idea of East African commercial development and the inherent opportunities for Oman given the country's historical ties. We also





Mona Al Said and HE Sayyid Badr al-Busaidi were both able to attend amongst many other ministers and dignitaries.

We have just hosted the 2016 Delegation in Corpus Christi College, Cambridge – a special few days that brought our Omani and British friends together once again. All of the event's details and photos are covered in the pages that follow – another wonderful experience with truly great people.

managed to visit the Churchill Family seat and finished up with a fantastic dinner for 80 held in the Great Hall.

In 2015, the Delegation met at the Shangri-La Resort in Muscat – a stunning setting, ideal for spending quality time together. We addressed the theme of Oman's increasing role as a Gateway to Asia – both commercially and logistically and were treated to some phenomenal speakers covering economics, diplomacy and trade. Once again, we were able to conclude the conference with a dinner, this time held in the beautiful hotel grounds. We were delighted that HH Sayyida





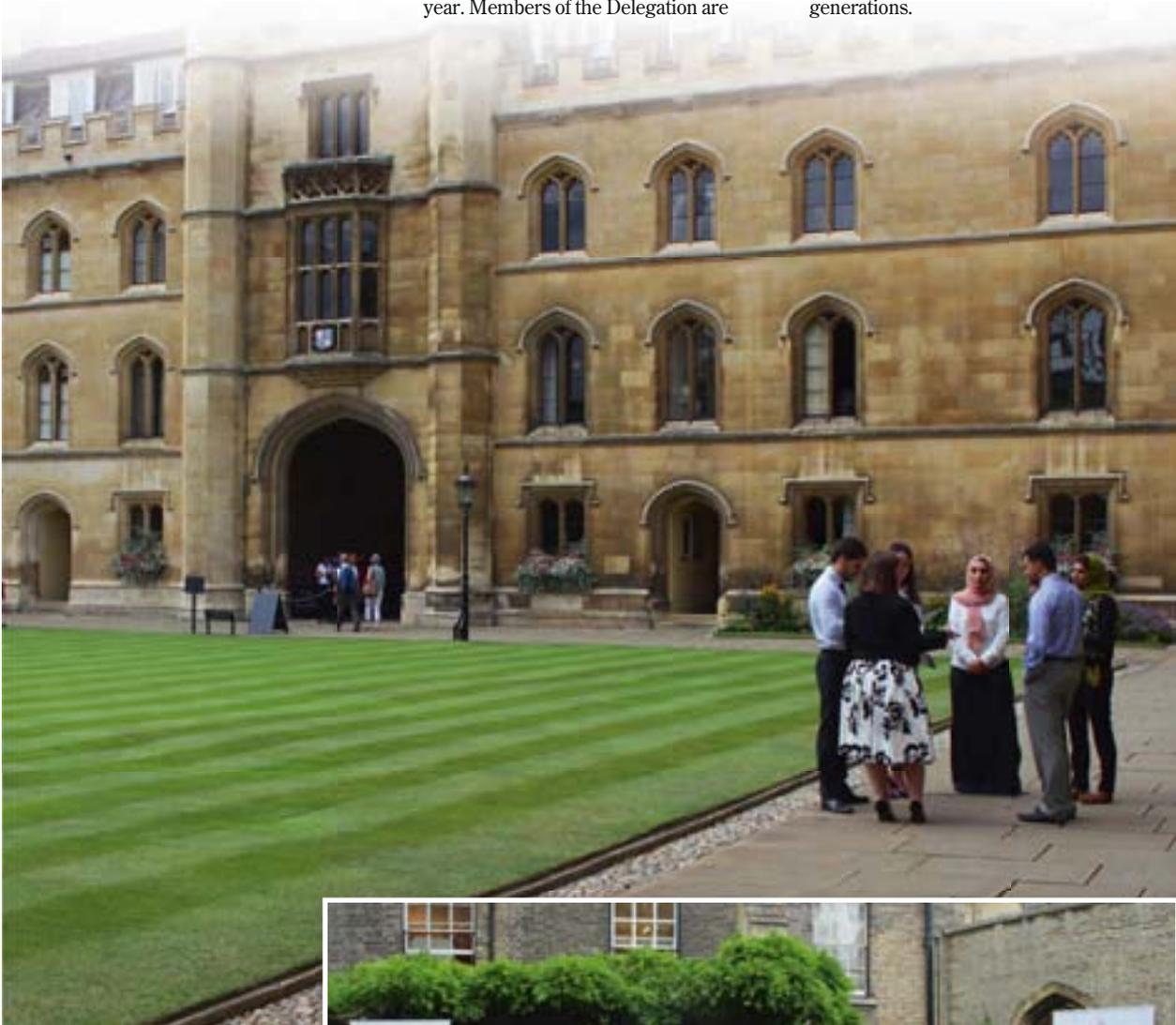
The NGG journey continues and we are always looking for new and innovative ways to bring our younger generations together. In a world that is increasingly congested and contested, more cooperation, understanding and exchange has to be the way forward.



NGG DELEGATION 2016

The NGG Delegation was inaugurated in 2013 as a means of building bridges between high flyers in both our countries' public and private sectors. 2016 marks our fifth annual NGG Delegation which we hosted in Corpus Christi, Cambridge this year. Members of the Delegation are

drawn from a wide spectrum of organisations and during meetings with senior advisors, ministers, CEOs, academics and board members, they are able to explore enhanced Anglo-Omani cooperation amongst our younger generations.



The importance of communication in Oman's diversifying economy



After some extremely interesting and enlightening conversations with our Al-Jil Al-Jadid board in Muscat, the theme of this year's Delegation was the Importance of Communication in Oman's Diversifying Economy. As a result of the oil price decline, economic policies and commercial practices are being reviewed and reformed across the region. Communication strategy and outreach have been identified as vital areas for growth in both Oman's public and private sectors and this delegation sought to explore best practice from some of the UK's top political, corporate and financial advisors.



Order of Topics	Speaker	Job Title
THURSDAY 28th JULY		
Introduction	Mr Oliver Blake	Chairman-UK, New Generation Group
Economic Reform and Communication	Mr Oliver Dowden	CBE, MP for Hertsmere
Communicating in the Million Channel Universe: Media Change in a Digitally Connected World	Dr Chris Westcott	Visiting Senior Research Fellow, Policy Institute, King's College London and recently Director of BBC Monitoring
The Challenge of Communicating to Financial Markets	Mr Nick Turnor	Global Head of Investor Relations HSBC Holdings
Communications and Strategy – Supported and Supporting Roles	Mr Simon Bergman Mr Gerry Osborne	Director World Services, Associate Director, M&C Saatchi, World Services
FRIDAY 29th JULY		
Strategic Communications: Activating Value in the 21st Century Programme	Mr Robert Gardener	Partner at Davidson Ryan Dore
Communications from the Perspective of a Multinational Energy Company	Mr Ilya Bourtman	Vice-President, Communications and External Affairs, BP
Joined up Government Messaging and Communications	Mr Alex Aiken	Executive Director Government Communications, Prime Minister's Office and Cabinet Office Communications
Looking Ahead to a New Era of Omani Communications	Professor Tim Evans MBE	Professor of Business and Political Economy, Middlesex University London
Closing Remarks	Sheikh Ma'an Hamad Al Rawahi	Chairman – Oman, New Generation Group





PROFILE OF DELEGATES

UK DELEGATES

Oliver Blake, Director, Blake Evans & Co and Chairman, NGG UK.

Tom Robinson, LD Squadron Leader, British Army.

Thomas Klemm, Director, Global Corporate Risk, HSBC Holdings.

James De Savary, Entrepreneur, Napier Parking.

Alexander Stewart, Director, Abercore.

Jane Kinninmont, Deputy Head and Senior Research Fellow, MENA Programme, Chatham House.

Patrick Forbes, CEO, Forbes Associates.

Callum Maxwell, Master in International Security, Science Po.

Elisabeth Simpson, Private Banking Assistant – Middle East, Coutts.

Nicola Iles, Senior Research and Project Officer (International), Clarence House.

Youssef Boulos, Partner, Trowers & Hamlins LLP.

Rocio Corrales Rayon, NGG Board Member.

OMANI DELEGATES

Sheikh Ma'an Hamed Al Rawahi, DGM, Bin Salim Enterprises, and Chairman, NGG Oman.

Nejood Al Khasibi, First Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Mohammed Al Ghareebi, In-Country Value Manager, Petroleum Development Oman (PDO).

Moatasim Al Balushi, Corporate Communications Manager, State General Reserve Fund (SGRF).

Lamya Harub, PhD Candidate, King's College London.

Saleh Al Rawahi, Director of Commercial and Economic Affairs, Oman Embassy, Beijing.

Abdullah Al Ajmi, Senior Translator and Interpreter, Sultan Qaboos Higher Centre for Culture and Science.

Shabib Al Maamari, Communications & External Affairs Team Manager, BP Oman.

Ibrahim Al Nadhairi, General Manager – Fleet Management and Shipbuilding Projects, Oman Shipping Company.

Mohammed Al Issaei, First Follow-up Administrator, Office of the Chief of Royal Protocol, Diwan of Royal Court.

Nawal Khalid Ahmed, HR Senior Specialist, Telecommunication Regulatory Authority.

Hadil Al Moosa, PHD Candidate, University of Bedfordshire.

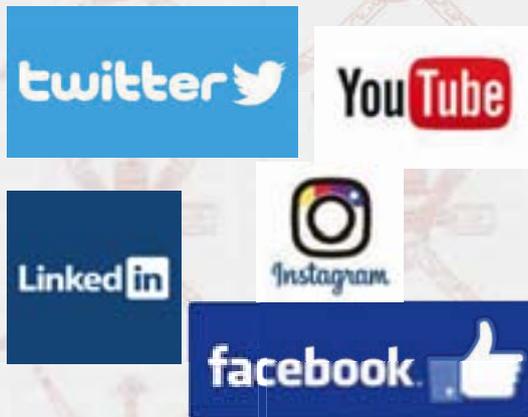




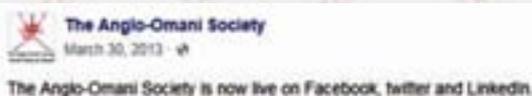
The Society is hugely grateful to all of our speakers and sponsors – BP, Sabco, Amouage and David McCarty. I hope you enjoy browsing highlights from our previous Delegations held in London, Muscat, Oxford and most recently Cambridge.

SOCIAL MEDIA

The Anglo-Omani Society on Social Media, 2013—2016



On 30th March, 2013, the New Generation Group launched its own website, and it was through the Group that The Anglo-Omani Society became active on social media. Since then its Facebook, Twitter and Youtube channels have attracted more and more attention. There have been a great number of benefits from using these channels, including raising awareness of Omani culture, UK-Oman relations and a promotion of events, to name a few. It has become an integral part of not just the NGG but also the Society generally.



62% of our followers on Twitter are based in Oman.

Arabic is our top language on Twitter, with 69% of our followers using Arabic.

مرحبا!

English is more commonly used on our FB with over 2300 English speakers being reached at one time.



In July 2016 we launched the AOS Instagram account 'Britomani' follow us to see the very best photos and news from Oman !

Our Top Tweet on Twitter!
Earning 11000 impressions!

Top Tweet earned 11K impressions
NGG Chairmen meet HH Sayyid Haitham bin Tariq Al Said in #London aoc-ngg.com/2015/08/hhsayy... #future #Oman #friendship pic.twitter.com/KUmccKOVLe



The NGG attracts a great many young people by the successful use of social media.

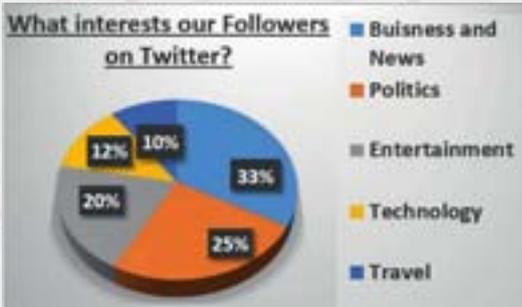
Our Twitter account in numbers:

TWEETS	FOLLOWING	FOLLOWERS	LIKES
1,303	487	2,255	678

Over 1150 individuals have liked The Anglo-Omani Society on Facebook!



This post was our best received on FB with an incredible 21,271 people engaging!



Business tweets have the highest views on twitter!

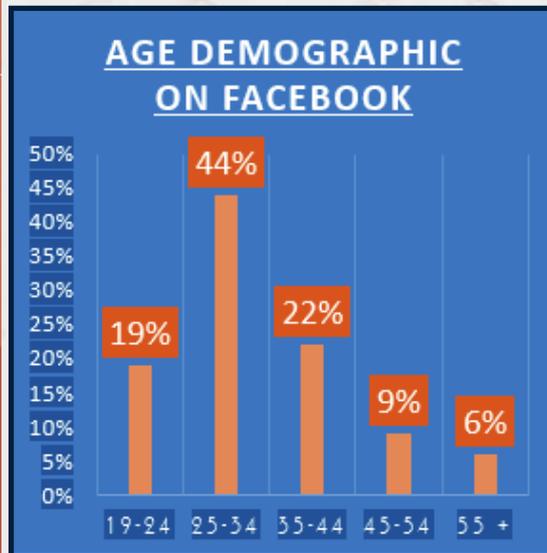


This post got 333 likes!

This is our most viewed video on YouTube with 567 Views!



Our most popular age group is 25–34 year olds!



OMANI STUDENTS UK

The Anglo-Omani Society (AOS) has established very strong ties with Omani students in the United Kingdom during the past few years whose numbers have increased since the establishment of the Omani Students' Advisory Council in UK (OSAC), formerly known as Omani Students' Union in UK (OSU).

Oman National Day celebrations in Leeds, 2013, witnessed the AOS's first ever participation, when its delegate introduced the Society's activities and events during OSAC-UK meeting with the chairmen of all Omani students' societies in UK. This opened new doors to OSAC administration, as well as many students' societies to take advantage of the valuable opportunities that AOS provides to Omani students in UK. Since then, AOS has become an essential partner in most of the major events that are organised under OSAC's umbrella and has been hosted by different Omani students' societies around UK. The Society supports Omani students in the United Kingdom

through various strategies which vary, from inviting them to attend NGG lectures and events, providing them with awareness about training and jobs opportunities in Oman and the UK, through to its relationships with a range of firms and to hosting students' lectures for the Omani Student Society in London (OSSL).

The Anglo-Omani Society has been offering OSAC great chances to promote its annual activities. Furthermore, the Society took part in Oman National Day celebrations in Manchester and presented its activities in the Oman Civilization Exhibition. In 2015, AOS played a crucial role in organising Oman Open Day in Loughborough. It

helped Loughborough Omani Students' Society to communicate with firms in Oman thanks to the Society's Project Manager, Miss Rocio Corrales. The event attracted more than 400 students from across the UK and three companies presented their profiles and job opportunities to the students. In June 2015, AOS provided another opportunity to promote OSAC activities in its annual magazine. In addition, it participated in Oman National Day celebrations in Swansea. The latest AOS activity took place on Oman Open Day that was organised and sponsored by OSSL, OSAC and the Omani Cultural Attaché in London. Such cooperation between AOS/





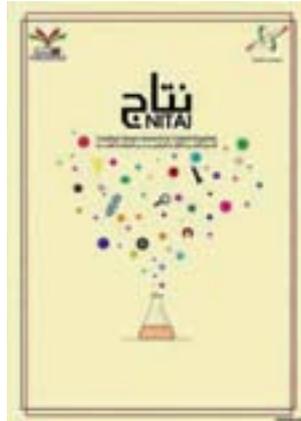
NGG and OSAC and other Omani students' societies in UK has resulted in Omani students' involvement with several activities in Oman and UK. It also established an important panel for OSAC and students' activities by promoting their annual activities in UK.

OSAC-UK ACTIVITIES IN 2016

In February 2016, the Omani Students' Society in London (OSSL) hosted Oman Open Day in Brunel University under the auspices of His Excellency Sheikh Abdul Aziz bin Zahir Al Hinai, the Sultanate's Ambassador in the United Kingdom, and Julia Buckingham, Vice-President of Brunel University. The event was organised in cooperation with OSAC-UK and was sponsored by the Cultural Attaché of Oman in London. There were three major events during the open day; the Omani exhibition, students' projects exhibition and graduation ceremony. The Omani exhibition included a presentation of the first version of the OSAC-UK journal (Nitaj) and another corner for AOS. The official site of OSAC, as well as the launch of the Omani students' guide took place at the exhibition. The students' project exhibition consisted of



17 scientific projects conducted by undergraduate and postgraduate students. Dawood Al Mahrooqi, PhD student in Petroleum Engineering at Imperial College, won the Best Project Award. Mohammed Al-Awfi from the University of Surrey won second place, while Juma Al-Nahdi, an undergraduate in Mechanical Engineering at Liverpool University won the third best project.



The closing ceremony began with a speech by Rashid Al Junaibi, Chairman of OSSL, and was followed by two other speeches by the Vice-President of Brunel University and Sheikh Abdul Aziz bin Zaher Al Hinai. Sheikh Al Hinai's speech focused on the importance of the scholarship and its enormous benefits for the recipients' futures. He concluded his speech by congratulating the graduates on this occasion, wishing them a lifetime of wonderful experiences and success. The event was sealed by honouring 239 graduates who will be completing their academic degrees this year.



After the success of the first issue of the OSAC scientific journal, the council has started its preparations for publishing the second version of Nitaj. OSAC's scientific committee released the first issue during the Oman National Day celebrations in Swansea last year. It is worth mentioning that Nitaj was established by OSAC in 2014 and its editorial members are the same members of OSAC's scientific committee. Moreover, the committee consisted of 10 Omani postgraduate students who study a range of majors in different British universities. ■



INTERNSHIP PROGRAMME

Over the last few years since launching the Internship Programme in 2014, we have seen a vast array of talented young people applying for the position of Intern with the Society.

The programme was an initiative led by Ollie Blake as a way to introduce highly gifted graduates to the Society, giving them the opportunity to pursue an area of interest on Oman whilst learning valuable skills for the future.

It is a highly competitive process that attracts graduates from the UK's best institutions such as KCL, SOAS, Oxford, Cambridge and Edinburgh, all competing for the prestigious position. Graduates are attracted to the role due to its dynamism, exposure and flexibility to conduct fieldwork and produce a relevant piece of work, which is unique to this Internship Programme.

From a day-to-day basis, Interns have assisted and lead in projects, engaging in the work of the Society. These have included the Oral History Project, the Society's Oman Library, social media and contribution to the organisation of events, including monthly lectures, the Annual Lunch and the Reception to celebrate the AOS' 40th Anniversary. The individual

projects conducted by our Interns have included: the Evolution of British-Omani Relations, Omanisation, Expressions of Interfaith in Oman, Dynamics of the Oil Sector and Higher Education. All of these were a superb portrayal of their talents, unique style and interests.

All Interns are offered the opportunity to pursue their research projects in Oman, as part of a week-long trip to the country to conduct interviews and experience the society and culture of the Omanis. These trips have proved to be a huge success as well as a rewarding experience for Interns after their hard work at the Society for six months. In August we welcomed two new Interns, Amy and Isobel, from whom we are anticipating great things over the next few months.

The following are testimonials from three Interns, Callum, Chloe and Manar. Please read on to find out about their experiences and the projects they pursued. Please also visit our website for more information on the Internships over the last five years.



INTERNSHIP AND RESEARCH TRIP

BY CALLUM MAXWELL

My internship with the Anglo-Omani Society, from August 2015 until January this year, was built on an already close relationship with Oman, having completed the Gap Year Scheme in late-2012. Yet, whereas the Gap Year Scheme was exciting and engaging due to the cultural, linguistic and travel opportunities it offered, the internship allowed me an independent experience to pursue my individual interests. On the one hand, this was to provide an online set of interviews with leading figures connected to Oman. On the other, it was to analyse the primary economic, security and diplomatic challenges that face the Sultanate today, and thus the issues that will occupy the next generation of decision-makers. This report is a brief summary of my thoughts on both projects. However, a longer and more extensive account may be found on the Society website.

Firstly, considering my interest in providing online interviews, it was at each of the Society's London-based lectures and events that I filmed my conversations with the speakers. Among many others, this involved discussions with Ahmad Al Harthy, Oman's top racing driver, on his journey through motorsports; Colonel Nigel Knocker, on his experiences of the Dhofar War and Jon Wilks, British Ambassador to Oman, on his impressions of the Sultanate today. In all, I believe that the provision of these exchanges, which can be found on our YouTube page, has allowed the Society to share its work and impact with a wider and more diverse audience.



Secondly, it was during a research trip to Muscat in December 2015 that I was able to investigate the leading challenges that face Oman today, as well as their potential solutions. Economically, in the wake of a sustained period of low oil prices, this addressed the need for the diversification of the Omani economy. As my longer report explains, the hope for such diversification can be represented by the current project at Duqm, through its potential to become a major trading station for international shipping. Nevertheless, several notable commercial figures in Oman stressed to me the need for a more efficient bureaucratic mechanism for trading partners to be attracted. Here, I believe that given Britain's leading expertise in international trade and port management, as well as its significant involvement in the Duqm project, this is a promising opportunity for the Anglo-Omani relationship to support economic diversification in the Sultanate.

Concerning Syria and Iraq, several diplomats identified how no Omani citizens have been documented to have joined jihadist organisations in the Levant, thereby dismissing the security threat of home grown radicalisation.

Moreover, my research addressed the impact of several security-based and diplomatic developments (such as the civil wars in Syria and Yemen, as well as the recent Iranian nuclear deal) – all of which call for an acute assessment of Oman's position in the wider military and political environment. Concerning Syria and Iraq, several diplomats identified how no Omani citizens have been documented to have joined jihadist organisations in the Levant, thereby dismissing the security threat of home grown radicalisation. In fact, it appears that Oman's security concerns with relation to Syria and Iraq rest in its diplomatic ability to facilitate peace-brokering discussion, much as it did with the Iranian deal. Conversely, however, numerous diplomats and military officers argued that Yemen poses a notable security threat to the southern territories of the Sultanate, and as my longer report investigates, must be taken as a far more serious concern for Oman.



COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVES FROM THREE INDUSTRIES IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR

BY CHLOE BROOKS



As an Intern at the Anglo-Omani Society, I was able to involve myself in a wide variety of the activities of the Society. One particular experience that stood out was an opportunity to observe a meeting of the Supreme Council of Planning. Central to the discussion was the goal of increasing Oman's reliance on its indigenous workforce, while also pursuing complementary strategies for economic diversification and growth. With the Oman 2020 Vision nearing its completion, this provides an ideal time to examine the progress that has been made towards implementing Omanisation. Interested to learn more, I decided to undertake a research project exploring the achievements

and remaining challenges in the implementation of Oman's labour indigenisation strategies. In September I embarked on a research trip to Oman where I conducted interviews with representatives of leading companies in three of Oman's private sector industries: Bank Muscat, Petroleum Development Oman and Ernst & Young. Each interview provided a unique perspective on the role of major private-sector companies in leading the progress towards Omanisation.

Although the 2020 Vision seeks to create employment opportunities for Omanis in both the public and the private sector, it aims to develop the role of the private sector as the major driving force of the national

economy. Representing a major source of employment, the private sector has traditionally been made up of 91 per cent expatriates. This historical preference for expatriate labour in the private sector reflects discrepancies in the skill level of the Omani work force and the relatively cheaper cost of employing foreign workers. Meanwhile, there is a strongly-entrenched preference among Omanis for employment in the public sector, with its attractive benefits packages, shorter working hours, and favourable holiday leave and retirement policies.

This presents a considerable set of challenges to the implementation of Omanisation strategies, particularly for the



private sector. However, an approach to Omanisation which emphasises strong co-ordination between the government and private companies within each industry has led to promising new developments. While each industry faces widely different challenges and constraints in implementing Omanisation, human resource management has been identified across the board as the cornerstone of a successful Omanisation strategy. Extensive investment into training programmes by leading private-sector companies within each industry has improved the qualifications and competitiveness of the Omani workforce, and has helped to combat historical preferences towards public-sector employment. Through allocating considerable resources to learning and development, companies such as Bank Muscat and Petroleum Development Oman are confronting the existing skills gap

between the qualifications achieved through higher education, and the standards required by the industry. This skills gap has represented a major obstacle to Omanisation.

Extensive investment into training programmes by leading private-sector companies within each industry has improved the qualifications and competitiveness of the Omani workforce

Though there are short-term trade-offs associated with such a high level of investment into human resources, these companies envision themselves as not only developing their own talent, but taking on a leading role in building the national labour force. Omani workers trained by these leading companies often become highly sought after by smaller companies and new players in the industry. These are among many indicators of progress which suggest that the Vision 2020 has laid a substantial foundation for future success. Leading private companies have demonstrated the capacity and vision to take a leading role in developing the competitiveness of the Omani labour force. In turn, this has resulted in increased visibility of opportunities for Omanis in the private sector.

To read Chloe's full report please see the NGG website.

REFLECTION ON MY EXPERIENCE ABROAD

BY MANAR AL BUSAIDI

'What is Oman?', 'Where is that?' These are the questions every Omani scholar studying abroad would have inevitably faced at some point at the start of their journey out of Oman. As sad a fact that is, it is true, and I think that we, as scholars, consider it our responsibility to convey the image of what a lovely country Oman is, to whatever part of the world we are studying in.

One of the uncountable privileges we get as Omanis is the opportunity to pursue our higher education abroad, as the country invests greatly in its youth and considers them as the main infrastructure for ultimate development. I can gratefully say that I am lucky to be one of the many Omanis who was offered the opportunity to study here in the UK and to acquire such an experience.

I am an International Scholar under the Takatuf Scholarship Programme which is a programme that spans up to six years of studying aboard. In this programme's scheme, we spend the first two years in a preparatory boarding school assigned to us and then we move on to apply to a University of our choice, in whichever part of the world, studying the field which interests us. I studied my 'A' Levels in Millfield Senior School in Somerset and am now doing my first year as a university student studying Chemical Engineering at University College London.

The transition through boarding school was a great experience as it allowed me to gain independence gradually, having come from a very protective environment in Oman where parents provide everything for their children. I was still bound to a restricted full day schedule throughout the week so there





was a gradual step to freedom there which prepared me for university life. It was a great chance for meeting new people who excel in various fields and create a large network which will add value to my country in the future. Boarding school was a chance to try out a new lifestyle with different activities and step out of my comfort zone, along with

the academic development in preparation for university. We always talk of skills such as leadership, teamwork, critical thinking, etc. but it's not until you try it in life and apply it unconsciously that you have truly acquired it. Being in a boarding house and participating in many enriching activities such as lectures, think tanks, sports and

community service, honed those skills greatly and developed them exponentially.

I then progressed into my first year at university where I chose to do Chemical Engineering after realising the great interest I had in the subject during my two years in boarding school. This was an even more exciting experience as a larger mixture of cultures, people and interests are in one place, and being in London enhanced that even more. I can say that I have become more independent and am enjoying my course enormously.

I also had the privilege of working here at the Anglo-Omani Society for a month long internship which I enjoyed greatly. Getting to work with lovely people and meeting some of the members was remarkable and getting an insight into the great connections between Oman and the UK have, has been fascinating. I have learned a great deal about my own country being here and every day I feel more proud to call myself an Omani. ■

I have learned a great deal about my own country being here and every day I feel more proud to call myself an Omani.



NGG PARTNERSHIPS

ARTICLE BY OLIVER BLAKE

Over the last five years, the NGG has built a number of partnerships that help to grow our offering and further opportunities for our members.

We inaugurated a link to Chatham House last year and now enjoy frequent exchanges between our two organisations – lectures, seminars and meetings. Throughout our journey, BP have remained our closest corporate supporters and have again this year sponsored the New Generation Group Delegation. Their vision and commitment to the development of Oman’s younger generations is inspirational. We also welcomed the Sabco Group and David McCarty as new NGG sponsors this year and offer our thanks to them both for their commitment. We are currently pursuing an exciting partnership with one of HRH Prince Charles’ charities, Mosaic; building entrepreneurial understanding and excitement amongst younger school

children; we hope to see Mosaic operating in Oman shortly.

Earlier this year, we built on our existing connections to Takatuf and welcomed Manar Al Busaidi as an intern into the Society. Manar did a fantastic job and our particular thanks go to her for all the wonderful work she did helping to build our new website. We continue to strengthen our partnerships with the John Smith Memorial Trust, the Omani Students Society in London, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the Oman Embassy and many other organisations that are doing important work in pursuit of closer cooperation with the Sultanate. Please do get in touch if you would like to learn more about the NGG and how to partner with us. ■





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MY COUNTRY, OMAN

PHOTOS BY MOHAMMED HASSAN





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EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

The Al Ahlam Expo highlights UK educational opportunities for our Omani students

In March this year, The Al Nimr Expo, in association with Al Ahlam Higher Education Services, Oman's leading UK Student Counselling agency which is licensed by The Ministry of Higher Education, hosted the Al Ahlam UK Education Expo. The Expo took place on March 21-22 at The InterContinental, Muscat, and on March 23-24 at The Hilton Salalah Resort. It was also supported by UK Trade and Investment.

For the 2016 issue of The Anglo-Omani Review, we invited the attendees of the Expo, to advertise for the first time within its pages and we are grateful to those who have responded. We hope to be able to include further coverage for educational opportunities in our ongoing issues of The Review.

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SWANSEA UNIVERSITY

ARTICLE BY IBRAHIM AL SATAMI
MSC MANAGEMENT, SWANSEA UNIVERSITY

My experience as an international student at Swansea University.

Studying abroad is about having new experiences, so do not be afraid to explore, be inquisitive, get out of your comfort zone and do things you would not necessarily try to do at home. I had always wanted to study abroad because the English language was so dear to me and I wanted to get to know other cultures. I did a lot of research before selecting the Master's course in Management at Swansea University. I spoke with former students and was constantly in touch with the staff in the School of Management to find out more information about the course. I got good feedback from both the staff and previous students, which helped me a lot in making my decision to pursue my Master's at Swansea University.

Coming to the UK and studying at Swansea University was the most wonderful decision I have ever made in my life. From the very first few days, I felt it was an overwhelmingly friendly environment. The staff, local people and the students are so friendly that you never feel homesick. You can make friends from all over the world and learn about their culture.

I am lucky enough to have a scholarship from the government of Oman and therefore I do not have to pay tuition fees as my sponsor does that. As a result, I decided to work hard in order to be one of those first class students to fly the flag of my country and serve the country after the end of the Master's study, to pay back even a small part of the government's unconditional support.

WHY I CHOSE SWANSEA UNIVERSITY

When I was selecting universities, I did a lot of research because I imagined it wouldn't be easy to get into a good University which taught the subject I am interested in. The most important thing was the course and what we would learn.

The next thing I looked at was facilities, especially because I study a course that has a lot to do with computers for the research of my assignments, presentations etc., and I wanted a University that could offer me that. I got into five different courses at different universities and I ended up picking Swansea because of the friendly staff and its location. Also, as a Muslim student, I was looking for a city where I could practise my religion in a safe environment and that is what I found in Swansea as it has two mosques with one of them is located inside the campus.

LIVING WITH A LOCAL FAMILY

I came to Swansea and my aims were to be more confident while speaking in English and to expand my knowledge in the path I have chosen. Therefore, during my time in Swansea, I lived with a local family in order to learn their culture, as well as to improve my communication skills. They were very friendly toward me and they treated me as one of their sons. Their house was located near the University, which was great being so close to lectures. We had a great time

and we enjoyed being together. I really recommend students who want to improve their communication skills to stay with local families, which can be easily found through the accommodation's company in Swansea, 'Swansea homestay'.



STUDYING ENGLISH IN SWANSEA UNIVERSITY (PRE-SESSIONAL COURSES)

Before the pre-sessional course, I studied English in my previous University in Oman and I knew how to speak English. However, I had never experienced as long a time learning academic English as I did in the Pre-Sessional course, which I believe was essential to have a high English level and be able to go to a University in the UK. The course I studied is known as 'Academic Skills for Business Pre-

sessional' (ASBP) and takes place in ELTS which is part of Swansea University. The focus of this course is to prepare students for their academic studies by teaching them how to write an academic work, academic presentations, reading skills, how to use references etc. The pre-sessional course was an amazing experience where I developed my academic English skills and I learned how to write excellent essays. The tutors were absolutely great, always very friendly and helpful. They gave us all the necessary support to make sure that all the students

were going to finish the course prepared for the University's challenges. I am so lucky to have met with great tutors and a great University. I really recommend the course to everyone. It was an excellent experience of learning Academic English in a creative way, using the internet, interactive boards and computer labs.

DIFFICULTIES I HAVE FACED DURING MY STUDIES IN THE UK

The first days were difficult for me as I came from a different culture to the one I experienced in UK. In addition, the weather in UK is different and always rainy. Lectures are very intensive and you are required to do a lot more group work which I am not used to. However, working on group projects with other students also develops good team-working skills for the workplace. In addition, academically the system here is very different to back home. The UK assessment scheme is structured around coursework and final examinations, which count for a lot more than in the US. You have to learn to be more responsible about getting your work done. However, there is also a lot of independent study.

MY EXPERIENCE IN SWANSEA

The thing that surprised me most is how involved with the course I am studying I became, because I did not expect to like it so much. It is the best decision I have ever made and I wish everyone had the same opportunity. I feel that all the eight modules and the dissertation give a good taste of business life and prepare students for the actual professional working environment. The Master's programme also taught me to



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manage my time effectively. In addition to my studies, I play football with friends, go to gym and enjoy my life in the UK. Also, we as Muslim people, can practise our religion in a safe environment in one of the University's two mosques. Now, I am very proud to consider myself a first class student and I have skills that allow me to continue doing my work in efficient ways.

SOME ADVICE FOR STUDENTS CONSIDERING STUDYING ABROAD (SWANSEA CITY)

When you are looking for a University, it is important that you do research and know the reasons for your choice. It is definitely a great experience to study abroad, and there are many people going through the University, so you will never feel alone. I would recommend Swansea because it is a lovely city, it is full of kind people and there is something for everyone here. Moreover, I would recommend Swansea University, particularly The School of Management because the staff are very helpful, the campus boasts a new modern style, the library is very big, there is always space to study or chill. The best advice I can give to prospective students is come to Swansea since it offers everything you could possibly need for a great study abroad experience. Finally, I would say Swansea is a place where you can learn a lot, while having fun at the same time. Hence, Swansea University is one of best options for you if you are planning to study in the UK. ■



THE ANGLO-OMANI SOCIETY

REVIEW

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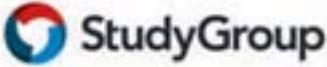
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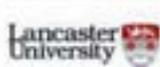
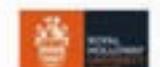
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THE 'ABC' OF OMAN INSECTS

AGRICULTURE, BIODIVERSITY AND CONSERVATION

ARTICLE BY DR. ANDREW POLASZEK

Since 2013, collaborative research on the insects of Oman has been continuing between the Natural History Museum London (NHM), the National Field Research Centre for Environmental Conservation (NFRCEC; Diwan of Royal Court, Oman), Earthwatch UK, Sultan Qaboos University (SQU), the University of Nottingham and National Museum of Wales, Cardiff (NMW).



A new species of ant in the unusual genus *Anochetus* discovered in Hibra Village on the Batinah coast in April 2016.

To date, several thousand insects have been collected, including several species new to science, and many new records for Oman. The majority of specimens have been identified by specialists at the NHM and returned to Oman for permanent deposition at the Oman Natural History Museum. Much of this work has been funded by the Anglo-Omani Society, including preliminary fieldwork in Dhofar in September 2013, training of two Omani students at NHM and NMW in August 2014, and field work in the Hajar Mountains in April 2016.

In September 2013, the Society supported a brief expedition to Dhofar by a joint NHM-NMW team, during which a new species of moth was discovered, as well as many new records of other insects, several of economic importance such as *Diadegma semiclausum* an important natural enemy (parasitoid) of

the major agricultural pest, *Plutella xylorella*, the diamondback moth.

In August of the following year, two Omani students from Sultan Qaboos University, Salma Al Mabsli and Sara Al Ansari, undertook a month of training in field and laboratory entomological techniques, focussing on identification of economically important insects. This training, divided between NHM and NMW was also generously funded by the Society.

From October 2013 until November 2014 Mr Joe Monks, working for the Oman Earthwatch Programme (OEP) in Oman, collected several thousand insect specimens that were brought to the NHM for identification. Because of our developing interest in the insect fauna of Oman, NHM staff and other specialists were able to undertake extensive identification work,



Above L-R: Mostafa Sharaf (ant researcher at King Saud University); Annette Patzelt (Director of Science, Oman Botanic Garden); Andrew Polaszek (Researcher, Natural History Museum, London); Shadia Al Rijeiby (Horticulturalist, Oman Botanic Garden) and Joe Monks (University of Nottingham) at the Oman Botanic Garden.

including “DNA-barcoding” of 130 moth specimens. This investment has resulted in many new occurrence records for the country, including a new species of ant, published recently in *Journal of Natural History* (Sharaf *et al.*, 2016 <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/00222933.2016.1180722>). In addition, a checklist of the specimens collected from the Hajar Mountains in northern Oman during the Earthwatch project will be published imminently. To our knowledge this will be the first checklist of multiple Orders of insects collected from the Oman Hajars since the *Journal of Oman Studies* published its Special Report on Jebel Akhdar in 1977. The checklist will provide further information on the distribution of invertebrate species in the Hajars, along with information on species found in the Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs reserves at Al Saleel National Park and Jebel Qahwan Reserve in the Eastern Hajars.



Joe Monks and Mostafa Sharaf in Hibra Village where the new ant species of *Anochetus* was discovered.

We are also improving the collections and supporting research at the Natural History Museum in Oman, but most importantly, we are helping to raise the profile of insect research in Oman



Lepisiota omanensis a new species of ant collected from Jebel Qahwan by Joe Monks.

The new ant species was recognised by a specialist visiting the NHM, Dr Mostafa Sharaf from King Saud University, Riyadh, and a type specimen has been deposited in the Oman Natural History Museum. Fieldwork in the Hajar Mountains funded by the Society in April 2016 has resulted in a further two new ant species and several new species records for Oman. During this fieldwork I gave a lecture to staff and students of Sultan Qaboos University which was well attended.

One very unusual new species in the genus *Anochetus* will be formally described during 2016, and named in honour of Dr Annette Patzelt, Director of Science at the Oman Botanic Garden. The species was

collected by Dr Sharaf in a date plantation in the village of Hibra in the Batinah Coastal Region. Our long term ambition is to produce a monograph of the ants of Oman.

Our entomological research has several aims. As the title of this article suggests, many insects are of major importance to agriculture in Oman. I am currently working with Dr Salim Al-Khatiri on an important parasitoid wasp, natural enemy of a caterpillar pest of pomegranates. Enhancing the activity of such natural enemies can lead to important reductions in the use of environmentally damaging pesticides. The insect biodiversity of Oman, indeed of much of the Arabian Peninsula, is still little-known, although extensive research on the UAE

fauna has been undertaken recently. There is no question that the insect fauna of Oman must be richer and more diverse than in most of the remainder of the Peninsula, with the exception of Yemen. We hope that these small projects are just the beginning of a major effort to discover and describe Oman's wealth of arthropod biodiversity. Conservation can only be carried out successfully if we know what we are conserving. Many microscopic insects are of primary importance to the well-being of both our natural and modified environments – they have been called “the little things that run the world”. By undertaking these studies we are training Omani students and technicians, and fostering collaboration with Omani scientists, in universities and national research centres. We are also improving the collections and supporting research at the Natural History Museum in Oman, but most importantly, we are helping to raise the profile of insect research in Oman, and its importance to so many aspects of life.

I would like to thank the following for facilitating our work in Oman: Saif Rashid Al Shaqsi (CEO, National Field Research Centre for Environmental Conservation); Ali Al Wahaibi and Ali Al Raeesi (Sultan Qaboos University); Annette Patzelt, Shadia Al Rijeiby, Nasser Al Rashedi and Saif Al-Hatmi, (Oman Botanic Garden); Thuraya Said Al Sariri (Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs); Azzah Ahmed Al-Jabri (Oman Natural History Museum); and finally the Anglo-Omani Society for financial support. ■



Reportedly the oldest and largest *Juniperus excelsa* in Oman, at Jebel Akhdar.

ANGLO-OMANI LUNCHEON

The Annual Luncheon was held in our by now accustomed venue – The Army and Navy Club – courtesy of our Deputy Chairman Colonel Nigel Knocker, in spite of the fact that sadly he was unable to attend himself.

Nonetheless, we were, as usual, made most welcome with around 100 members and guests attending including a strong contingent from the Oman Embassy led by Ahmed Al Kathairi representing the Ambassador. We were also joined by representatives from the GCC Nations and the FCO.

The new format with the pre-lunch drinks and the table wines being included in the package made for an easy transition into the Luncheon where the seating around a series of round tables enabled groups of friends and contemporaries to

gather to talk of old times and to meet the various Guests and members of the Oman Embassy staff.

After the loyal toasts Mr Neil Bush from the FCO addressed the assembled company and stressed in glowing terms the value and importance of the relationship between our two nations. He also mentioned the close affinity between His Majesty The Sultan and Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth, especially considering that at the time, Her Majesty The Queen was approaching her 90th year.

We now look forward to repeating the event in October 2016. ■





THE SOCIETY GRANT SCHEME

ARTICLE BY RICHARD OWENS



Richard with friend Mussallem at a family home in the Qara mountains, Dhofar.

One of the Society's principal charitable objects is the provision of funding to UK and Omani nationals and organisations through a grants scheme for educational, cultural and environmental projects. £125,000 was budgeted for the last financial year and awarded in grants during the course of the year. This figure has been increased to £150,000 for the 2016/17 year.

The Society continues to support its two well-established student programmes, at the Sultan's School, primarily for UK gap-year students, and at the Sultan Qaboos College for Teaching Arabic to Non-Native Speakers at Manah, for under-graduate and graduate students. The Society has also made grants during the last year to:

- Ten scholars from the Sultan's School to attend International Baccalaureate summer schools at Oxford and Cambridge.
- Dr Andrew Polaszek of the Natural History Museum, London, for further study of the Agriculture, Biodiversity and Conservation of insects in Oman.
- Durham University for continuing archaeological research at Rustaq and the Batinah Coast in conjunction with Sultan Qaboos University and the Ministry of Heritage and Culture involving up to 20 students.
- Helen Couchman towards the publication of her book illustrating her "Women in Oman" photographic project.
- Fiona Warton for archival preparation of interviews conducted as part of her Oman "Oral History" project.
- Dr Ruth Young for a photographic exhibition of her research into Omani mudbrick villages.
- Rebecca Brown in support of a research field trip to Oman for her Oxford DPhil on British Counterinsurgency Operations.
- Jane Kinninmont of Chatham House for a research visit to Oman for meetings on economic and political issues.
- Captain Saleh Said Al Jabreh towards the publication of a book on his sailing experiences including his time as Captain of the "Jewel of Muscat".
- Shubbak Festival towards a visit to Oman to develop relationships with contemporary artists and their involvement with the festival.

■ Outward Bound Oman for training Omani instructors in the UK and support for a lecture tour illustrating the 2015/16 expedition to retrace the route of Bertram Thomas's 1930 expedition across the Rub Al Khali.

■ Biosphere Expeditions, UK, for training of three Omani students to work on marine conservation in the Musandam, and support for a UK marine expert from the Marine Conservation Society.

■ Halima Al-Balushi towards a documentary film and photographic display about Oman, primarily for exhibiting at UK universities.

■ Rolf Killius and Dr Francis Owtram in support of a research visit to Dhofar based on material from the British Library for cultural aspects of the region.



Dr Ruth Young's research into Omani mudbrick village.

■ Professor Marilyn Booth for translating a book by Omani author, Jokha al-Harhi, into English.

from individuals and academic, training or cultural institutions in the UK and Oman, and grants are made throughout the year. ■

These illustrate the wide range of activities supported by the Society and which contribute to the overall aim of promoting Anglo-Omani relations. Applications for grants are welcomed

Related articles:

- Bat Oasis Heritage Project*
- Support for young Omani Scholars*
- ABC of Oman Insects*



Helen Couchman's book illustrating "Women in Oman".

ARABIC LANGUAGE SCHEME

Sultan Qaboos College for Teaching Arabic to Non-Native Speakers, Manah, Oman.

It was a privilege to run the Anglo-Omani Society's Arabic Language Scheme for the sixth consecutive year in summer 2015.

Ten British students from a cross-section of British universities were selected to attend four weeks of intensive Arabic tuition at the excellent Sultan Qaboos College for Teaching Arabic to Non-Native Speakers in Manah, Oman. As ever, this proved a marvellous opportunity for young Brits to soak up Omani culture and the Arabic language in an exceptionally friendly environment. From the

testimonies of the students related below, it is clear that their unforgettable experiences will do much to promote the strong relationship between the UK and Oman among our upcoming generation. On behalf of the Society, I would like to thank the Omani Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Diwan of the Royal Court and Sultan Qaboos College for making this not only possible but also highly successful.

DR ELISABETH KENDALL

Trustee, Anglo-Omani Society
Senior Research Fellow in Arabic &
Islamic Studies, Pembroke College,
University of Oxford





MICHAEL SKINNER

University College London

When I signed up for the Society's programme at the Sultan Qaboos College for Teaching Arabic to Non-Native Speakers, I would not have been able to predict that I would find myself trawling around the Omani interior looking for somewhere to buy a sheep's stomach. Thankfully a friendly farmer obliged, and as a result the cultural evening was a great success. The British Ambassador did us the honour of slicing the haggis, although we did struggle with working out how to express "great chieftain o' the pudding race" in a sufficiently evocative Arabic dialect. Other highlights included the opportunity for extensive speaking practice with genuinely committed and friendly volunteers from the local area; whizzing up and down al-Jabal al-Akhdar in a convoy of four-by-fours; and chasing turtles on the south-eastern most point of the Arabian Peninsula. The Anglo-Omani Society Language Programme is a unique opportunity for language training and cultural dialogue and would come highly recommended from every participant.

MARINA MORE

Exeter University

Last summer I was lucky enough to be chosen for the Anglo-Omani Society's Arabic Language course in Manah, Oman. While I didn't know a huge amount about the country before embarking on the trip, the cultural classes, our extensive meetings with our language partners, and the weekly excursions really gave me an opportunity to learn and understand more about life in Oman among its incredibly hospitable citizens. The standard of teaching at the college was excellent and teachers were enthusiastic, offering us interesting and engaging ways to learn Arabic, including a publicity campaign on an active and healthy lifestyle, producing a newspaper, and engaging in debates on a range of current issues. I found the course academically challenging and worked hard to complete the daily assignments set by our teachers. It was definitely worthwhile and now, in my final year, I am reaping the benefits from my month spent in Oman. I would highly recommend this experience to any Arabic student eager to learn more about Oman and the Middle East. One of

my favourite parts of the course was the extra-curricular activities on offer. While the accommodation boasts a pool table, ping-pong table, makeshift cricket pitch, and fully-equipped gym, the college made sure our weekends were never dull by taking us on visits to a range of places including al-Jabal al-Akhdar, Muscat, Seeb, al-Dakhiliyya, and Nizwa. I thoroughly enjoyed my month spent in Oman and am lucky enough to have met some like-minded people I can now call close friends, both Omani and English.

JACK McCONNEL

Cambridge University

My highlights include the trips – to al-Jabal al-Akhdar, Sur and the Sharqiyya – the food (thank you to Dipak in the kitchen!) and of course (it has to be said again and again) the kindness of everyone we met without exception. My favourite event was the cultural evening for which we made a haggis – Omani style. This meant peering around local goat farms for a freshly-extracted goat stomach, flied or otherwise. Guddling about in entrails did



have its academic benefit though: translating Burns' *Ode to the Haggis* into Arabic wasn't easy. Michael managed to explain how to play musical chairs to a very keen mix of participants – the Director of the College, an Omani English teacher, a couple of Bahraini students, a Pakistani Major and a British Masters student – while they shuffled around chairs to the tune of Thomas the Tank Engine, much to

the delight of onlooking Manah residents. Moreover, the other Brits on the course were a fantastic bunch of engaging people. A year on, we're still in touch and meet up. The language scheme confirmed my plans to spend my year abroad in Oman learning Arabic. I still meet up with friends from Manah and I'm still very much here in Oman. Leaving will be difficult.

The Arabic language Scheme students on a desert trip... enjoying a meal with their Omani friends... and at work





ANDREW HORSEWOOD Oxford University

Spending five weeks in Oman at the Sultan Qaboos College for teaching Arabic to Non-Native Speakers was a fantastic experience for me personally. It allowed me to obtain a greater insight about Oman and its rich heritage and culture through the diverse range of activities put on for us. These included language classes, lectures, trips, language exchange sessions and sports days, all of which allowed us to embrace the country and its citizens. I greatly enjoyed, in particular, the opportunity to converse in Arabic with Omanis of different ages. All of the people we met during our stay were incredibly friendly and provided many great memories. And, of course, my Arabic improved greatly. I would definitely like to return to Oman in the near future and further my knowledge of the country. I'm very appreciative to have been selected for this programme and would like to express my gratitude to those who made it happen and their generous contributions.

WILL LIEBRECHT Cambridge University

My time in Manah was the best possible introduction to Oman, where I stayed on to spend my year abroad in various corners of the country. From our first drive between the mountains from Muscat to Manah to our last floodlit game of football, studying at the college was an education not only in conversing with Omanis, but also in the traditions and day to day life of the country. I have very fond memories of every aspect

of life in Manah. Each day started with an amazing array of breakfast options, from the familiar cereals and eggs to curry and samosas, which we all eventually decided to try. Then we would pile onto the college minibus with the six soldiers from around the world who were also attending the course, each of whom had some fantastic stories and a few hidden talents. A day in college consisted of morning classes followed by lunch, which was just as good as breakfast. Each afternoon we would meet with our language partners, all of whom have become great friends. After quite an intensive day, the college hostel was the ideal place to relax with friends and play pool, go to the gym or study in the evenings. We even managed to get a game of cricket going under the floodlights outside, in which the star players were without fail the Indian and Pakistani soldiers, or Marina, whose eye for the ball was unrivalled.

Once the week was over we had time to relax, attend a lecture at the college or play football with our language partners and their friends before setting off on a trip to one of the many amazing sites in Oman. We had a brilliant weekend in the desert of Wahiba Sands, another up in the mountains of al-Jabal al-Akhdar and day trips to Muscat, Nizwa and Sur. Aside from the college's excellent organisation and consideration for its students' comfort, enjoyment, studies and socialising opportunities, the students and the Omanis associated with the college were great company both for serious study and relaxing in our free time, and I'm sure that we will remain friends for many years to come.

HARRIET TINKER Durham University

It was a real pleasure to take part in the Arabic language summer programme at the Sultan Qaboos Academy in Manah in 2015. The unique programme at the College improves students' Arabic language skills and their cultural understanding. In particular, I and other students made progress as a result of the small group sessions with local language partners, which allowed us to gain a real understanding of Omani family life and culture. Similarly I was proud to engage in cultural dialogue with these partners, and I hope that they also learnt something about British life (even if they didn't think much of the haggis!). Weekend excursions to Oman's famous deserts and mountains allowed us to glimpse the country's natural beauty and left us all urging friends and family to visit. Perhaps most importantly, and the lasting impression of this beautiful country, is that we all left with great new friendships from both Oman and the UK.

TOM MCGEE Cambridge University

I spent an exhilarating month in Manah as part of the Anglo-Omani Society's Arabic Language Scheme. Shortly after arriving in the sweltering Dakhiliyya governorate (a ninety-minute drive from Muscat), I was struck by our hosts' hospitality. The emphasis which the Omanis placed on greeting us each time we met, the lengthy hand-shakes and the occasional touching of noses, together with the generous servings of dates and cardamom-flavoured Omani qahwa (coffee) quickly made me feel welcome. Our home for the month of August was the college's guest-house just outside Manah. The facilities (pool table, gym, televisions) were excellent and the food, kindly prepared by Dipak and his team, was delicious. The guest-house also provided us with a quiet environment in which to consolidate the Arabic we studied each morning at the college. The classes were rigorous but varied and a particular highlight was the 'media campaign' focusing on health and sport which we organised and we published pamphlets to

convey our messages in Arabic. Our Arabic also improved considerably outside of the classroom: we had fascinating discussions with our (extremely patient) language partners, sometimes while playing football, sometimes over a game of cards. I remain in touch with some of them. The weekend excursions were a fantastic complement to our studies. Swimming in the waters of the picturesque Wadi Shab, looking down at the valleys of al-Jabal al-Akhdar, camel-riding in the Sharqiyya desert and meeting turtles on the beaches of Ras al-Jinz will all live long in the memory and helped demonstrate Oman's incredible diversity and natural beauty. I would like to thank Dr Kendall and the Anglo-Omani Society for organising the programme, the staff at Sultan Qaboos College for their warmth and encouragement and the Omani Ministry of Foreign Affairs for their support.

SOPHIA TILLIE SOAS

Two generations on from Thesiger, this was a unique opportunity to rediscover the Interior of Oman, and to see for ourselves how wrong Thesiger perhaps was about the inevitable loss of a way of life in the face of modernity. Our month at Sultan Qaboos Language Centre revealed to us the extent to which Omanis have managed stylishly to preserve their cultural identity, traditions and honour, as well as their extraordinary reputation for hospitality. Rather than a convoy of camels, every weekend we would be whisked off by the Palace's personal convoy of four by fours to ancient mountain

villages made of stone and desert dunes, whilst listening to the tales of the Bedouin drivers. We witnessed great mother-ship turtles lay their eggs and disappear back into the ocean by moonlight, and cruised the turquoise coastline by day. The friendships that were formed attuned us to the subtleties of cultural exchange whilst allowing us to engage in lively debates and discussions on a rich variety of topics. This gave us rare insight into the perspectives and wisdom of a new generation of Omanis and the vital role they see themselves playing in the wider region post-Arab Spring.

JONATHAN BENTHAM Oxford University

In summer 2015 I was lucky enough to spend a month at the Sultan Qaboos College for teaching Arabic to Non-Native speakers. This month bettered my knowledge of the Arabic language, both in an academic capacity and on a colloquial speaking level. It also gave me an in-depth introduction to Oman, its culture and some of its most attractive features. I found the morning classes contributed extensively to my understanding of media Arabic, focusing on current affairs and topic-specific vocabulary. This was followed up by one on two speaking sessions in the afternoon, where, besides gaining an insight into the Omani Colloquial dialect, I made a number of Omani friendships with my speaking partners. One of the highlights was being able to develop these friendships through a number of social activities, some focusing on culture and

others on sport. A very memorable occasion was a multi-sport tournament held towards the end of my stay, where a number of mixed British-Omani teams took to competing in a variety of events from table-football to volleyball in an attempt to win the coveted sports trophy. In addition to the thrills of winning the team competition and making it into the national newspaper, experiencing the other, more competitive half of our teachers and language partners was thoroughly enjoyable. Other highlights included visiting al-Jabal al-Akhdar and a turtle sanctuary at Ras al-Jinz, which are testaments to the natural delights Oman has to offer, both at sea level and way above it. Our group was even lucky enough to witness the egg-laying of a sea-turtle, and following that, some previously hatched baby sea-turtles running down to the shore – something I only thought I'd ever see on TV. I am extremely grateful for the opportunity given to me by the Anglo-Omani Society and for the hospitality shown to be by my Omani friends. Having seen what Oman has to offer, and coming towards the end of my degree, I hope to return in the near future.

NIAMH McBURNEY SOAS

The five weeks spent in Manah at the Sultan Qaboos College for Teaching Arabic to Non-Native Speakers were a wonderful mix of attentive pastoral care, excellent teaching and subtly awe-inspiring scenery. The quiet solitude of the desert and the mountains surrounding the evenings of vocabulary searching, Omani children's games and sharing stories, contrasted by the muted bustle of the Carrefour and a sneaky Kentucky Fried Chicken when the dining hall wasn't quite enough, were a welcome change from London. Everyone we met was memorable in their own way – eager and patient, kind and so very welcoming. Being actively inducted into the nuances and idiosyncracies of Omani culture made it all the more special – more cultures need "hul-hul" parties for their little ones. I hope my fond memories will be replaced by new ones sooner rather than later. ■



AOS LECTURE PROGRAMME

ARTICLE BY LOUISE HOSKING

While members of the Anglo-Omani Society may not travel to Oman as often as they would wish, they are able to keep in touch with the Sultanate by attending the Society's monthly lectures.

For 2016/17 we have prepared a varied series of lectures drawing on the expertise of academics and enthusiasts, both Omani and non-Omani, which we encourage you to attend.

Next season's programme includes three lectures that focus on Oman's place in the modern world, accessing its options for the future at a time when the surrounding regions are experiencing increasing political and economic pressure. In September Jeremy Jones, author of *A History of Modern Oman*, will look at Oman in the 21st century while October's speaker, John Peterson from the University of Arizona's Center for Middle Eastern Studies, will examine 'The Significance of History for Contemporary Oman'. In May 2017 Hatim Al-Shanfari, senior Omani economist and businessman, will review the Omani economy and the ways in which it is

adapting to its current economic environment.

Aisa Martinez, curator at the British Museum, and the young Omani filmmaker Halima Al Balushi will provide insights into traditional Omani culture: Aisa's January lecture will be looking at the 'Cosmopolitan Connections in Omani Traditional Dress', while in March, Halima will introduce her film on how customs differ throughout the Sultanate, which was sponsored by the Society. Anyone who has lived in Oman will have heard about the importance of Omani waters to the Indian Ocean's turtle population. Roxanne Whelan, a field biologist and our final speaker in June, will update us on conservation projects for Masirah's turtles.

Three lectures will examine very different military connections between Oman and the outside world. In November Ross Mahoney, who has curated the current exhibition on

Oman at the RAF museum, will speak on '*An Enduring Relationship: A Brief History of the Royal Air Force and Royal Air Force of Oman*' while in May, Seth Priestman will examine a very different aspect of Oman's military history through a report on his ongoing excavations of a newly-discovered Sassanian military base in Oman. In December, David Mearns will speak about excavations of the *Esmeralda*, a ship in Vasco de Gama's armada in India that sank in Omani shores in 1503 to be rediscovered in 1998.

Plans are well advanced for our remaining lecture in February when we hope to examine links between Omani football and the English Premier League. Please keep an eye on the AOS website in early February 2017 for more details!

We look forward to seeing you at some or all of these lectures. ■

2016/17 Speakers Programme

2016

15th September 2016	JEREMY JONES <i>Oman in the Twenty-First Century</i>
27th October 2016	JOHN PETERSON <i>The Significance of History for Contemporary Oman</i>
24th November 2016	ROSS MAHONEY <i>An Enduring Relationship: A Brief History of the Royal Air Force and Royal Air Force of Oman</i>
15th December 2016	DAVID MEARNS <i>The Discovery of the Esmeralda Shipwreck</i>

2017

19th January 2017	AISA MARTINEZ <i>Cosmopolitan Connections in Omani Traditional Dress</i>	20th April 2017	SETH PRIESTMAN <i>Policing the Batinah? Late pre-Islamic Persian imperial expansion into the Arabian Peninsula: new evidence from Fulayj</i>
16th February 2017	Linking Oman football and the English Premier League. Details to be confirmed in early February 2017	18th May 2017	HATIM AL SHANFARI <i>Oman's Economic Outlook: Challenges and Opportunities</i>
16th March 2017	HALIMA AL BALUSHI <i>One Traditional Oman? How Customs Differ throughout the Sultanate</i>	15th June 2017	ROXANNE WHELAN <i>Masirah Turtles, into the Light</i>

Unless otherwise notified all lectures will take place at The Society's premises at 34 Sackville Street, London W1S 3ED, starting at 6pm. Drinks will be served from 5.30pm.

Please visit the Society website or contact the Events and Projects Manager for up to date information of any changes.

THE ANGLO-OMANI SOCIETY GAP YEAR SCHEME

Colonel Nigel Knocker
is the Society Trustee
responsible for the
Gap Year Scheme

The Scheme, based at the Sultan's School in Oman, is open to British nationals, male or female, who are either school leavers or who plan a gap year between graduation and first employment. The scheme started in 2002 and offers generous benefits and a memorable experience. Each year up to four students go to the school for about

three months between September and December. A further group goes between January and April. About 90 students have been through the school up to April this year.

The scheme provides the opportunity to become part of the school community, to take part in excursions and to contribute to

NICOLA FORRESTER – SHREWSBURY HIGH SCHOOL. SEPT TO DEC 2014

The months I spent in Oman, both within and outside the school environment, were incredibly enjoyable memories that I will never forget. As soon as I arrived I was made to feel very welcome at the school and I was able to tailor my timetable to my strengths in Geography and Business.

A personal highlight has been the opportunities I was given to run my own Geography classes. I am about to embark on a Geography degree, so this opportunity allowed me to genuinely consider teaching as a career and I was hopefully able to impart some knowledge to the Year 12s! Also with the Geography department, I was given the chance to tutor a number of students on their personal statement writing as this is a process I had just been through with my own university applications. I felt like I made a genuine contribution towards those girls receiving their chosen places.

During my time out there, I was lucky enough to experience the

National Day Celebrations. This was truly an amazing day. The whole school dressed up in traditional clothing and there was a huge celebration during the day of the incredible achievements the country has made in such a short period of time. During the afternoon, the Year 13s invited us to join them for a traditional meal, eaten with our hands on the floor. They then taught us some dancing, which was great fun. Although I wasn't the best at it, the atmosphere was something that I have never experienced before and I am not sure that I ever will again.

Outside of school, the other volunteers and I were able to visit so many incredible places, listing them all below would simply take too long! My favourite place would have to be Wadi Bani Khalid. The water was so warm and jumping from the high rocks was great fun, but quite scary.

I would like to thank the Society for all their help during my time out there, it was truly an experience I will never forget.



school life according to the talents and interests of the individual – whether as a classroom assistant, in the CAS (Creativity Activity and Service) programme of the International Baccalaureate or in out of school activities such as sport and music. The school is predominantly a mixed

day school but there are about 50 boy student boarders under a scholarship scheme established by His Majesty Sultan Qaboos. There is the opportunity to be involved with the boarders in their sporting and leisure activities. Further details may be obtained at <http://www.sultansschool.org>

To illustrate the two different types of student, I have used two student experiences; one a gap year girl from Shrewsbury High school, and the other a mature student who had been at SOAS. ■

KHEIRA TARIF – SOAS. SEPT TO DEC 2013

The months I spent in the Sultanate of Oman were a very valuable experience to me in a beautiful and peaceful country. As a group Matthew, Alexis, Marina and I were made to feel instantly welcome at the Sultan's School, not just by the staff but also by the delightfully charming pupils.

My time at the school was also instructive. I learnt a great deal about communication, not just with my colleagues (who were Omanis and non-Omanis, young and old, newcomers and semi-permanent residents of the Gulf region!) but also with the students. During my four months at the Sultan's School I taught a range of classes from ages 5 to 15, in PE, Music, Art, IT, English, Arabic and Business. Helping in these lessons taught me a great deal about tact and about matching my message to my audience.

Muscat is equally easy to live in, being as safe a town as anyone could ask for. We never hesitated to visit a new place of interest. Some of my best memories are of sleeping under the stars

on Sifa beach and taking in the phenomenal views from the dizzy heights of Jebel Akhdar. The Sultanate of Oman is a country of spectacular natural beauty, ideally suited to people who enjoy exploring.

During the final week of our stay in Oman, the other gappies and I were invited to attend the 5th Muscat Youth Summit, which was held in Duqm. Along with other, mostly Omani, students we travelled seven hours by ferry to the tiny port town in central-eastern Oman where we spent five days visiting local sites and developing ideas for the future of the Duqm area. I have many great memories of the MYS and was extremely sorry to say goodbye at the end of the week.

I was fortunate to receive the opportunity to live and work in a place like the Sultanate of Oman. I am very grateful to the Anglo-Omani Society, not only for introducing me to such a special part of the world, but also for facilitating such a rich experience.



SUPPORT FOR YOUNG OMANI SCHOLARS

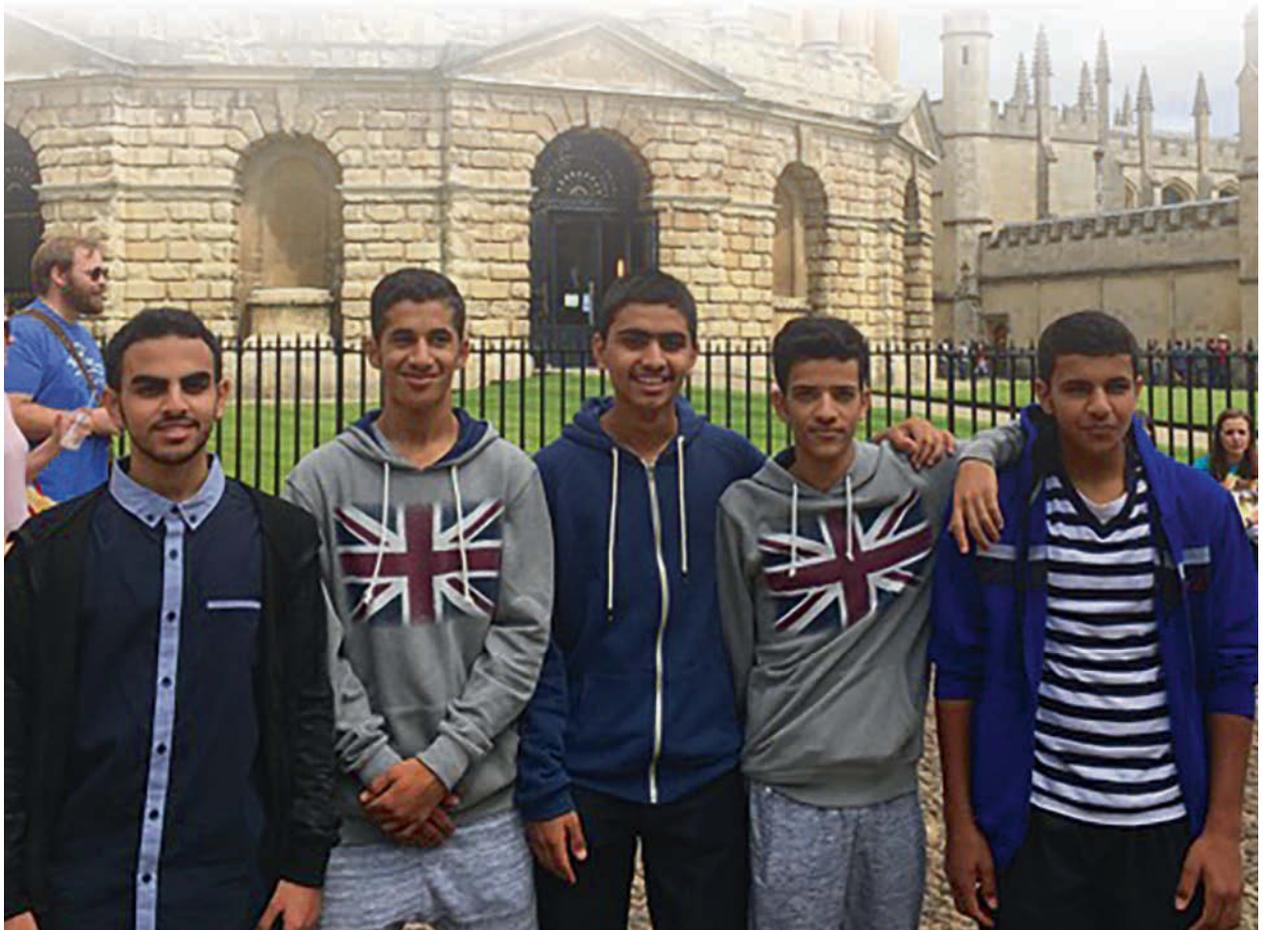
ARTICLE BY ALAN HENDERSON

For the past four years the Society has provided a grant to support scholars from The Sultan's School attending summer schools in Oxford and in Cambridge.

These young students, from homes in the interior, join as boarders at entry to Secondary School under a scholarship scheme established and supported by His Majesty Sultan Qaboos. Inevitably their standard of English is initially below that of the other students and they face a daunting challenge in embarking on the demanding bilingual programme leading to International GCSE and then the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme. They must also acquire a rather different set of study skills than may have been demanded in their primary schools.

The support of the Society allows them to attend intensive two-week courses run by Oxford Study Courses, the leading provider of such courses and associated IB revision courses. The younger students who are about to embark on the IB programme study an introductory pre-IB programme at St Antony's College, Oxford. The older students follow the mid-IB course at Emmanuel College, Cambridge. Both courses are taught by teachers of outstanding ability and experience from IB schools around the world.

This programme not only provides an academic and motivational boost; it also



Studies at Cambridge.



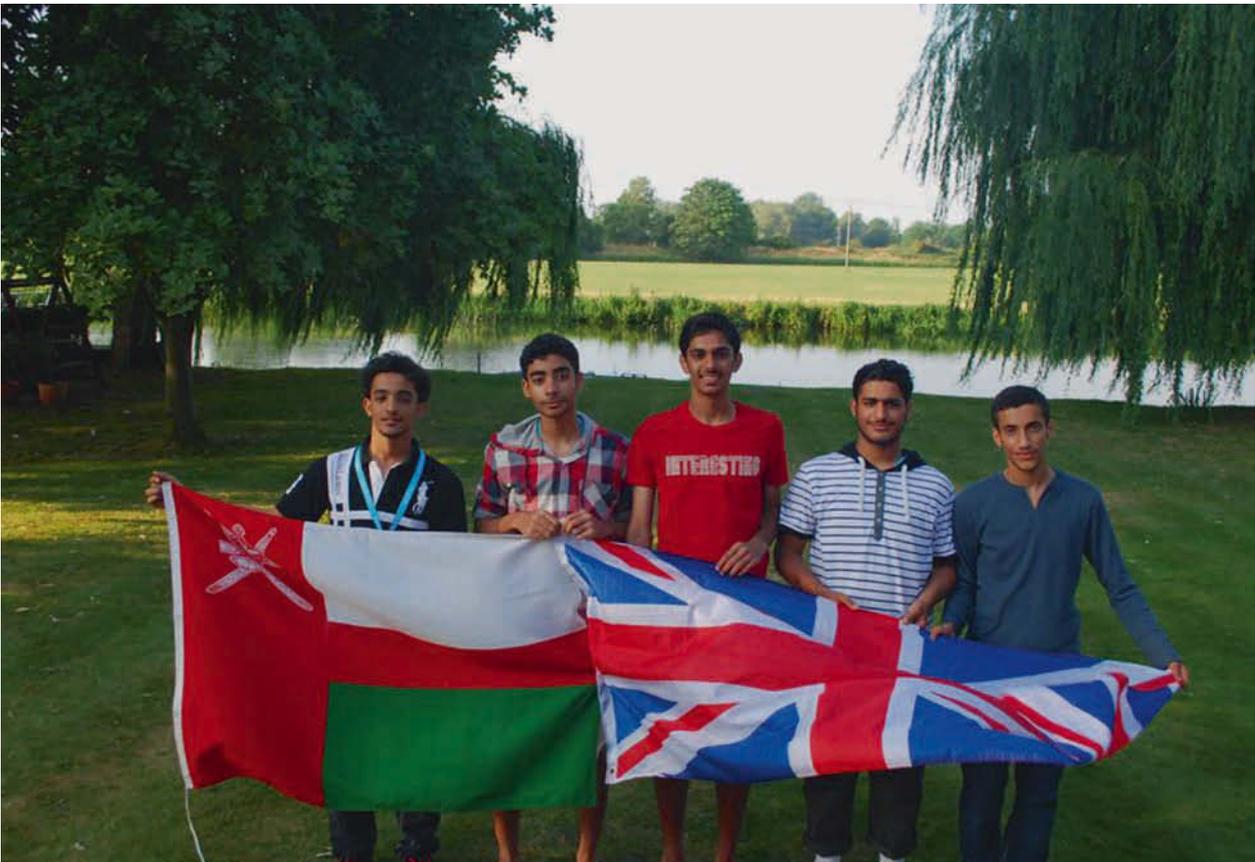
It is fitting that the Society, benefiting from the patronage and endowment of His Majesty the Sultan, should support these young students from the scholarship programme which he has established in the school which bears his name. Former scholars now hold prominent positions in both government and private institutions. Their achievements demonstrate what individual Omanis can achieve, without wealth and influence but with the benefit of quality education. It will be the skills of its people rather than the wealth derived from gas and oil which will drive the development of the Sultanate in the decades ahead. The Society is proud to contribute to the development of these skills. ■

encourages aspiration by introducing the students to the delights and challenges of the Oxbridge academic environment. The trip also includes a weekend visit to London with visits to the Science and Natural History Museums and an

introduction to the landmarks of the city on a Thames river cruise.

Few, if any, of these students have previously travelled outside Oman though many will go on to Higher Education in the UK.

Alan Henderson is a former Headmaster of The Sultan's School and a member of the Anglo-Omani Society. He remains closely involved with educational developments in Oman and with the Society's Gap Year Scheme, based at The Sultan's School.



LETTER TO THE EDITOR

After reading Dawn Chatty's article in last year's Review, Michael Butler wrote the following letter from his home in Australia. I was delighted to receive our first 'Letter To The Editor' and hope that we will now receive some more – all subjects will be welcome. At my request, Michael sent the two photographs relating to his letter. *IK*

Reading this article revived memories of my contacts with the Harasees tribe five decades ago, and I felt a few notes and comments based on my observations and diary records from that time might be appropriate, particularly with reference to water and tribal distribution in and around the Jiddat al Harasees.

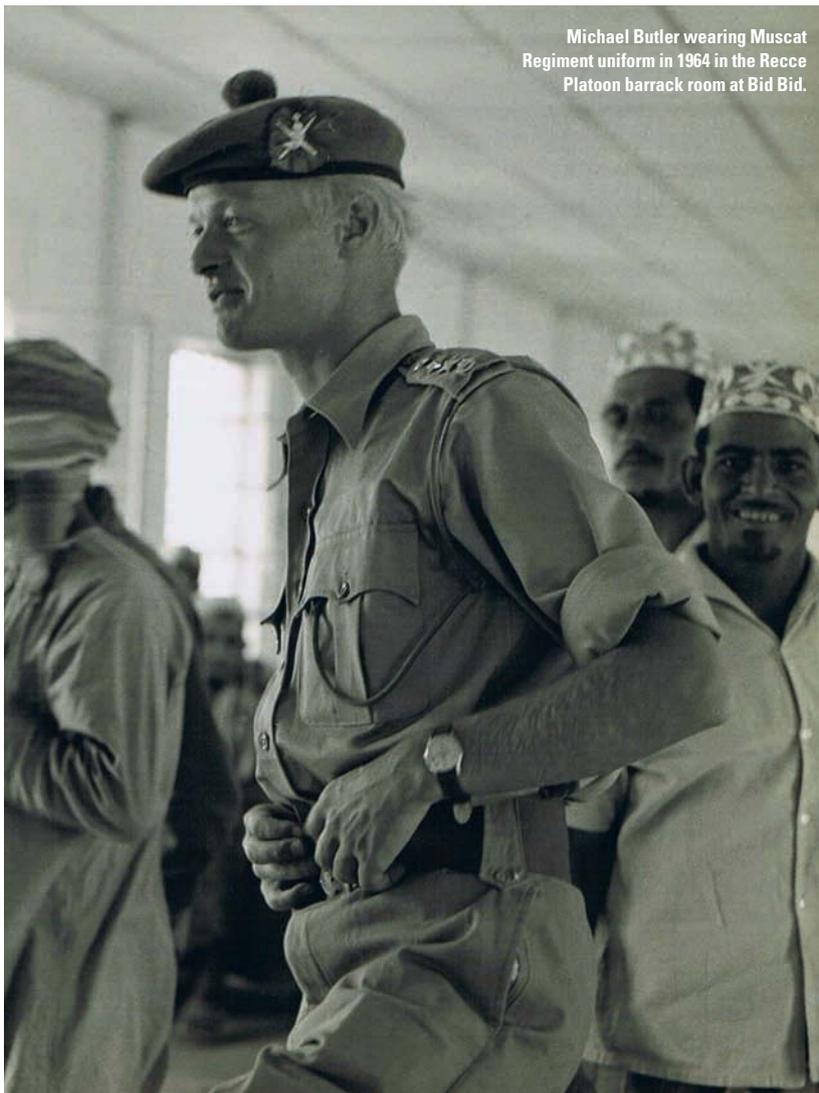
While serving with the Muscat Regiment (MR) Recce Platoon in 1964 one of my regular duties was to provide an escort for

SSL (Seismic Services Ltd) trucks delivering explosives to survey parties operating in the Jiddat al Harasees. In the course of these patrols we visited many remote locations such as Ramlat at Sahma, Haima, Mugshin, al Agayiz, al Huqf, Turban, Qarat al Milh, etc. One of the Platoon Corporals was a Harasousi – Ibrahim bin Sangor – who is now dead, and the Platoon Sergeant was Mohamad bin Masaud al bu Said of Manah who is alive

and in excellent health and living in al Khoudh. Ibrahim, whose Arabic was still quite limited, was our principal guide when patrolling in the Jidda. At that time there was only one other Harasousi serving in SAF: Said bin Dooda, who was in the NFR.

Haima was then an abandoned rig site, the rig still in position over the dry hole which was said to be 13,000 feet deep. There was no water well there then, water for the drilling operation having been hauled from al Agayiz. Drilling for a reliable water supply at Haima had proved to be almost as unproductive as drilling for oil. So at that time al Agayiz was the only borehole available to the Harasees as a supplement to the seepages and hand dug wells on the edge of al Huqf, which included Boi, Taureg, Bahama, Raqi, Umm Riqash, Naklit, Sar, some being more potable than others. However, the diesel pump was only fuelled and serviced by SSL or other PDO subcontractors when their operations were dependent upon it. At other times the pump was sometimes functioning and sometimes not.

The ancient and what might be called natural water sources used by the Harasees, found along the edge of al Huqf escarpment, were uniformly low yielding, which limited the number of animals which could be watered per hour or day. This placed a ceiling on goat numbers in particular which could be grazed in the immediate vicinity of a well, since the goat normally needs to drink once in every 48 hours. Another source of water, both very limited and seasonal, was the dew pond, which collected mist moisture beneath trees. Some sites were more efficient than others, and the best all had names. Yet another source were the rocky depressions found in a shallow water course which following a shower of rain could hold a useful volume of water for four or even six months.



Michael Butler wearing Muscat Regiment uniform in 1964 in the Recce Platoon barrack room at Bid Bid.

Michael sharing memories in 2015 with Omani friends, including Sheikh Khalid bin Salim bin Huwaila al Harasousi (third from left).



The very few water sources in the Jidda meant that when a far off storm produced rain and grazing emerged, the fresh pastures could only be utilised by camels, which under these conditions would not require water for many weeks. Attendant humans were dependent on the water carried in skins by camel from the nearest well or dew pond. The arrival of the motorised water tanker and 4 x 4 pickup changed this situation fundamentally, and made grazing/browsing anywhere in the Jidda and beyond perfectly feasible. However, the negative side to this is that when pasture does appear it only lasts for a brief time owing to the mobility of humans and their livestock for whom distance is no longer a limitation. This in turn leads to overstocking and degradation of both pasture and browse.

In 1964 the distribution of the Harasees tribe was approximately 70 per cent in the

Sharqiya and 30 per cent in and around the Jidda. The generally acknowledged chief of the bedu Harasees was Sheikh Salim bin Huwaila. While running Special Branch in al Ain in 1968/69, I was not aware of any Harasees living in Abu Dhabi or elsewhere in the Trucial States. By this time some of the young men were being employed by PD(O) in various capacities. In the Jidda the Harasees readily accepted fareeqs and livestock from the Afar, Bait Kathir and Bait Imani on their "dar" when grazing was plentiful. The ancient division between Ghaferi and Hinawi tribes was never far beneath the surface in inter-tribal affairs – the Jenaba, Duru and Bautahara often seemed ill at ease when in the company of Harasees or Bait Kathir, and memories of old blood feuds remained strong.

In October and November of 1965, I travelled from Dhofar to Ibri with a group of bedu from the Bait Kathir and the Harasees.

Our journey took six weeks during which we covered about 1100 miles, sometimes riding and sometimes walking on foot. This took us through a large portion of the Jiddat al Harasees. I wrote an account from my diary soon afterwards, and a copy of it – "Travels with a Camel" – can be seen at the ME Archive, St Antony's College, Oxford.

In 2015, I and my family revisited Oman. We received a wonderful welcome, especially from the Bait Kathir at Thumrait and the Harasees at Yalooni and Midabi.

I should add that I am the same Michael Butler as the one mentioned by Andrew Spalton in his article about the Arabian Leopard.

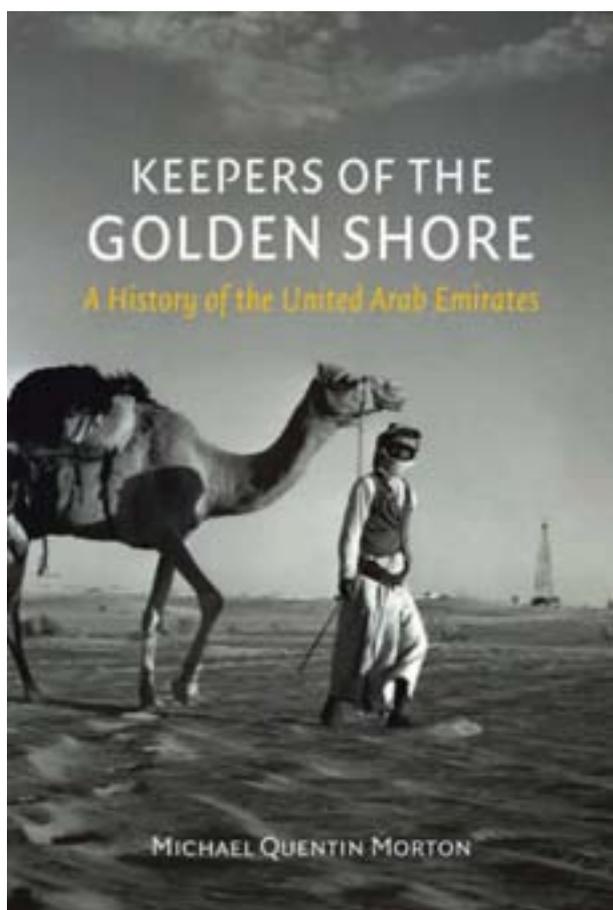
I hope the observations and information I have provided may be of interest to Dawn Chatty and others studying the subject.

*With best regards,
Michael Butler*

BOOK REVIEWS

KEEPERS OF THE GOLDEN SHORE: A HISTORY OF THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

By Michael Quentin Morgan. Published by Reaktion Books



The United Arab Emirates is an amazing success story. Few first-time visitors to the emirates today can have any conception that 50 years ago there were few made roads in Dubai or Abu Dhabi (and none in Sharjah), no bridge across Dubai creek, and that anyone leaving Abu Dhabi island to drive to Dubai had to be aware of the tide times in order to avoid getting stuck in the surrounding salt marsh (*sabkha*). There was little education and no building above two storeys.

Contrast this picture with the ultra-modern skylines of today's emirates, even the smaller ones. Abu Dhabi is the first among equals by virtue of its political and financial pre-eminence. Dubai has become the tourism media and financial centre of the Gulf. Its airline, Emirates, is a world-renowned brand and a major sponsor of the Premier League. Each of the smaller emirates has its unique selling point.

How did this happen? Obviously oil, which started to be produced in the 1960s, played a major part, at a time when the coast was suffering from the demise of the traditional pearl industry. But no less important was the forging of a modern state out of seven traditional shaikhdoms, in the face of their no less traditional rivalries, into what the author describes as 'a beacon of stability in an unsettled Middle East'.

This excellent and readable book, with a wealth of illustrations, begins by charting the early tribal history of the coast and its extensive trading relationships. Thereafter the first real milestone in its development came with the intervention of the Royal Navy in the mid-19th century, intent on neutralising the perceived threat from piracy in the Gulf to the imperial communications to India. The nature of that threat is justifiably disputed. The outcome was a series of treaties, agreed with the rulers, which established Britain as the Exclusive Power in the Gulf. The shaikhdoms along the coast became British Protected States, known as the Trucial States. Britain was responsible for their security and external representation.

This relationship evolved over time. British representatives – Political Agents on the ground reporting to the Political Resident in Bahrain – were drawn into the internal affairs of the shaikhdoms in a variety of ways: keeping the peace (through the Trucial Oman Scouts), delineating the boundaries and mediating in disputes, exercising jurisdiction over the non-Arab part of the population, discreetly easing out any ruler who was deemed to be an obstacle to progress, and laying the foundations for the development of a modern state through the instrument of the Trucial States Council comprising all seven rulers.

The crisis came with the unexpected British decision in 1968 to withdraw, brought about by the economic strains of its overseas commitments. It fell to a former Political Resident, Sir William Luce, to conduct the delicate negotiations leading to the formation of the UAE including all seven emirates (but excluding Bahrain and Qatar which decided not to join).

Two key figures in these critical negotiations were Shaikh Zayed, the Ruler of Abu Dhabi, and Shaikh Rashid, the energetic Ruler of Dubai, who set aside their long-standing rivalry to enable the new state to come into being. These two remarkable men, together with Luce, are the real architects of today's UAE.

Reviewed by Sir Michael Burton

Readers can order "Keepers of the Golden Shore" online with a special 20% discount. To do this visit www.reaktionbooks.co.uk and enter the code 'UAE' at the checkout.

THE EMERGENCE OF THE GULF STATES

J. E. Peterson (ed). Bloomsbury, London, 2016, pp. xv + 388. Maps. Illust. Hb. Bibliog. Notes. Index. £108. ISBN 978-1-4411-3160-7

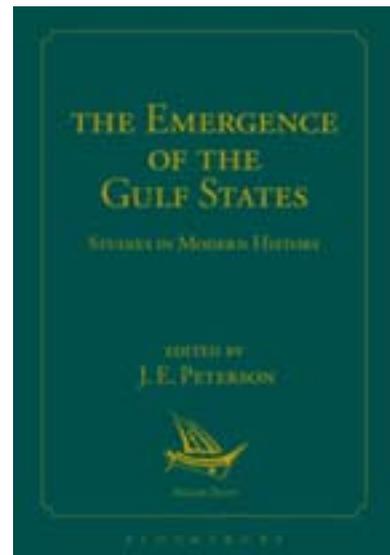
This reviewer approaches edited books with reserve. Any such reserve is not justified in the case of the present volume. The Editor (and contributor), John Peterson, went to great lengths to produce a cohesive tome, beginning in 2011 with the recruitment of a board of advisers who would help match the best authors with the most important trends in modern Gulf history. The authors having been selected, a series of e-mail discussions and workshops were conducted to ensure that their contributions would be complementary. Footnotes have been avoided, but each chapter bar one has been followed by a bibliographical essay and a bibliography. There are 30 illustrations (in black and white) and eight maps (in colour). Helpful use has been made of sub-headings and careful copy-editing has been carried out. The 15 contributors, for whom brief biographies are provided, are all leaders in their fields. Between them they have contributed to 11 extensive essays ranging from an introductory piece on the pre-modern history of the Gulf region (by D T Potts) through a discussion of the tribal identities of the Gulf states (by Dale F Eickelman) to a description of the process of modern state formation (by Frauke Heard-Bey). The outcome is a readable series of chapters constituting also a work of reference. Confronted with such a rich offering, the reviewer is forced to make an invidious choice of articles to comment on.

The exception to the rule about footnotes is an essay on "Religion and Religious Movements in the Gulf, 1700-1971" by Michael Crawford: it was judged that the footnotes to that essay referred to Arabic-language sources that might not be familiar even to specialists in the field. Crawford paints a picture of a maritime Gulf that was naturally outward-looking and tolerant coming under pressure from doctrinally aggressive land-based powers, notably Shi'ite Iran and unitarian Saudi Arabia. From the middle of the eighteenth century the texts show the religious elites wrestling with three main issues: the nature of religious authority, the interplay

between religion and the state, and the enduring schism between Sunni and Shi'i. Meanwhile the intrusion of the Western international system meant that both Sunni and Shi'i had to contend with new territorial constraints and secular ideologies such as Arab nationalism. Crawford's rich working out of these themes includes passages on Sufism, the pilgrimage, the Ibadis, and Pan-Islamism. He is careful to point out that the peoples of the Gulf had complex identities not defined solely by religion: there are many examples of political alliances made regardless of political affiliation.

In parallel with Crawford's references to the ideologies of the Gulf, a useful perspective is provided by an essay on "The Gulf, the Indian Ocean and the Arab World" by Fahad Ahmad Bishara and Patricia Risso, pointing out that for much of their history the inhabitants of the Gulf looked outwards across the water rather across the land. In so doing, the authors trace the period of Omani history initiated by the turning away of the Al Bu Sa'id from their tribal interior in favour of the opportunities provided by the sea, and the eventual creation of a trade empire forming a triangle between the Gulf, East Africa and western India. They rather romantically assert that the communities of Indians to be found today throughout the Gulf, and the boats from Gujerat that line the creeks of Dubai and Sharjah, are "enduring testaments to the fact that despite all of the late twentieth century transformations, the Gulf continues to hold a place as a regional crossroads of cultures, capital and history".

A fascinating chapter is offered by Clive Holes on "Language, Culture and Identity". After an introductory paragraph in which he points out that dialects can be rich repositories of the cultural and social histories of their speakers, the sub-headings of his piece give an idea of the range of his offering: Community and dialect; Linguistic minorities; The recession of community dialects and regional homogenisation; Globalisation and the spread of English; Pidginisation; Community, meeting, greeting and the



coffee ritual; Dialect poetry; Oral historical narrative; Popular customs; Dress. Holes concludes that the Gulf's cultural past is not just Islamic, nor even just Arab: it is "a treasure trove of millennia of multicultural riches still waiting to be fully uncovered".

The Emergence of the Gulf States was produced under the auspices of the Altajir Trust, and the founder of the trust, HE Mohammed Mahdi Altajir, writes a foreword. He generously pays tribute to several categories of people. Among them are some of those who brought into being the United Arab Emirates – Shaykh Zayid of Abu Dhabi, Shaykh Rashid of Dubai, Ahmad ibn Khalifah al-Suwaidi of Abu Dhabi and Sir Geoffrey Arthur, at the time Political Resident in the Persian Gulf; there is an evocative photograph of them, along with Mahdi himself, on the occasion of the signing of the agreement in 1971 that ended the treaties of protection between Britain and the Trucial States. Besides Geoffrey Arthur, Mahdi pays tribute to my own first chief in Dubai in the 1950s, Peter Tripp, the Political Agent. Mahdi also thanks the trustees of his trust and the Director, Richard Muir, former Ambassador to Oman and Chairman of the Society. Referring to Ibn Khaldun's championing of the writing of history, Mahdi expresses the hope that *The Emergence of the Gulf States* will serve to remind readers that something exceptional took place in the Gulf in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and will do justice to the individuals who contributed to the making of the modern Gulf states. It would be difficult to think of a book that would do more to meet Mahdi's wishes.

Reviewed by Sir Harold Walker

MEET THE SOCIETY STAFF

Very best from all at
34 Sackville Street!

In order to realise the charitable objects of the Anglo-Omani Society, the organisation employs two full time members of staff. Since 2013, Ben Wright as Manager, and since June this year, Isabelle Habib as NGG & Communications Officer, who has taken on the good work started by Rocio Corrales. Rocio left the Society in May and will be in Oman refining her Arabic from September. The Society has also taken on Ami Amlani as Administrator three days per week. Ami can answer any membership queries that you may have,

and can be contacted on admin@angloomanisociety.com

The team is ably supported by Kamille Leon at the reception desk, and since August we have been fortunate to have on board both Amy Whight and Isobel Ransome as interns. They provide continuity to an Internship programme that has been a simply marvellous success over the past few years. Amy and Isobel will be with us until late January, and we would encourage you to say hello to them at one of our upcoming events if you get the opportunity to do so. ■



WHERE WAS THIS PHOTOGRAPH TAKEN?



Readers may recognise Tim Severin's *Sohar*, which set sail from Oman as part of the 1980 National Day celebrations heading for the Chinese port of Canton. The vessel had been built at Sur using traditional construction methods, then the seven-month voyage followed the ancient spice route charted by Omani sea-faring merchants more than a thousand years previously.

After the voyage, the *Sohar* was returned to Muscat and put in temporary storage. In

1985, Al Bustan Palace Hotel was opened and its newly constructed service road was joined to the coast road by a large roundabout with a shallow lake in the middle. The *Sohar* was firmly fixed in the middle of the lake at an angle that would allow the sea breezes to inflate the main sail. The 'sailing' illusion was completed by pumping water at the bow of the boat to imitate a natural bow wave.

This photograph was taken quite soon

after the *Sohar* was installed, and to the left of the hull it is just possible to see the roof of a car circulating the roundabout. Later on, the sail was removed, probably because it hung loosely and rather sadly when the winds didn't blow. However, with or without the sail, the *Sohar* remains a memorable tribute to a remarkable voyage.

Tim Severin's book, *The Sindbad Voyage*, tells the whole story and is still available. ■

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JEBEL AKHDAR



MUTTRAH



Photography by Khalil Al Zadjali